

THE ACTS
OF THE
APOSTLES.

THIS forms a central, or intermediate book, to connect the Gospels and the Epistles. It is a useful postscript to the former, and a proper introduction to the latter. This divine history is evidently a second part, or continuation, of St. Luke's Gospel, as appears from the very beginning of it: and, that both were written by the same Evangelist, is attested by the most antient Christian writers. The subscriptions at the end of some Greek manuscripts, and of the copies of the Syriac version, testify that St. Luke wrote the Acts at Alexandria in Egypt. As the narrative reaches down to the year of Christ 63, the Acts cannot have been completed earlier than that year; and that they were not written much later, may be inferred from the subject being continued no farther, which otherwise it would probably have been; at least St. Luke would have been apt to have given the issue of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome, as what the Christian reader would have been desirous to know. With respect to the evidences of the facts, the grand point on which the Christian rests, is the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by whom the whole book was indited. But St. Luke, considered as a mere human witness, was better able to draw up an authentic history of the Apostles as he had accompanied St. Paul in so many of his journeys. As he was a physician by profession, he was able to form a sound judgment of the miracles which St. Paul wrought upon the diseased; and to make a credible report of them. But he seems not to have had the gift of healing himself: at least we have nothing on record concerning it. St. Paul, and not he, healed the sick. His accounts are generally so full and circumstantial, that the reader is perfectly enabled to examine the facts himself, and to judge whether they were attended with any deception or not. St. Luke appears not to have intended to write a complete ecclesiastical history of the whole Christian church, during the first thirty years after Christ's ascension: for he almost wholly omits what passed among the Jews after the conversion of St. Paul; though the labours and sufferings of the other Apostles could not but have afforded interesting materials. If we examine the contents of this book, we may observe two ends pursued in it: 1. To give an authentic relation of the effusion of the Holy Ghost, and the first miracles by which the Christian religion was established. An authentic account of this was indispensably necessary, since Christ had so often promised the Holy Ghost to his disciples; and if a hearer were to receive the Gospel, he would naturally inquire how it had been first promulgated. 2. To impart those accounts which evince the claim of the Gentiles to the visible as well as spiritual church of God,—a point particularly contested by the Jews about the time of St. Luke's writing the Acts. St. Paul was at that very time a prisoner at Rome, upon the accusation of the Jews, who became his enemies for having admitted the Gentiles into the visible-church. Hence it is, that St. Luke relates the conversion of the Samaritans, ch. viii., and the history of Cornelius, ch. x., xi., whom even St. Peter (to whom St. Paul's opponents appealed, Gal. ii. 6—21.) had

instructed in the Gospel by divine command, though he was not of the circumcision. For the same reason he relates, *ch. xv.*, what was decreed by the first council at Jerusalem concerning the Levitical law; and treats most fully of the conversion of St. Paul, and of his mission and transactions among the Gentiles.

The Acts of the Apostles may very properly be divided into seven parts; viz. First, The account of the first Pentecost after Christ's death, and of the events preceding it, contained in *ch. i. ii.* Secondly, The acts of the Apostles at Jerusalem, and throughout Judea and Samaria, among the Christians of the circumcision, *ch. iii—vii. xi. xii.* Thirdly, The acts in Cæsarea, and the receiving of the Gentiles, *ch. viii—x.* Fourthly, The first circuit of St. Barnabas and St. Paul among the Gentiles, *ch. xiii. xiv.* Fifthly, The embassy to Rome, and the first council at Jerusalem, wherein the Jews and Gentiles were admitted to an equality, *ch. xv.* Sixthly, The second circuit of St. Paul, *ch. xvi—xx.* Seventhly, St. Paul's third journey to Rome, *ch. xxi—xxviii.* The reader, desirous of seeing the authenticity of this book incontestably proved, will find all the satisfaction he desires in the first part of Dr. Benson's Appendix to his History of the Plantation of Christianity; and in Mr. Biscoe's Boyle's Lectures, *ch. xiv. xv.*

CHAP. I.

Christ, preparing his apostles for the beholding of his ascension, gathereth them together unto the mount Olivet, commandeth them to expect in Jerusalem the sending down of the Holy Ghost, and promiseth after a few days to send it: by virtue whereof they should be witnesses unto him, even to the utmost parts of the earth. After his ascension they are warned by two angels to depart, and to set their minds upon his second coming: they accordingly return, and, giving themselves to prayer, choose Matthias apostle in the place of Judas.

[Anno Domini 33.]

THE ^a former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, ^b of all that Jesus began both to

do and teach,

2 Until the day in which he ^c was taken up, after that he ^d through the Holy Ghost ^e had given commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen:

3 ^f To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them ^g forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the ^h kingdom of God:

4 And, ^{*} being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not

^a Gospel of Luke. Luke, 1. 3. ^b Luke, i—xxiv. Rom. 15. 8. Ch. 10. 33. ^c Mark, 16. 19. Luke, 24. 51. Ver. 9. Heb. 1. 3. ^d John, 3. 34. Mat. 3. 16. ^e Mat. 28. 19, 20. Mark, 16. 15—18. Luke, 24. 45—49. John, 20. 21—23. & 21. 15—17. Ch. 10. 41, 42. ^f Mat. xxviii. Mark, xvi. Luke, xxiv. John, xx. xxi. Ch. 10. 40—42. I Cor. 15. 5—8. ^g Deut. 9. 9, 18. I Kings, 19. 8. Mat. 4. 2. ^h Mat. 3. 2. & 4. 17. & 13. 24, 31, 33, 41—49. ^{*} Or eating together with them.

Ver. 1. *The former treatise*] *This former treatise*, undoubtedly, means the gospel, which was written by St. Luke, and dedicated by him to *Theophilus*. See the note on Luke, i. 3. All in this verse, cannot mean every one of the miracles and sermons which Jesus wrought and preached. See John, xx. 30, 31. xxi. 25. By *all*, therefore, we must understand only all that was necessary to be recorded, to establish the divine mission of Christ, and to convince mankind. *All that Jesus began to do and teach*, is a Hebraism, frequently used by the sacred writers, and particularly St. Luke; and signifies only "all that he did and taught." The phrase, however, may refer here to the account which he had given of Christ's ministry, from the beginning and first rise of it, (as he speaks, *ch. i. 2, 3.*) to the ascension (with which he concludes his gospel).

Ver. 2. *Through the Holy Ghost had given, &c.*] By the influence and assistance of the Holy Spirit, with which he himself was anointed, "the fulness of the Godhead dwell-

ing in him bodily." It is no wonder, considering how short a history we have between Christ's resurrection and ascension, that this should be the only place which speaks of his acting by the Spirit after he arose from the dead. His breathing on the apostles, and saying, *Receive ye the Holy Spirit*, John, xx. 22. confirms the interpretation that we have given. In the third verse St. Luke expresses, in general terms, what Christ said to his apostles during the forty days of his continuance with them upon earth. But in the 2d, 4th, and following verses, he declares what Christ said on the day of his ascension. He had brought his former account down to that day; and from that day began the Acts of the Apostles.

Ver. 3. *Shewed himself alive by many infallible proofs,*] By *infallible proofs* are meant such proofs as amount to a demonstration, and cannot admit of the least doubt. Thus the actions of speaking, walking, eating, and drinking, are the undoubted proofs of life; and it should be observed, that

depart from Jerusalem, but wait for ¹ the promise of the Father, which, *saiſt he*, ye have heard of me.

5 ^k For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together

they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time ¹ restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, ^m It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 ⁿ But ye shall receive ^{*} power after that

¹ Luke, 24. 49. John, 14. 16. 26 & 15. 26. & 16. 7. & 20. 21. Acts 2. 4, 33. & 4. 8. ^k Mat. 3. 11. Ch. 2. 4. & 11. 15, 16. & 19. 4. ^l Dan. 7. 27. Amos, 9. 11. Mat. 18. 1. & 20. 21. Luke, 17. 20 & 22. 30. ^m Deut. 29. 29. Mat. 24. 36. & 13. 32. Luke, 17. 20. See John, 21. 21. 1 Thess. 5. 1. ⁿ Ch. 2. 1-4, 33. Luke, 24. 49. & 3. 16. Joel, 2. 28. ^{*} Of the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you.

that the disciples had the same infallible proofs of Christ's being alive after his passion, as they ever had of his being alive before it. They saw him, saw the particular marks of identity in his person and countenance, in his hands, feet, and side, which had been pierced at his crucifixion. They saw him also eat what they themselves gave him; a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb. They heard him speak, and were by him commanded to *handle him*, and see that he had flesh and bones,—a command, which doubtless they obeyed, for the words, *as ye see me have*, strongly imply, that they had received the satisfaction offered them, by feeling his hands and feet. Certainly these were *infallible proofs*, as the sacred writer asserts: but what increases their certainty, is, that they were frequently repeated; not for one or two days, but for the space of forty days together. Whoever takes a view of the method and order in which the several proofs of the resurrection were laid before the apostles, must confess, that, as Christ required of them a reasonable and well-grounded faith, so did he pursue the most proper and effectual means for attaining that end. For this purpose, instead of bearing down their reason, and dazzling their understanding by a full manifestation of himself all at once, we see him letting in the light upon them by little and little, and preparing their minds, by the gradual dawning of truth, to bear the full lustre of the Sun of righteousness rising from the grave; to consider and examine, and know that it was he himself; and to assure the world that it was impossible they could be deceived. And most certainly, never was evidence more fairly offered to consideration; never was the inquiry put into a more rational method, as, indeed, there never were any facts which could better bear the test. *Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God*, implies the giving them full instructions concerning the nature of his spiritual kingdom; which, before his resurrection, they did not rightly understand. Dr. Heylin observes on this passage, that “the Greeks weave long periods, by connecting many clauses with relative pronouns, participles, and prepositions, in one sentence; which, according to the genius of our language, should be divided into several sentences; whose brevity facilitates the attention of the reader, by holding it less in suspense. I therefore scruple not, says he, frequently to change the grammatical construction of the original, and sometimes insert a word or two, that I may render the sense more intelligible, which is the principal purpose of my interpretation.” Conformably to this remark, he reads the present passage thus: ver. 3. *He had soon after his passion, shewed them himself*

alive with indubitable evidences, appearing to them forty days and discoursing with them concerning the kingdom of God Ver. 4. [One day in particular] *being present with them, when they were assembled, he ordered them not to depart, &c.* The reader will find in the note, on ch. x. 41. an answer to the objection raised from Christ's confining his appearance, after his resurrection, to his disciples and friends.

Ver. 4. *That they should not depart, &c.*] This seems a plain intimation that, after our Lord had met his disciples in Galilee, he appointed the apostles to meet him in Jerusalem, or perhaps accompanied them thither, and as man spent his last days on earth there; doing his last honour to the place where the Godhead had in a peculiar sense chosen to dwell, and where the most solemn ordinances of his worship had been administered. There is nothing for the words *saiſt he*, in the original, but they are plainly implied, and we have many examples in the best Greek writers of such a change in the persons speaking. Many others occur in the sacred writers. Compare Luke, v. 14. Acts, xvii. 3. xxiii. 22. Gen. xxvi. 7. Deut. ii. 13. This is the rather to be observed, as it may account for many prophecies of Christ in the Old Testament, where he is introduced as speaking on a sudden in an abrupt manner; which is not so usual in modern and wettin writers.

Ver. 5. *Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost*] Baptism was a rite of initiation, by which disciples were admitted not only among the Jews, but also among other nations. John the Baptist adopted this rite after the Jewish manner, making use of *water* for this purpose: but Christ's disciples being designed for an office of a superior nature, to disseminate the gospel all over the world, and to govern the church of Christ after his departure, were instated and initiated into their office in a superior manner, God himself sending down the *Holy Ghost* in a visible form for this purpose. But something more than the mere consecration of the apostles was intended by this miraculous appearance; for, by these means, he gave testimony to the truth of all that Christ had said to the apostles: he declared, that whatsoever they should teach was the effect of immediate and intallible inspiration; and he gave them both knowledge of the divine will, and courage to preach it, in opposition to every obstacle which power, or wealth, or learning, or danger, or death, could throw in their way

Ver. 6-8. *Lord, wilt thou at this time, &c.*] The disciples seem to have expected, that, when the Spirit was in so extraordinary a manner poured out, and the world, according

the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9^p And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 ¶ And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

12 ¶ Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

13 And, when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode

* Luke, 24. 47, 48. Mark, 16. 15. Mat. 28. 19. Ver. 22. Ch. 2. 32. & 3. 15. & 4. 33. & 10. 39, 41. John, 15. 27. Rom. 10. 18. & 15. 19. Ch. ii.—xiii. ^p Mark, 16. 19. Luke, 24. 50, 51. John, 6. 62. Mat. 17. 5. ^q Mat. 17. 2. & 28. 3. Luke, 24. 4. John, 20. 12. ^r Ch. 2. 7. & 13. 31. ^s Mat. 20. 6. Luke, 24. 5. ^t Dan. 7. 13. Pl. 47. 5. with Mat. 25. 31. ^u 1 Theff. 4. 16. ^v 1 Theff. 1. 7, 8, 10. ^w 1 Theff. 1. 10. Rev. 1. 7. ^x Mat. 24. 3. & 26. 30. Zech. 14. 4. Luke, 21. 37. & 24. 52. ^y About a mile, or perhaps more. Luke, 24. 50. John, 11. 18. ^z Ch. 20. 8. & 9. 37, 39. Luke, 22. 12. & 24. 53. John, 20. 19, 26.

according to Christ's prediction (John, xvi. 8.) *convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment*, the whole nation of the Jews would own him for the Messiah, and so not only throw off its subjection to the Romans, but itself rise to very extensive and perhaps universal dominion. The word ἀποκαθίσταεις, rendered *wilt thou restore*, intimates the shattered and weakened state in which Israel now was. Dr. Heylin renders the clause more properly, *Wilt thou re-establish the kingdom of Israel at that time?* namely, when they should be baptized, as was promised just before. Our Lord's answer, though calculated to repress an improper curiosity, yet may intimate, that the kingdom should at length be restored, though not immediately, or with all the circumstances which they imagined. "It will not be of any use to you, in your work, to know the times or the seasons for the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Besides, this is one of the things which the Father hath thought fit to conceal from mortals in the abysses of Omniscience. This only is of importance for you to know, that you shall receive miraculous powers after the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and that by these powers you shall bear witness unto me with great success."

Ver. 9. *A cloud received him, &c.*] That is, some bright appearance like a cloud, accompanied by angels. It was for majesty, and not for necessity, that our Lord used the ministrations of angels on this occasion. See 2 Kings, ii. 11. Our Lord ascended into heaven from the mount of Olives, at or near the place where he had been apprehended and bound, and whence he had been led away like a felon to be tried for his life, insulted, scourged, and condemned to crucifixion. He now goes off in triumph from the same mountain into a place and state worthy of his innocence and infinite dignity. See the note on Luke, xxiv. 50. and the Reflections on that chapter.

Ver. 10, 11. *Behold two men, &c.*] Two angels in human form. As Christ's resurrection had been honoured with the appearance of angels, it is natural to expect that his ascension into heaven would be so likewise. The angels spake of our Lord's coming to judge the world at the last day, a description of which he himself had given in his life-time: *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels.* Matth. xvi. 27. Wherefore the cloud whereon our Lord now ascended, being the same

with that in which he is to come again, was more bright and pure than the clearest lambent flame; for it was the *glory of God*, that is, the *Shechinah*, or visible symbol of the divine presence, which appeared to the patriarchs in ancient times, which filled the temple at its dedication, 2 Chron. vii. 3. and which cannot be beheld in its greatest splendour by mortal eyes. As our Lord ascended up into the skies, the flaming cloud which surrounded him, leaving a large track of light behind it, marked his passage through the air, but gradually lost its magnitude in the eyes of those who stood below, till, soaring high, he and it vanished out of their sight. In this illustrious manner did our Saviour depart, after having finished the grand work which he came down upon earth to execute; a work which God himself, in the remotest eternity, contemplated with pleasure, which angels antiently with joy described as to happen, and which, through all eternity to come, shall, at periods the most immensely distant from the time of its execution, be looked back upon with inexpressible delight by every inhabitant of heaven: for, though the little affairs of time may vanish altogether and be lost, when they are removed far back by the endless progression of duration, this object is such, that no distance, however great, can lessen it. The kingdom of God is erected upon the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God,—the kingdom and city of God, comprehending all the holy and faithful beings that have been, or ever shall be, in the universe, made happy by goodness and love; and therefore none of them can ever forget the foundation on which their happiness stands firmly established. In particular, the faithful of the human species, recovered by this labour of the Son of God, will view their Deliverer, and look back on his stupendous undertaking, with high ravishment, while they are feasting without interruption on its sweet fruits, ever growing more delicious. The other holy and faithful members of this city of God will likewise contemplate it with perpetual pleasure, as the happy means of recovering their faithful kindred who were lost, and as a grand confirmation of the whole rational and divine system, in their subjection to him *who liveth and reigneth for ever, and whose favour is better than life.*

Ver. 12. *A sabbath day's journey.*] That is, about a mile. See the note on Luke, xxiv. 50.

Ver. 13, 14. *They went up into an upper room,*] This might

both ² Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James.

14 ^a These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

15 ¶ And in those days ^b Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the ^c names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

16 Men *and* brethren, ^d this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, who was guide to them that

took Jesus.

17 For he was ^e numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ^f ministry.

18 ^g Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and ^h falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; infomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20 For it is written in the book of Pſalms, ⁱ Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his ^k bishoprick let another take.

21 Wherefore of these men who have com-

^a Mat. 10. 2-4. Mark. 6. 16-19. Luke. 6. 14-16. Jude 1. ^b Luke. 5. 35. & 24. 53. & 23. 49. John. 20. 25. Mat. 13. 55. & 27. 55, 56. Ch. 2. 7. 42, 46. ^c John. 18. 27. & 21. 15-17. ^d Persons. Rev. 3. 4. & 11. 13. ^e Pſ. 41. 9. & 55. 12-14. John. 13. 18. & 18. 2-11. with Ch. 2. 23. & 4. 27. 28. & 13. 27. ^f John. 6. 70, 71. Mat. 10. 4. Luke. 6. 16. Ver. 25. ^g Ch. 12. 25. & 20. 24. & 21. 19. ^h Mat. 27. 5-10. & 26. 15. 2 Pet. 2. 15. ⁱ Mat. 27. 5. Pſ. 55. 15, 23. ^j Pſ. 69. 25. & 119. 8. ^k Or office, or charge of oversight. Ch. 10. 28. 1 Pet. 5. 2.

might be rendered *into the upper room*. There was in Jerusalem an upper room in which the apostles had been used to assemble with their Lord, where they had eaten the last supper with him, and where perhaps they had assembled since his resurrection, and been favoured with his company. Such a room many of the richer and more devout Jews used to have in their houses for religious exercises. Some say, that this room where the apostles assembled, was upon mount Sion, where Epiphanius asserts there was afterwards a Christian church built: that the gospel should go out from mount Sion, was agreeable to the prophecies, Isai. ii. 3. Mic. iv. 2. See also the note on Luke, xxiv. 52.

Ver. 15. *The number of the names, &c.*] Of the persons. See Rev. ch. iii. 4. and Virg. Æn. vi. ver. 763. *An hundred and twenty* was the number of a Jewish council. It is very likely that most of the disciples who met our Lord in Galilee after his resurrection, did either live in Galilee, in the remotest parts of Judea, or in Samaria, and were not now in Jerusalem.

Ver. 16. *Men and brethren,*] Literally, *men brethren*. So chap. ii. 29. See chap. vii. 2. Some have taken this for a Hebraism; and it is true, that it was usual with the Hebrews; but it was used also by the politest Greeks,—Xenophon, Homer, Herodotus, &c. Instead of *must needs have been fulfilled*, Dr. Heylin reads *must be fulfilled*. His place must be supplied by a new election, as in the sequel. See ver. 20.

Ver. 18. *Now this man purchased a field, &c.*] It means, *Occasioned the purchasing a field*. It is worth observing, that an action is sometimes said in scripture to be done by a person who was the occasion of doing it. See Gen. xlii. 38. Exod. xxiii. 8. Rom. xiv. 15. 1 Cor. vii. 16. and 1 Tim. iv. 16. To what has been said in the note on Matthew, xxvii. 5. on the death of Judas, we subjoin the following observations of different writers. Casaubon observes, that Judas hanged himself; but the rope breaking, he fell down,

and, by the fall, broke his belly. He supposes therefore, that St. Matthew relates only the beginning of the history, and St. Luke the conclusion. Stephanus, in his Lexicon, says, that when Judas had put the rope about his neck, throwing himself forward from the place where he stood, he burst his belly by the shock which he received; and with this opinion Dr. Whitby seems to agree. Heinſius interprets the word ἀπὸ ψυχῆς in Matthew, *he was suffocated by the anguish of his mind*; to which he applies what is said by the LXX. 2 Sam. xvii. 23. and Job, vii. 15. and adds, “such a suffocation is wont to occasion a rupture;” which he thinks is applicable to St. Luke’s account. Gronovius understands the word to signify *he hung himself*, but then he interprets the expression ὡρῶν, ἐγίνετο, *falling headlong*, in a passive sense, as if Judas’s body, when dead, was cut down by some other person, and so burst by the fall. Lastly, Perizonius, agreeing with Heinſius, understands St. Matthew as speaking only of a suffocation arising from a melancholy disorder; which sense of the word he proves from a variety of examples. But then he supposes, that this did not kill Judas, who afterwards threw himself down from an eminence upon his face, and broke his belly by the fall; which is what is referred to by St. Luke.

Ver. 19. *And it was known, &c.*] Aringhſius mentions a funeral inscription dug up in the *Via Nomentana*, by which it appears that the fate of Judas became a proverbial form of cursing. See his *Roma Subterranea*, p. 436. The best critics seem universally to read this verse in a parenthesis, considering it not as the words of St. Peter, but of the historian. Dr. Lightfoot conjectures, that the *father’s field* was the place where Judas hanged himself; and that it was not only bought with the money for which Judas had sold his Master, but stained also with the traitor’s blood. See on Matth. xxvii. 7, 8.

Ver. 20. *And his bishoprick let another take.*] *And let another take his office.* Heylin.

panied with us ' all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a ^m witness with us of his resurrection.

23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord,

^m which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25 That he may take part of ^o this ministry and apostleship, from which ^r Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26 ^r And they gave forth their lots ; and the lot fell upon Matthias ; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

¹ Mat. iii.—xxviii. Mark, i.—xvi. Luke, ii.—xxiv. John, i.—xxi. Ver. 9. 31. 21. 1 Sam. 16. 7. Pl. 7. 9. & 44. 21. & 94. 9—11. Prov. 15. 11. John, 2. 24, 25. ^o Ver. 17, 20. Pl. 109. 8. ^r Ver. 16—21. Lev. 16. 8.

^m Ver. 8. Ch. 2. 32. & 10. 39, 41. & 13. 31. Heb. 2. 3. ^o Deut. Jer. 11. 20. & 17. 10. & 20. 12. Ch. 15. 8. Heb. 4. 13. Rev. 9. 13. Mat. 26. 14—16, 24. & 27. 3—5. ^r Prov. 16. 33. 1 Chr. 24. 5.

Ver. 22. Must one be ordained, &c.] They must reasonably and modestly conclude, that it was fit the number of apostles whom Christ first chose, should be kept up, perhaps in allusion to the twelve tribes of Israel. But it is impossible, as well as quite unnecessary, that we at this distance of time should be able to assign a reason why the two afterwards mentioned, and no more, were proposed as candidates. Perhaps a longer and more intimate acquaintance with our Lord, might entitle them to a preference on this occasion.

Ver. 23. Joseph called Barsabas, &c.] That this Joseph was a different person from *Joses*, surnamed *Barnabas*, mentioned ch. iv. 36. will appear more than probable, when it has been considered, *first*, that the character of *Barnabas* is given chap. iv. as if he had no where been mentioned before : *secondly*, this Joseph was surnamed *Justus* ; but we no where find that *Barnabas* was so named.

Ver. 24. Which knowest the hearts] See Prov. xv. 11. 1 Sam. xvi. 7. Jerem. xvii. 10.

Ver. 25. That he might go to his own place.] That is, to the place and state of lost souls. It was a maxim among the Jews, " He who betrayeth an Israelite, shall have no " part in the world to come." The term *his own place*, or *his due or appointed place*, was very frequently used by the primitive Christians, who meant thereby to express a man's going presently after death into his proper place and state of happiness or misery. In the epistle ascribed to Barnabas, it is said, that good men go to the place appointed for them ; and Clemens Romanus observes, that St. Peter suffered martyrdom, and went into the place of glory which was due to him, that is, *his own*, through the Blood of Christ. Ignatius says, " all things have an end ; death " and life are set before us, and every one must go unto " his own place." Compare with this, what our Lord himself had said of Judas, Matth. xxvi. 24. John, vi. 70, 71. and xvii. 12. The word rendered *part* is κληρον, which signifies a lot, and may refer to the lots mentioned in the next verse.

Ver. 26. And they gave forth, &c.] This was, no doubt, most impartially adjusted, though we know not in what particular method. The honour which God had in peculiar instances conferred on inquiries by lot, (see Josh. vii. 14, 15. 1 Sam. x. 20, 21.) and the custom of fixing the offices of the priests in the temple, while in waiting there, by lot,

(1 Chron. xxiv. 5—7. and Luke, i. 9.) might lead them to this turn of thought ; or, very probably, they might have received an express revelation from heaven in respect to their mode of proceeding. Thus the number of the apostles of the circumcision was filled up again before the effusion of the Holy Spirit,—that the Spirit might fall on Matthias in the same manner as upon the other eleven ; and that he might not only have like spiritual gifts, and miraculous powers, but that they might be conferred at the same time, and in the same conspicuous and honourable manner.

Inferences drawn from the character and conduct of Judas Iscariot. We have already made some reflections on the history of Judas. See on Matth. xxvi. &c. From that character and conduct we now further observe, there arises " a strong proof of the truth of the Christian religion." For in Judas we have a man, who in three respects particularly answers three distinct and most remarkable prophecies, and who, being thoroughly acquainted with the most secret conduct and views of the Lord Jesus, was therefore capable of detecting any fraud or imposture which might have been supposed to be carrying on by him ;—and yet this man, after having delivered up Christ through the strength of the temptations of avarice, ambition, and resentment, no sooner finds the consequence of what he had done, than his conscience, taking the alarm, makes him in the strongest manner retract, and attest his Master's innocence, before those very rulers, to whom he had betrayed him but a few hours before ; and to whom it is evident he had made no discovery of imposture, since they would not have failed, as well to have reproached him with it when he returned the money, as to have urged it against Jesus upon his trial, which yet they never did : and this man, finding that his retracting his evidence, or at least declaring the innocence of Jesus, had no effect with the chief priests, speedily put an end to a miserable being in an excess of grief and remorse. *I have sinned*, cried he, *in that I have betrayed the innocent blood !* an attestation to the innocence of Christ, so circumstanced, that it is scarcely possible to suppose a stronger ; which nothing but the most thorough conviction could have extorted, as nothing but the deepest remorse could have hurried him on to so desperate a death, which, according to the idea of the Talmudists, was the punishment

CHAP. II.

The apostles, filled with the Holy Ghost, and speaking divers languages, are admired by some; but are derided by others, whom Peter confutes, shewing that the apostles spake by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus was risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, had poured down the same Holy Ghost, and was the Messias, known to them to be approved of God by his miracles, wonders, and signs: a great number that were converted, are baptized, who afterwards devoutly and charitably converse together, the apostles working many miracles, and God daily increasing his church.

[Anno Domini 33.]

AND when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one

^a Deut. 16. 19. Lev. 23. 15, 26. Numb. 28. 26. ^b Ch. 1. 13, 15. Ver. 46. Zeph. 3. 9. Luke, 24. 53. Neh. 4. 9. & 6. 3. ^c Ch. 4. 31. & 1. 8. Luke, 24. 49. John, 3. 8. Ezek. 37. 9. ^d Ver. 4, 6, 8. Ch. 10. 46. & 15. 8. ^e Mat. 3. 11. Jer. 23. 29. ^f Joel, 2. 28. Is. 44. 3—5. Ch. 1. 5. & 11. 15. John, 14. 16, 26. & 15. 26. & 16. 7. & 20. 22. Mark, 16. 17. Pl. 8. 2. 2 Pet. 1. 21. Ch. 10. 45, 46. & 19. 6. 1 Cor. xii. xiv. ^g Exod. 23. 16, 17. & 34. 23. Rev. 23. 15—21. 1 Pet. 1. 1.

accord in one place.

2 ^c And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared unto them ^d cloven tongues like as of ^e fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4 ^f And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5 ^g And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

punishment usually inflicted by the divine vengeance on such persons as bore false witness against their neighbours.

And Judas bore false witness against his Master and his God! Stirred up to a deed so execrable, by the vile temptation of miserable covetousness, he followed the blessed Jesus, not to partake of the riches of his spiritual kingdom, but in hopes of temporal power and wealth. As soon as he perceived the golden dreams vanish which he had formed, that there was no hope of temporal advantage from Christ, nay, that Christ was privy to the secret designs of his malevolent heart, full of resentment for his disappointed purposes, he, for a few silver pence, betrays his Master, whose innocence he perfectly knew, whose power he had fully experienced, and whose goodness and love had charms enough, one should think, to have engaged any heart but a covetous one.

And how do we see the crime of Judas, black and horrid as it is, daily re-acted upon earth, and repeated among professing disciples of Christ! How many are there, who prefer gold and temporal interest to their God, their Saviour, and their souls, and, strangely perverse, set so exorbitant a value on the gifts, as to forget, as to despise, as to betray the Giver! *Covetousness* is a crime above measure odious in the sight of God; whose liberal bounty freely extended to all his creatures, abundantly shews his abhorrence of it. Christ has given a particular charge against it, "Take heed and beware of covetousness." St. Paul has stigmatized it with the opprobrious name of idolatry. It robs God of the heart; it robs our fellow-creatures of their due; it injures the poor and afflicted; and, what is worst of all, it robs the soul of everlasting bliss. *Take heed therefore, and beware of covetousness.*

One powerful reason to incline us to do so,—a reason which should make the covetous heart bleed drops of blood, is, that the most execrable and horrid villany that ever was thought of, ever was heard of under the sun, was owing to covetousness; namely, the betraying to crucifixion the innocent Lamb of God. Nor let us suppose ourselves above the power of this lust; for who shall presume to be secure, when a disciple, an apostle, a preacher of righteous-

ness, a worker of miracles, was yet seduced to sell his Master and his soul upon so sordid a consideration as thirty pices of silver! This ought to put us all upon our guard; and the fate of Judas stands as a monument and perpetual admonition to all who make gold their god, and the fine gold their confidence.

We may observe again with respect to Judas, that, though never conscience was more distressed than his, yet was his sorrow wholly unavailing; and that for this plain reason, because he would not, he could not, (given over, as he then was, to a reprobate mind) fly for mercy to the blessed Lamb of God. Convinced that he had betrayed that Lamb to his crucifiers, and conceiving that there could be no grace for a wretch like him, he abandoned himself to all the horrors of despair, and, full of his own aggravated guilt, could bear the light no longer, but rushed from temporal into eternal punishment. For *repentance* by no means consists solely in, nor is its truth and efficacy to be gathered merely from, the inward anguish and sufferings of the mind. It is possible that these may be the most intense, and yet the sorrow utterly inefficacious. For such was the case of Judas, and such has been the case of many despairing sinners: they have seen their own guilt in its utmost horror, and most aggravated circumstances; and may have been ready with Judas to make restitution of their ill-gotten gains, and freely to confess their fault: but then they have been devoid of that humble and earnest application to the bleeding Redeemer, which is the only source of hope to the repenting soul; and which, as it is the only means whereby we obtain pardon, so it is the only means which can prevent or cure despair. This teaches us the heinous, the unspeakable guilt of *self-murder*; which is a voluntary cutting ourselves off from all possibility of the Redeemer's mercy, a voluntary plunge into woe eternal, and misery unutterable. This fatal step for ever deprived Judas of hope and pardon, and he sunk into endless sorrow, and into the world of darkness, where there is no repentance, and where the doom is irrevocably sealed.

Upon the whole, from this example of Judas, we who, like him, are of the visible church of Christ, should take

6. Now * when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were ^b con-founded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

* Greek *when this voice was made.*

^b Or troubled in mind. Ver. 7. 12. Mat. 2. 3.

especial heed, that we deceive not ourselves by depending upon our outward privileges, while our hearts are not right before God, and our intentions are warped and biased by worldly attachments. It behoves us to be especially careful, that we adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by a suitable conduct; otherwise the excellence of our profession will serve only the more to enhance the severity of our future condemnation: and as Judas perished in the more extreme anguish, because he had been so particularly favoured by his Lord and Master, so shall we perish with aggravated confusion if we disobey a doctrine which is perfective of our highest happiness, and despise a Saviour who bled only to bless and to save. Judas could not bear the stings and arrows of his reproaching conscience; and all guilt, sooner or later, will find conscience as busy as it was with him. Let then the sinner reflect, who has lived days, and months, and years, in utter neglect of, the God who created him,—of the Redeemer who died for his soul.—Let him think, what extremity of anguish will seize his soul, when death gives the last summons, and the future world is opening on his view! Ungrateful to his Father, his Saviour, his immortal Friend; neglectful of his own infinitely valuable interest, enslaved to concupiscence and sin, every circumstance of condemnation will crowd upon his mind; while his affrighted and tormented conscience anticipates the punishment to come. Let no man doubt of that punishment; the despairing sinner is a living proof: he carries his own hell with him; a worm within, which never dieth; a flame which never shall be quenched. It can only *now* be quenched; and *now* quenched only by one sovereign stream, the precious blood which flowed from the Lamb of God, when, betrayed by his own familiar friend, he died a willing sacrifice for the sins of the world.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, St. Luke, the supposed penman of this book, addresses it, as he had done his gospel, to Theophilus his noble catechumen.

1. He reminds him of the former treatise which he had written for his edification and instruction, containing an account of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, laying the foundation of that Christian church on which they were to build, *until the day in which he was taken up*, continuing to instruct them in the nature of his kingdom, *after that he, through the Holy Ghost, which the Father gave without measure unto him, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen*, commissioning them to preach his gospel, and, according to the plenitude of his power, enabling them for the arduous work. *Note*; They who *teach*, must *do*: a minister's practice must be correspondent with his precepts.

2. He mentions some of those many infallible signs which Jesus gave of his resurrection. He shewed himself to his disciples alive, convinced them fully of the identity of his person, was seen of them several times, in different places, during the forty days that he continued on earth;

ate, drank, and conversed freely with them, instructing them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, informing them of the nature of his kingdom, the powers they should be endued with, the success of their ministry, and the glory which was prepared for all the faithful.

3. Christ ordered them, at one of their solemn meetings, not to depart from Jerusalem, whither they had probably come from Galilee, after they had seen him on the mountain where he appointed them to meet him; *but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me, fully and confidently expecting that Spirit whom the ancient prophecies had foretold should be abundantly poured out in the days of the Messiah, and of whom he had so often spoken to them before his departure, as the Comforter whom he would send unto them from the Father, to enable them for the glorious work which was before them. For John truly baptized with water, and that was all he pretended to do; but ye, according to his declarations, shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence; receiving such abundant measures of light, grace, wisdom, courage, and utterance, as effectually to carry them through every difficulty, and make them successful in spreading the gospel, in defiance of all opposition. Note*; We must patiently wait, and then we shall assuredly see the salvation of God.

2dly, The apostles had not yet quite dropped their expectations of the Messiah's temporal kingdom, and the resurrection of Jesus probably flattered them with new hope.

1. They put the question therefore to him, whether at this time he would restore again the kingdom to Israel, raising the Jewish people to the highest pitch of grandeur, and bringing all the kingdoms of the earth in subjection to them: so hard is it to eradicate early prejudices.

2. Christ checks their vain curiosity. And, as the Spirit, which should be given them, would shortly rectify these mistakes, he tells them it was not for them to know the times or the seasons when those great expected revolutions should be brought about, *which the Father hath put in his own power, and which are secrets concealed in the divine mind. Note*; (1.) Secret things belong unto God. Curiosity to be wise above what is written, is foolish as well as fruitless. (2.) The uncertainty in which it has pleased God to leave us concerning future events, is graciously ordered, to the intent that we might be always prepared for that which God hath prepared for us.

3. He assures them, that poor, illiterate, and despicable instruments as they appeared, they should be endued with the most astonishing spiritual powers, through the mighty influence of the Holy Ghost, which should come upon them; when filled with zeal, courage, and wisdom, which none of their adversaries could gainsay or resist, they should be witnesses unto him, asserting his character as the divine Messiah, bearing testimony to his resurrection, publishing the glad tidings of salvation through his name, and confirming the truth of their words by the attestation

of

7 And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these who speak Galileans?

8 And how hear we every man in and were tongue, wherein we were born? ^{Hebrew} Parthians, and ^{Medes} Medes, and ^{Elam} Elam.

¹ Ver. 12. Ch. 3. 10. & 4. 13. & 1. 10, 11.
² Ver. 7. Luke, 1. 34. ³ If. 21. 2. Dan. 5. 28.

⁴ Mat. 4. 18—22. Mark, 2. 13, 14. John, 1. 43—46. & 7. 52. Luke, 13. 1, 2. Ch. 1. 46.

of the most amazing miracles; beginning at Jerusalem, then going to the Samaritans, among whom, before, they had been withheld from preaching; and afterwards spreading the glorious gospel to the ends of the earth, not only among the dispersed Jews, but among the Gentiles also. *Note*; Gospel ministers must preach Jesus Christ, bearing witness to his grace and glory, and publishing to all, the free and full redemption, which is obtained for lost sinners through his infinite merit and intercession.

4. *When he had spoken these things, while they beheld, earnestly regarding him, and duly attentive to the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, he was taken up; and with eager looks they followed him, till a cloud received him out of their sight; and, amid congratulating angels, he ascended to the throne of his glory. May I follow thee, Lord, with the eyes of faith now, and, when it shall please thee, ascend to behold thee face to face.*

5. An angelic vision appears to them, as they stood gazing towards heaven after their dear Lord as he went up, willing to catch the last possible glimpse of him, and keeping still their eyes fixed on the place where he became invisible to them. Two celestial spirits in human forms, arrayed in white apparel, the emblem of their purity and grandeur, stood by them, and kindly addressed them, saying, *Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven, as if you expected your Lord and Master to return quickly to you? This same Jesus, which was delivered for your offences, and died on a tree, and is now taken up from you into heaven, and exalted to the mediatorial throne, shall so come in like manner, at the last day of his appearing and glory, in the clouds of heaven, attended by his angelic hosts, as ye have seen him go into heaven.* O that we may be ready to meet him in that great day! O that the expectation of it may powerfully and continually influence our minds!

3dly, We have,

1. The place whence our Lord ascended, *the mount Olivet*, about a mile from Jerusalem. There his sufferings began in the garden, and thence he entered into his glory as a triumphant conqueror, in full view of that devoted city, for which judgment was now prepared.

2. The return of the disciples. They came back to the city according to their Master's orders, and when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, for greater secrecy. In that room probably they chiefly spent their time, with one accord, in prayer and supplications for the coming of that Comforter who was promised. The eleven apostles are particularly mentioned, all of whom kept close together, with the women, who had approved their fidelity, love, and zeal, in a very distinguished manner, and *Mary the mother of Jesus*, concerning whom we hear no more mention ever after; and *his brethren*, those of Christ's kinsmen who now believed on him, (see Matth. xiii. 55, 56.) with many others. *Note*; (1.) It is good for the disciples of

Jesus to unite together: the world is closely leagued against them. They need therefore maintain the closest fellowship with each other. (2.) Prayer is the blessed and constant employment of God's people; and especially in all seasons of particular trial, when their faith and patience are called into exercise, they have need to redouble their supplications. (3.) Nothing can be denied to the united prayers of the faithful, who, with one accord, surround a throne of grace in the name of Jesus.

4thly, At one of those solemn meetings, where about a hundred and twenty of the disciples were assembled, Peter, the zealous servant of his Lord, stood up in the midst of them; not affecting to sit, as their master or superior, but proposing a matter to them as his equals. We have,

1. His speech. He addresses them as his friends, companions, and brethren in Christ; and having an important proposal to make to them, he reminds them of the fulfilment of the scripture in the wickedness and miserable end of Judas the traitor. As aggravations of his guilt, St. Peter observes,

[1.] The high dignity to which he was advanced. *He was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry; and this but the more aggravated his sin and ruin.* *Note*; Many are numbered with us, who are not of us; but a name to live, while persons are really dead in trespasses and sins, will avail nothing.

[2.] His sin was treachery. He was guide to them that took Jesus; a ringleader in iniquity, as apostates usually prove.

[3.] His end was notorious. His money, the wages of unrighteousness, served only to buy a field to bury strangers in; and, driven by the devil and a despairing conscience, he went and hanged himself: when the rope, or the place on which he hung, giving way, he fell; and his belly bursting asunder, his bowels gushed out; a fearful exit! of which great notice was deservedly taken; the fact being publicly known in Jerusalem, and noised abroad, inasmuch that the people called the field purchased by this money, *Aceldama*, or *The field of blood*, with respect to the innocent blood, of which it was the price; perpetuating thereby the infamy, not only of the traitor who sold his Master, but of the rulers who tempted him to this atrocious deed. [See the Annotations.]

[4.] He cites the book of Psalms, in which the prophecy relating to Judas was found. *Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein*, Psal. lxxix. 25. *and his bishoprick let another take*, Psal. cix. 8.

[5.] He proposes to them, according to this prophetic word, that the sacred college should be filled up by the addition of one to their number, out of those who had approved themselves from the beginning faithful; and had been among the first who followed Jesus, and privy to all the transactions concerning him, from the time when he was baptized of John in Jordan, till his ascension to glory; that

and the dwellers in ^a Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and ^o Cappadocia, in Pontus, and ^p Asia,

to ^q Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in ^r Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of ^s Rome, ^t Jews and proselytes,

^a Ch. 7. 2. Judges, 3. 8. ^o 1 Pet. 1. 7. 15. 21. Ch. 6. 9.

^p Ch. 18. 2. & 21. 11.

^q Ch. 16. 6. Rev. 1. 11. ^r Ch. 16. 6. & 13. 13.

^s Exod. 12. 47—49. ^t If. 56. 6, 8.

^u Exod. 1. 1. Ezck. 38. 5. Mark,

that he might with them be a *witness of his resurrection*, of that grand article of faith, as well as of all the other glorious things relative to Christ's divine mission and character. *Note*; (1.) None should be admitted into the ministry, but such as for a season have proved their fidelity to Christ, in a course of holy walking with him. (2.) They who have known Christ, and the power of his resurrection in their souls, cannot but make him the subject of all their discourses.

2. The church, approving the proposal, nominated two, Joseph and Matthias; and not knowing which to prefer, they applied to God, the Searcher of hearts, by prayer for direction, that he would be pleased to shew them which of these he had chosen to take part of that ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place, the dire abode prepared for fallen angels and rebellious sinners. *Note*; In our emergencies, we should never fail to look up to God for direction. Having commended the matter to God's determination, they solemnly cast lots; when the Lord, at whose disposal the lot is, Prov. xvi. 33. appointed Matthias, who was thenceforward numbered with the eleven apostles.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come,] It has often been observed, that as our Lord was crucified at one of the great Jewish feasts, it was fit that he should be glorified at another; and this of Pentecost was chosen, with peculiar propriety, as next succeeding that of the passover at which Christ suffered; and also as it was celebrated in commemoration of the giving the law from mount Sinai on that day, (Exod. xix. 1—11.) and as the first-fruits were then offered and anointed, (Exod. xxiii. 16. Lev. xxiii. 17.) To these answered the fuller discovery of the gospel on this occasion, and the anointing the first-fruits of the Christian church by the effusion of the Spirit. The solemnity of the feast, the general expectation of the Messiah, and the length of the days, as it was about the middle of summer, would no doubt bring great numbers to Jerusalem at that time; who, when they returned home, and reported this great event, would naturally make way for the better reception of the apostles, when they came among them. The Jews used to begin their days, as we have often observed, about six o'clock in the evening, and reckoned till that time the next evening, according to Gen. i. 5. By saying therefore that *the day of Pentecost was fully come*, St. Luke meant that the night was past, and the light of the next morning begun. This was the first day of the week, or the Lord's day, as it is called Rev. i. 10. On the first day of the week our Lord arose from the dead. On that day of the week he appeared to his apostles when they were assembled, for two weeks successively; and, on the first day of the week, the Holy Spirit was first poured out upon the apostles and their company. On that day

of the week the apostles and primitive Christians used to assemble for religious worship; and, from the custom and example of those who must needs have known the mind and will of Christ, the Christian church still continues to assemble on that day for religious worship. St. Luke says, they were all *with one accord in one place*. It is said, ch. i. 14, 15. of all the hundred and twenty, *all these met with one accord*, to choose an apostle, &c. The history is continued, as would appear more plainly if we had not divided it into chapters and verses;—and of the same company it is here said again, they were all *met together with one accord in the same place*, (for so it should be rendered,) when the Holy Spirit was poured down upon them. It is probable all these hundred and twenty were along with the apostles, when the Holy Spirit was poured down a second time, ch. iv. 23—31. and it is evident from ch. vi. 3. that several beside the apostles were full of the Holy Spirit, (which is the very phrase in the text, ver. 4.) when the Spirit was now poured out;—a phrase, which, in other places, signifies that the Spirit was conferred in the most honourable manner, as well as in a greater degree; that is, that it was given immediately from heaven, and not by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. Again, Why might not the Holy Spirit fall down upon all the hundred and twenty, as well as upon Cornelius and his company? ch. x. 44—46. What seems much to confirm this account of the presence of the hundred and twenty, is St. Peter's speech, ver. 16. where he asserts, that, by that effusion of the Holy Spirit, the prophecy of Joel was accomplished, in which it was foretold, that the Spirit should be poured out upon women as well as upon men, &c. For one cannot conceive how that prophecy could be already fulfilled, unless the Spirit was shed upon all the hundred and twenty; among whom it is expressly said, ch. i. 14. there was Mary the mother of Jesus, and some other women, who were Christ's disciples. It may perhaps be objected to this interpretation, that the apostles had the highest and the most of the spiritual gifts, and are taken notice of as the only persons who preached to the multitude which then came together. Now it is allowed, that the apostles had the most, and the best of the gifts of the Spirit; but, notwithstanding, the other disciples might have some inferior gifts, and those granted at the same time, in what measure and proportion God saw fit; for there were diversities of gifts and operations, though they all proceeded from one and the same Spirit; and the Spirit could easily distinguish between the apostles and others, though they were all in the same room and company.

Ver. 2. And suddenly there came a sound] It was about 1500 years before this, and, as many think, on this very day of the year, that the law was given of God from Mount Sinai, in the sight and hearing of all Israel; and attended not only with a visible glory, but with pomp also and terror; and now the new law of grace is given to the apostles

11 * Cretes and * Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

12 * And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

* Ch. 27. 7. Titus, 1. 5, 12.

* Gal. 4. 25. & 1. 17.

† Ch. 10. 38—48. & 1. 1—3, 22. & 3. 13. Ver. 22—24.

‡ Ver. 6, 7. Luke,

apostles upon mount Sion; (see on ch. i. 13.) attended likewise with a glory, but communicated, agreeably to the nature of it, in a much more mild, gentle, and familiar manner. For, while they were big with expectations of their ascended Lord's fulfilling his promise, in sending down the so-often mentioned gift of the Holy Spirit, there came all on a sudden a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, which filled the whole house where they were assembled, as their doctrine was afterwards to fill the whole earth. When Moses had finished all things according to the pattern shewn him on the mount, it is said, Exod. xl. 34, 35. that a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle; and when Solomon had finished the building of the temple, it is said that the cloud, &c. filled the house of the Lord. 1 Kings, viii. 10, 11. In like manner, when Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, it is said, that his train filled the temple, ch. vi. 1. But now the divine Presence had left the temple, and the glory of the Lord rested upon mount Sion, and filled the house where the apostles were assembled.

Ver. 3. *There appeared unto them cloven tongues*] Besides the great and indispensable use of the gift of tongues to the first preachers of the gospel, the elegance and propriety in the choice of this miracle to attest the real descent of that Spirit who was to teach us all things, can never be enough admired; for words being the human vehicle of knowledge, this appearance was the fittest precursor of the Spirit of truth. When the cloven tongues appeared upon each of the disciples, they were assembled together in a private room sequestered and apart; and it was not till the thing was noised abroad, and the multitude came together, to inquire into the truth of it, that the apostles spoke with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now between this visible descent of the Holy Spirit, and their speaking to the multitude, a considerable time intervened; sufficient to convince the apostles, from the steady duration of the appearance, that it was not natural, but miraculous; and this the original will express, properly rendered by the phrase of *SITTING upon each of them*; words so inconsistent with a momentary appearance, that it would be trifling with common sense to deduce such an interpretation from oblique circumstances, and collateral reasoning. It may not therefore be improper to consider the evangelical account of this visible descent with a little more exactness. In this place we see the fiery tongues are said to *fit upon each of them*; and other places of scripture, which mention the like descent of the Holy Spirit in a visible form, describe it in such terms as denote a very different appearance from a sudden flash of lightning. St. Matthew tells us, that the Spirit of God descended like a dove; as birds, when about to settle upon any thing, first hover upon it with quivering wings: it then lighted upon Jesus. So the same Spirit is said to descend under the appearance of

cloven tongues, like as of fire. In this descent, the motion, figure, and colour, are described; and the term of *cloven tongues*, which the sacred historian employs to describe the motion, proves it to be of some continuance. Let us observe, that the thing seen, *like as of fire*, on the heads of the apostles, was no more an elementary fire, than the thing seen *like a dove* on the head of Jesus, was a real dove; for, as only a dove-like motion is intimated in the latter expression, so only a flame-like motion is intimated in the former. And what this was, the historian tells us in effect;—the appearance of cloven tongues. The sudden flash of lightning exhibits to the eye of the beholder only a line of light, angularly broken into several directions, very different from the form of tongues, whether whole or divided. Whenever a flame assumes this appearance, it is become stationary, as this was, which the historian says *sat upon each of them*; and then, its natural motion being upwards, it represents, when divided length-wise, a pyramidal tongue-like figure cloven; a demonstration that the appearance in question was not momentary, but of some continuance. What in our English Bible is rendered *fire*, Isa. v. 24. is, in the original, *a tongue of fire*. Our old English version has preserved the allusion, and rendered the words *like as the fire lighteth up the straw*. *Tongues of fire* properly signify the points of flames, which move nimbly, and lick like tongues. The ancient Romans alluded to this when they spoke of *lambent flames*. Virgil's fiction, concerning the omen which happened to Iulus, is very pertinent to the present purpose:

Ecce levis summo de vertice visus Iuli
Fundere lumen apex, tactuque innoxia molli
Lambere flamma comas, et circum tempora pasci.
Æn. ii. line 682, &c.

Strange to relate, from young Iulus' head
A lambent flame arose, which gently spread
Around his brows, and on his temples fed.

DRYDEN.

This fire, or divine glory, resting upon the head of each of the persons there assembled, was a lively emblem of one of the most remarkable gifts then conferred. That the tongues were separated, might denote the multiplicity and variety of languages which they should be able to speak; though as all these proceeded from one and the same Spirit, they should all agree in their doctrines: and possibly to denote this unity of the Spirit, the singular *it*, namely, this fiery appearance, is used after the plural *tongues*. As the glory rested for some time upon them, it might shadow out the permanency of the gifts then bestowed; in which, as well as in many other particulars, they excelled the Old Testament prophets. Thus was John the Baptist's prediction fulfilled, that Christ should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, Matth. iii. 11. And as the division of tongues at Babel once introduced confusion, so now there

was

13 * Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

14 ¶ But ^b Peter, standing up with the eleven, ^c lifted up his voice, and said unto

* 1 Sam. 1. 14. Mat. 11. 19. 1 Cor. 2. 14.

^b John, 18. 27. Ch. 1. 15. Ver. 38. & 3. 12. & 4. 8.

^c If. 58. 1. Hosea, 8. 1.

was a remedy provided by the gift of tongues at Sion, to bring the Gentiles out of darkness unto light, and to destroy the veil which had been spread over all nations, *Isai. xxv. 7.*

*Ver. 4. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,] That is, "all the hundred and twenty." See on ver. 1. This effusion of the Spirit, particularly demonstrated in the gift of tongues, was intended not only as a sign of the apostles' inspiration at this period, but likewise designed for the use of the apostolic mission. Jesus himself expressly tells us so; for, on his leaving the world, he comforts his disciples with this promise: *But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me,—unto the uttermost parts of the earth.* This is recorded, *ch. i. 8.* by the evangelic writer, as an introduction to his narrative of the miraculous gift of tongues, which he considers as the completion of this promise; and that the *power to be received* was the power then given; the use of which, as we see, was to enable the disciples to become *witnesses unto him, unto the uttermost parts of the earth.* We find St. Paul had this *power*, not only in the fullest measure, but in a proportionable duration; for, endeavouring to moderate the excessive value which the Corinthians set upon *spiritual gifts*, he observes, that, with regard to the most splendid of them, the gift of tongues, he himself had the advantage of them all.—*I thank my God, says he, that I speak with tongues more than you all.* The occasion shews, that he considered this his acquirement as a *spiritual gift*; and his using the *present time* shews, that he spoke of it as then in his possession. But why did he *speak with more tongues than all of them*? For a good reason: he was to be the peculiar apostle of the Gentiles, and was to preach the gospel among remote and barbarous nations; which very circumstance rendered this endowment more necessary to him than the rest of the apostles, whose ministry was circumscribed within more narrow bounds.*

Ver. 5. There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, &c.] There were sojourning, &c. κατοικεῖντες. Devout or pious men, is a title applied not only to those religious persons who observed the Jewish law, but likewise to those Heathens who had renounced idolatry, and lived a life of piety and holiness. From every nation under heaven can signify no more than "from all the several nations among whom the Jews were dispersed." The Jews were then so numerous, as to have spread through every country; so that, as Agrippa, in Josephus, says, "there was not a people upon earth who had not Jews inhabiting among them." These men were come up to Jerusalem, not only upon account of the festival then celebrating, but in expectation of the Messiah, who was to be manifested about that time according to the concentring testimony of the prophets.

Ver. 6. Every man heard them speak, &c.] Some commentators of note, both ancient and modern, have maintained that they spoke only one language, that is, Hebrew, or Syro-Chaldaic; but that the people heard them every one in their own language. This is really making the mi-

racle consist in the *hearing*, and not in the *speaking*, and seems so groundless, that it does not need any laboured confutation. Our Saviour promised, *Mark, xvi. 17.* that they should speak with new tongues, &c. And St. Luke here plainly asserts, *ver. 4.* that they did *speak with other tongues*, or in other languages. The same thing is either supposed or plainly asserted by St. Paul, *1 Cor. xii. 10. 28. 30.* and *xiv. 2—39.* The mistake seems to have arisen from this and the 8th verse. But St. Luke did not intend to say, that any one of the apostles spoke more languages than one at a time, nor that they spoke one language, and the people heard one or many others; but his plain meaning is, that one of them spoke one language, and another another, and so on; and that different apostles addressed themselves to men of different nations at the same time; or that one apostle addressed himself to men of different nations one after another; by which means all the foreigners heard their own native language spoken distinctly and intelligibly; and not only the languages spoken, but the Christian doctrine also plainly delivered to them in their own language.

Ver. 7, 8. Are not all these—Galileans? &c.] See on Matth. xxvi. 73. and on John, i. 46. The word διαλέκτες, ver. 8. signifies not only what we call a dialect, or different way of speaking the same language, but also an entirely distinct language; and perhaps it may be used here to express the propriety and accuracy wherewith these low and uneducated Galileans spoke these different languages. The original in ver. 7. is very beautiful, and expressive of the astonishment of the hearers,—Οὐκ ἰδοὺ πάντες, &c.

Ver. 9. Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia,] Bishop Cumberland takes these to be the remainder of the Jews, who had been carried captive into Assyria, first by Tiglath-Pileser, and afterwards by Salmaneser, and placed in the cities of the Medes,—2 Kings, xvii. 6. See also Gen. x. 22.

*Ver. 10. Strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,] That is, Jews and proselytes who were by birth or habitation Romans, but now sojourned at Jerusalem. That there were great multitudes of Jews who dwelt at Rome, is evident not only from Josephus, but from Dio, Suetonius, Tacitus, and, I think we may say, all the Roman authors of that time, not excepting even the poets; and that there were not a few in that great city proselyted to the Jewish religion, sufficiently appears from the Satires of Horace, Juvenal, and Persius. *The wonderful works of God*, in the next verse, mean the several dispensations of God to mankind in the successive ages of the world, and particularly concerning the resurrection of Christ, and the Messiah's kingdom. The original is expressive,—τὰ μεγαλῆα τῆ Θεοῦ: as if the dispensation of God in Jesus, was the only *great and magnificent* work of God.*

Ver. 12. And were in doubt,] "And they were all in a mixture of amazement and perplexity."

Ver. 13. These men are full of new wine.] Though there was no must or new wine at Pentecost, yet if they pre-

ferred

them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words :

15 For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the * third hour of the day.

16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ;

17 ^d And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams :

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit ; and they shall prophesy :

19 ^e And I will shew wonders in heaven

above, and signs in the earth beneath ; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke :

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come :

21 ^f And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words ; ^g Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know :

23 ^h Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain :

* Nine o'clock forenoon. ^d If. 44. 3—5. Joel, 2. 28—32. Pf. 72. 6. Ezek. 11. 19. & 36. 27. Zech. 12. 10. John, 7. 38. Ch. 10. 40. & 21. 9, 10. & 11. 28. & 16. 9. ^e 1 Tim. 4. 1. 2 Tim. 3. 1—6. 2 Pet. 3. 3. 2 Cor. 12. 1. ^f Joel, 2. 30, 31. Mat. 24. 29. Luke, 21. 25. Mal. 4. 1, 5, 6. Zeph. 1. 14—17. ^g Joel, 2. 32. Rom. 10. 13. Ch. 9. 14, 15. & 13. 46—48. Mat. 24. 14. & 26. 13. & 28. 19. ^h Mat. 11. 4, 5. Luke, 7. 16. & 24. 19—21. John, 3. 2. & 5. 19, 26, 36. Heb. 2. 4. John, 10. 25, 38. & 14. 10, 11. & 15. 22—24. Ch. 10. 38. ⁱ Mat. 26. 24, 53. Luke, 22. 22, 53. John, 7. 30. & 8. 20. & 18. 11. & 19. 11. Ch. 4. 27, 28. & 3. 13—15, 18. & 5. 30. Rom. 4. 25. & 8. 32. 1 Pet. 2. 10. Mat. 20. 19. & 26. 45, 47.

served the wine cool, it kept sweet a long time, and tasted like *must*. So Plutarch ; “ *Must*, if a vessel be kept in a cool place, will continue *sweet*, γλυκὺν, for a long time.” Such wines were remarkably intoxicating. See Isai. xlix. 26. Sweet wine, such as the prophet there speaks of, was used in royal palaces for its gratefulness ; was capable of being kept to a great age, and consequently was very inebriating. A few generations ago, *sweet wines* were those most esteemed in England.

Ver. 14. *Dwell*] Sojourn.

Ver. 15. *Seeing it is but the third hour of the day.*] Such of the Jews as shamefully imitated their Heathen neighbours, and drank too largely at the festival, did not use to take such criminal liberties till after the sacrifices were offered, and the oblations made ; but the morning sacrifices had not been now offered, to which, as some think, St. Peter might allude. Josephus tells us, that, on the feast days, the Jews seldom ate or drank till noon ; which, if true, would render the calumny here referred to the more incredible.

Ver. 16. *This is that which was spoken, &c.*] Respecting this remarkable prophecy, we refer to the notes on Joel, ii. 28, &c. just observing, that if this miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit had not been foretold, the argument for the truth of Christianity from it, would have been fully conclusive ; but as it was referred to in the Old Testament, it might dispose the minds of the Jews still more to regard it, as it was indeed the more remarkable. The reader will not omit to compare the passages in the margin.

Ver. 19. *Vapour of smoke* :] *A cloud of smoke*. Doddridge ; who paraphrases the passage thus : “ Such destructive wars shall arise, as a punishment for the wickedness of those who reject the mercy I offer, that there shall be blood shed in abundance, and fire scattered abroad to consume your

cities and villages ; so that a cloud of smoke shall ascend from the ruins of them.

Ver. 21. *Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord.*] See Ezek. ix. 4, 5, 6. This context being quoted thus, was a strong intimation that nothing but their acceptance of the gospel could secure them from impending ruin. Brennius has proved, by an ample collection of texts, that *calling on the name of the Lord*, is often put for the whole of religion ; and if it do not here directly signify invoking Christ, which is sometimes used to express the whole of the Christian character, (Comp. Ch. ix. 14, 21. xxii. 16. Rom. x. 12, 13. and 1 Cor. i. 2.) it must imply, that it is impossible for any who reject him, to pray in an acceptable manner. How awful a reflection ! See the note on Joel, ii. 32.

Ver. 22. *A man approved of God among you*] “ *Recommended to you, ἀποδεικνυμενον εις υμας, pointed out to you, as the object of your highest admiration.*” Heylin reads it, *Whose divine authority was evidenced by God to you, in the powerful effects and wonders, &c.*

Ver. 23. *Him, being delivered, &c.*] The word ἠδδοτον, rendered *being delivered*, signifies one given or surrendered up into the hands of an enemy ; and St. Luke intimates by it the free and gracious donation of God the Father, whereby he delivered up his only begotten Son for the redemption of mankind. *By wicked hands* the Romans are meant, who were the immediate agents in the crucifixion of Christ, yet were only the instruments of the Jewish rage and cruelty in what they did. Heylin renders the verbe rather more clearly thus : *Him (who was given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God) you have taken and put to death upon the cross, by the hands of wicked men.* Pyle would read, *Him, who by the determinate counsel—of God, was given*

24¹ Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, ² I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26¹ Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer ^m thine Holy One to see corruption.

28² Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men *and* brethren, ^{*} let me freely speak unto you ^o of the patriarch David, that he is

both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, ^p and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31¹ He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32¹ This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof ^o we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore ¹ being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34 For David is not ascended into the

¹ Ver. 32. Ch. 3. 15. & 4. 10. & 10. 40. & 13. 30, 34. & 17. 31. Rom. 4. 24, 25. & 8. 11. 1 Cor. 6. 14. & 15. 15. Heb. 13. 20. 2 Cor. 4. 14. Eph. 1. 20. 1 Pet. 1. 21. 1 Theof. 3. 10. ² Pf. 16. 8—11. & 109. 31. & 131. 5. ¹ Pf. 16. 9, 10. Rom. 8. 31. ^m Dan. 9. 24. Luke. 1. 35. ² Pf. 16. 11. & 17. 15. & 21. 4—6. ^o Or I may. ^p Ch. 13. 36. 1 Kings, 2. 10. ¹ 2 Sam. 7. 12. 1 Chron. 22. 10. Pf. 132. 11. 1f. 9. 7. Luke, 1. 32, 33. John, 18. 36, 37. Rom. 1. 3, 4. & 9. 5. 1 Tim. 1. 17. Rev. 17. 14. & 19. 16. ² Pf. 16. 10. Ch. 13. 31. Ver. 27. ³ See ver. 24. 27. Ch. 3. 15, 26. Mat. xxviii. Mark, xvi. Luke, xxiv. John, xx. xxi. ⁴ See ch. 1. 8, 22. & 3. 15. & 5. 32. & 10. 39, 41. ⁵ Mark, 16. 19. Luke, 24. 49. John, 14. 16, 26. & 15. 26. & 16. 7—13. Ch. 1. 4, 8. & 10. 45. & 5. 31. Phil. 2. 9.

[to you as a Saviour], *ye have taken, and crucified.* See ch. iv. 27, 28.

Ver. 24. *Whom God hath raised up, &c.*] “But be it known unto you, that God hath abundantly vindicated the honour of this his dear Son, whom you have thus infamously abused, and hath borne a most glorious testimony to his innocence, truth, and dignity; for it is he whom God hath raised up from the dead, by a miraculous effort of his divine power, having loosed the bonds in which he lay, when the pains of death had done their work upon him; as indeed it was impossible that he should finally be held under the power of it.”

Ver. 25. *For David speaketh concerning him, &c.*] It is plain that the phrase *εἰς αὐτὸν* here signifies *of or concerning him*: the particle has the same import, Eph. v. 32. Elfsner upon this place, and Gataker upon the title of Marcus Antoninus’s book, which is *εἰς εαυτὸν, concerning himself*, have produced many places from some of the Greek authors, where the preposition *εἰς* is understood in the same sense. Mr. Jeffery, in his *True Grounds*, p. 121. observes from this text, and lays great stress upon it every where, “That the apostle does not make David to speak these things first of himself, and then of the Messiah only in a secondary sense, but quotes them as referring to Christ alone.” The passages here quoted in the words of the LXX. are something different from the Hebrew, but the sense is much the same; for which we refer to the notes on Pf. xvi.

Ver. 26. *His sepulchre is with us unto this day, &c.*] The sepulchres of the Jews, in general, were without the city; but the sepulchre of David and his sons was within the city. St. Jerome mentions the remains of Da-

vid’s sepulchre as extant in his time; and it is shewn to travellers even to this day. See Maundrell’s *Journey*, p. 76.

Ver. 30. *According to the flesh, &c.*] This is expressed in the original in such a manner, as seems to refer these words not to the loins of David, but to Christ; and so may be an intimation that it was only in respect to his human nature, that the Messiah should descend from David; while there was still a higher nature, in which he was superior to him, and was indeed to be regarded as the Son of God. See Romans, i. 3, 4.

Ver. 33. *He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.*] It is said, John, vii. 39. that *the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* See the note on that verse. The Spirit, in his extraordinary and superabundant influences, was reserved as the great donative after Christ’s triumph over principalities and powers. When he was ascended up on high, he sent down the greatest gift that ever was bestowed upon mankind, except himself. By this Christ discovered the greatness of his purchase, the height of his glory, the exercise of his power, the certainty of his resurrection and ascension, and the care he took of his church: for in what could he illustrate his character more, than by letting them see that he made good his last promise, of sending them another Comforter, who should be with them in all their undertakings, to direct them in their doubts, and to plead their cause against all opposition? What still enhanced this gift was, that it was not to continue with them only for a short time, but to abide with them and all his faithful saints for ever. It was to remain with them as a pledge of his love, as a testimony of his truth, as an earnest of his favour now, and of the

heavens: but he saith himself, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

37 ¶ Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent,

and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 ¶ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

* Pf. 110. 1. & 8. 1. Mar. 22. 44. Heb. 1. 3, 13. 1 Cor. 15. 25. Rev. 3. 21. Eph. 1. 20. John, 17. 3. & 6. 69. Mat. 28. 18. Eph. 1. 20—23. Phil. 2. 9—11. Ch. 5. 31. & 10. 36. Zech. 12. 10. Luke. 3. 20. Jer. 6. 16. Ch. 9. 6. & 16. 30. John, 16. 7—11. Rom. 7. 9. Mat. 3. 6, 8. Mark, 1. 4, 15. Ch. 3. 19. & 22. 16. 1 John, 1. 7. Titus, 3. 5. If. 1. 18. & 55. 7. Luke, 24. 47. Ver. 16—18. Ch. 8. 15—17. & 10. 44, 45. & 19. 6. Gal. 3. 16. Rom. 9. 8. Gen. 17. 7. Joel, 2. 28. Jer. 31. 34. Zech. 13. 1. Ch. 3. 25, 26. & 9. 15. & 10. 34, 44. & 11. 1, 18. & 13. 31, 46—48. xiv—xix. & 22. 21. & 28. 28. Eph. 3. 3—8. & 2. 13. Ch. 20. 21. 2 Cor. 6. 17. Mat. 15. 14. Luke, 21. 36. Pf. 110. 3. Mat. 13. 23. Ch. 1. 15. & 4. 4. & 5. 14. Pf. 72. 16, 17. Mat. 16. 18.

the future inheritance of all the faithful in heaven. See Eph. iv. 8, &c.

Ver. 34. *For David is not ascended*] It was a truth well known and established among the Jews, that many of the Psalms and other prophetic writings were spoken in the person of the Messiah; and accordingly St. Peter authorises our applying to Christ what had been spoken by David, by shewing, that as it was not compatible with David's character or circumstances, it must relate to the Messiah.

Ver. 35. *Until I make thy foes thy footstool.*] This text is quoted on the present occasion with the happiest address, as suggesting to the Jews, in the words of David, their great prophetic monarch, how certain their own ruin must be, if they went on to oppose Christ. Elser on the place has a fine collection of antient passages, referring to the custom of trampling upon the vanquished, dead or alive. See the note on Pf. cx. 1.

Ver. 37. *They were pricked in their heart,*] "Their hearts were pierced with compunction," Κατενόησαν.

Ver. 38. *Repent, and be baptized*] They are not only called on here to *repent*, but a submission also to the ordinance of *baptism* is required of them; for though on their repenting and believing, they were, according to the tenor of the gospel covenant, entitled to the remission of their sins; yet as Christ had, for wise reasons, appointed this solemn rite, as a token of their taking up the Christian profession in a public manner, there could have been no sufficient evidence of the truth of their repentance and faith, if this precept of Christ had not been obeyed. Vitringa has taken a great deal of pains to shew, that the phrase here translated *in the name of Jesus Christ*, signifies not only "being numbered among those who are called by his name," but "professing to devote themselves to the glory of it." The miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost were various, as appears from the first epistle to the Corinthians; and were variously dispensed. If all the persons whom the apostle addresses, received *this gift of the Holy Ghost*, to one might be imparted the *gift of prophecy*, to another

wisdom, to another the power of working miracles; those who were intended for the propagation of the gospel being endued with the extraordinary gifts; and those who were not separated to that office receiving only the ordinary ones; but all of them possessing such as were sufficient to manifest their faith, to enable them, if faithful, to persevere in it, to illustrate the gospel dispensation, and to set it in a conspicuous light.

Ver. 39. *For the promise is unto you, &c.*] Considering that the gift of the Holy Ghost had been mentioned just before, it seems most natural to interpret this as a reference to the passage in Joel above recited, where God promises the effusion of the Spirit on *their sons and their daughters*: but if the *promise* be interpreted as referring to a remoter clause, the *forgiveness* of their *sins*, this whole verse must be taken in a greater latitude, as having respect to the encouragement which all future converts and their children had, to expect the benefits of the gospel. This passage makes much in favour of infant baptism, as many writers on the subject have largely shewn. Since St. Peter as yet knew nothing of the intended calling of the Gentiles, he could only mean by the words, *to all afar off*, that the gospel should be preached to all the dispersed of Israel, in distant nations; but the Spirit of God might have a further view. "The words (says Dr. Heylin) refer to *time* as well as *place*; the *promises* also to *us* and to *our children*: words which imply a benefit, include the accepting of it: in this sense the word *call* is used in this verse, and in 1 Cor. i. 24. that is, they who *obey* the call."

Ver. 40. *Save yourselves, &c.*] That is, "See that you lay these things to heart; receiving them with such regard, as the importance of the case requires. Renounce that obstinate unbelief, in which you join with those who crucified Christ, and be ye saved (Σωθητε) from that ruin which will quickly come upon this perverse and depraved generation." See on ver. 47.

Ver. 41. *There were added unto them about three thousand souls.*] The phrase Προσέτιθησαν, rendered *there were added*,

42 ^f And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 ^g And fear came upon every soul: and ^h many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 ⁱ And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 ^k And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.

46 ^l And they, continuing daily with one

^f Ch. 1. 14. & 4. 32. & 5. 12. & 6. 4. & 20. 7. Ver. 46. Rom. 12. 12. Eph. 6. 18. Col. 4. 2. Heb. 10. 25. Jude, 19. ^g Esth. 8. 17. Ch. 5. 5. 11. Luke, 7. 16. Mark, 7. 37. ^h John, 14. 12. Ch. 3. 6. & 4. 30. & 5. 12, 15. & 8. 7, 13. & 9. 34, 40. & 13. 21. & 14. 10. & 16. 13. & 19. 11, 12. & 28. 8. Mark, 16. 17. ⁱ Phil. 2. 2, 4. Ch. 4. 32. & 5. 4. Phil. 5. 6, 7. Ver. 45. ^k Ch. 4. 34, 37. & 5. 1, 2. 11. 58. 7. Mat. 19. 21. & 6. 19, 20. Luke, 12. 33. & 16. 9. ^l Tim. 6. 19. ^l Luke, 24. 53. Ch. 1. 14. & 3. 1. & 6. 4. & 5. 42. & 20. 7.

ded, emphatically signifies, “*to pass over* to a body of men;” and implies that these persons renounced their former religious profession, and embraced that of the apostles. Some render it, *There came over*, or *acceded*. Ellner, in his note on this place, has shewn, that *souls* often signifies *persons* in the Greek and Latin classics. It is commonly said, that the *three thousand* mentioned in the text, were *converted by one sermon*. But, it is probable, that, while St. Peter was preaching in the Syriac language, the other apostles were preaching at some small distance, much to the same purpose, in *other languages*; and it is not to be imagined that none of them but St. Peter should be blessed on that day, as the means of converting souls; not to insist upon it, that he himself might deliver several discourses this day to different audiences, when the concourse of people was so great, and their languages so various. The late sufferings of our Lord, the present miracle of languages, and the authority of the speakers, greatly contributed to this numerous conversion: but all would have been utterly unavailable without the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. This numerous conversion not only confirmed the truth of the apostles, in laying claim to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but likewise served as a proof to them of the reality of it, and as an encouragement to undertake that office, for which it qualified them. With these credentials from Heaven, even a poor fisherman of Galilee might appear with dignity before the high-priest and sanhedrim of the Jews; asserting boldly, that *God had made that Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ*, and making good this assertion by proving that he was *risen from the dead*,—strange and supernatural as it might seem,—not only by his own testimony, and that of his brethren, the apostles and disciples of Jesus, by whom he was seen forty days after his passion; but by innumerable instances of a power in like manner superior to nature, derived upon them from him, and exercised by them in his name. From the scriptures also might the same ignorant Galilean show, against the traditions of the elders, and learning of the scribes, and the prejudices of the whole Jewish nation, that the humble suffering Jesus, was the mighty, triumphant Messiah, spoken of by the prophets; since if, with a reference to the interpretation of those prophecies, any doubt could have arisen among the people, to whose expositions they should submit,—to those of the *scribes* and *elders*, or those of the *apostles*,—the latter had to produce, in support of their authority, the attestation of the Spirit, by whom those prophets were inspired, now speaking through their mouths in all the languages of the earth.

And, with regard to that other point, of infinitely harder digestion to the Jews, namely, the calling of the uncircumcised Gentiles to an equal participation of the kingdom of God, and consequently the abolishing of circumcision, and the whole ceremonial law;—the apostles were furnished with an argument to which all the rabbies were not able to reply, by the Holy Ghost bestowing upon the Gentile converts to Christianity, the same heavenly gifts as he had conferred at the beginning upon the believing Jews.

Ver. 42. And they continued steadfastly, &c.] This may intimate, on the one hand, that many efforts were made to shake their resolution; and, on the other, that, upon fuller inquiry, they found all things as the apostles had represented. *Breaking of bread*, is a phrase which in the New Testament signifies, both eating common meals and celebrating the Lord's supper. It seems that the Lord's supper was here intended; because it is joined with *prayer*. They constantly attended upon the teaching of the apostles, in strict communion, and the exercise of the most affectionate friendship towards each other; uniting in the duties of piety, in receiving the Lord's supper, as well as offering up their united prayers and supplications unto God. Dr. Heylin reads after the Vulgate, *In the communion of breaking bread*.

Ver. 43. And fear came upon every soul:] A reverential fear, mixed with admiration and respect. Dr. Heylin reads the verse, *And the minds of all men were struck with awe, at the many wonders and miracles which were wrought by the apostles*.

Ver. 44, 45. And had all things common;] Peculiar reasons made this community of goods eligible at that time; especially as many sojourners, who had come from other parts, would justly be desirous to continue at Jerusalem much longer than they intended when they came up to the feast, in order that they might gain a thorough knowledge of the gospel. But the New Testament abounds with passages, which plainly show, that this was never intended for a general practice: the Gentiles did not fall into it when the gospel came to them; and none of St. Paul's epistles contain intimations or directions for such a practice. The Jewish converts acted thus at this time and place, though not by *command*, yet doubtless with the approbation of the apostles. But none can reasonably imagine that the number of Christian converts, even then at Jerusalem, is to be accounted for by a desire to share in *these* divided goods; for it is evident, that as the portion each could have, would be very small, so the hardships to be endured for a Christian profession would soon counter-

C H A P. III.

Peter, preaching to the people that came to see a lame man restored to his feet, professeth the cure not to have been wrought by his or John's own power or holiness, but by God, the Father, and his son Jesus, and through faith in his name; withal faithfully reprehending them for crucifying Jesus: which, because they did it through ignorance, he exhorteth them by repentance and faith to seek remission of their sins, and salvation in the same Jesus.

[Anno Domini 33.]

NOW ^a Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being ^b the ninth hour.

^a Luke, 24. 53. Ch. 5. 27, 25. ^b Three o'clock afternoon. Pf. 55. 17. f Mat. 10. 9. † Pet. 4. 10, 11. Mat. 7. 22. Mark, 16. 17. Ch. 4. 7, 10.

2 And a certain man ^c lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ^d ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

4 And ^e Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

6 Then Peter said, ^f Silver and gold have I

^c Ch. 4. 22. & 14. 8. ^d John, 9. 8. Ver. 10. ^e Ch. 14. 9.

of life and action, a heart that might always correspond and sympathize with him, its head. See 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. For the same Holy Spirit then descended upon all the living members of Christ, according to his gracious promise in the last words of St. Matthew's gospel,—almost the last words which he spoke upon earth: *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

This promise, I say, is fulfilled in the mission of the Holy Ghost. Christ is now peculiarly present in his church by his Spirit, which as it formerly descended upon the apostles, so it ever shall descend upon all his true disciples unto the end of the world. The sacred Fountain still stands open, and nothing is retrenched from the bounteous efflux of divine grace, but only the outward prodigies which attended it at the beginning of its course. Now indeed it flows on in general, as some peaceful river, through opened channels, with a silent stream, and marking its way chiefly by the riches it spreads in the parts it passeth through: but the season here celebrated was the time of its grand eruption, if I may so speak, when it rapidly issued forth from the divine source to replenish the apostles, who were the conduits prepared to receive and convey it forward to the latest generations. At that time, as was usual upon such extraordinary occasions, it manifested itself even outwardly by sensible representations expressive of its energy, and the effects it produces in the spirits of men.

These sensible representations appeared in the two active elements, *air* and *fire*, which kindle and keep up the life of nature. For when the apostles were assembled on the day of Pentecost, that is to say, the day whereon the law was given to the Jews, a double prodigy appeared; *a sound was heard from heaven, as of an impetuous wind filling the house; and several distinct flames were seen, one of which rested over each of the apostles.* Now these are two proper emblems or symbolical representations; and in order to judge of their significancy, we are to observe, that there is such an analogy and intimate connection between the material and the spiritual worlds, that not only the names of things visible serve to denote things invisible, and are the only names we have for them, which plainly argues a notorious analogy upon which such use of the names is grounded; but also some extraordinary transactions in the

higher order pass on and impress themselves upon the lower, so as to affect outward nature in a similar manner; such, I mean, as somehow answer to what is then accomplished in the supernatural state. Thus, for instance, a few weeks before this descent of the Holy Ghost, while our Lord was hanging on the cross, the sun was eclipsed; and, when he expired, outward nature was convulsed with an earthquake. And the sympathized again, yet to a different purpose, in a second earthquake at his resurrection. And now, when his Spirit with the plenitude of divine power was descending upon his apostles, a sound from heaven was heard as of an impetuous wind, and distinct flames were seen over the heads of the apostles.

It will be proper here, as far as our scanty knowledge will permit, to trace out the analogy whereon these two symbols are grounded.

Concerning the first, it has been observed, that among those parts of the material world which are invisible, and whose existence we discover only by their effects, there is scarcely any thing more subtle, more active, and of greater efficacy than *wind*, that is to say, air in motion, or *spirit*, according to the primary sense of the word. Hence, in the common use of most languages, the name of wind, or spirit, serves to express those things, which, being not discernible to us by reason of the subtilty or fineness of their substance, are yet conceived to be moved with great agility, and endowed with great force. So naturalists, when they speak of that which is most abstruse, most agile, and most operative, in any liquor or other body, call it *spirit*. And for the same reason, our souls are called spirits for the subtilty of their nature, and those vital powers wherewith they actuate our bodies.

In regard to our capacity and manner of conceiving things, the holy Scriptures have used this term *Spirit* to express even the adorable and incomprehensible Deity, signifying his most simple nature, and most powerful energy—his most simple nature, I say, which cannot possibly be the object of any of our senses; and his most powerful energy, which pervades and actuates all things.

This name *Spirit*, as it is common to the whole Godhead, so it is peculiarly applied to the third person of the ever-blessed Trinity, styled by way of eminence *the Holy Spirit*;

none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

* Mat. 8. 3, 13, 15. & 9. 22. & 12. 13. & 15. 28.

Spirit; and the spiritual operations of God towards men, are in an especial manner ascribed to him.

Now in all languages commonly known, the operation of a superior mind upon an inferior to raise and invigorate it, is expressed by the metaphor of *inspiration*, that is to say, *breathing into*; and the general consent of mankind in the use of this metaphor, demonstrates its fitness and propriety. And therefore when the infinite mind vouchsafed to communicate itself with such plenitude and force to the minds of his chosen servants assembled on the day of Pentecost, this sound from heaven of a mighty rushing wind, or torrent of mysterious air, was a proper symbol to indicate its descent; as the other miraculous appearance by the element of fire, was proper to represent the effects which it produces.

To enlighten, to purify, and to warm, are the properties of fire. Now if we transfer these to the spiritual world, the light of the soul is truth, the purity of the soul is holiness, the warmth or heat of the soul is an active, vigorous ardour to surmount the obstacles, and zealously prosecute the end proposed.

The Holy Ghost produces these three effects, and accordingly the Scriptures describe him as a Spirit of truth, of holiness, and of power. As a Spirit of truth, he enlightens the minds of the faithful, and leads them into all truth. As a Spirit of holiness, by an intimate union with their hearts, he reforms them, and makes them holy: as a Spirit of power, he gives them vigour to resist temptation, strength to bear their crosses, and full ability to work out their salvation. We will consider these three properties of the Holy Ghost separately.

First, He is a Spirit of truth; and so our Lord styled him, when he retold his descent upon the apostles. I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now: the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.

Men may teach us divers truths; but to teach all truth is the distinguishing prerogative of the Spirit of God. These are truths, and those too of the utmost importance, which flesh and blood cannot reveal — truths which the world could not bear, much less relish, approve, and fully practise, before they had received the Holy Ghost. Ye cannot bear them now, said Christ, in the passage last quoted; they are dark and corrupt nature, and our passions recoil at the mention of them. For besides the mysteries of our holy religion, the deep things of God, which cannot be duly apprehended but by minds enlightened by the Spirit of God; besides these, I say, there are many moral truths, whereof we cannot be fully and effectually persuaded, but by the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost: such are those in the beginning of our Lord's sermon on the mount, "That the poor in spirit, the meek, those that mourn, and are persecuted, are blessed above other men: that it is better to pull out our eyes, and cut off our hands, than use either in the commission of sin: that our ene-

mies must be loved, and that the most provoking injury ought not only to be forgiven, but requited with benevolence." These, and others that might be named, are certain and saving truths; but no mortal man can convince us of them; I mean with a full, lasting, operative conviction, such as shall determine our practical judgment, and become the habitual rule of our conduct. All demonstration of reason, and arts of persuasion, are vain to this end; and it is in vain that we ourselves endeavour to reason ourselves into these truths. The Holy Ghost only can work this conviction in our minds; and we must seek this conviction from him by prayer, and by opening our minds to his operations, or we shall perish in our errors. The same power only that made our minds, can reform them. That Holy Spirit of God, which at the first creation brooded over the rude chaos, and produced this orderly world out of darkness and confusion, must also preside in our minds to make the new creation of holiness, to bring forth light out of our darkness, truth out of our errors. St. Paul alludes to this, where he says, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Such are the advantages of the descent of the divine Spirit; such are the privileges to which we are admitted, if we do not love darkness more than light, because our deeds are evil, and we resolve to continue in them. God's school now stands open to all, his Spirit condescends to be our master, our teacher, and will infallibly lead us into all truth, if we devoutly resign ourselves to his direction.

We cannot have a plainer proof of this than in the history given us in this chapter. Consider the apostles; see how wondrous a change was wrought in them by the illumination of this Holy Spirit. Observe what they were before, what after his descent, and thence learn what inestimable advantages we are entitled to by Christianity.

Three long years had the apostles been in the school of Christ, and had tired even his patience with their gross stupidity, and incapacity to apprehend his spiritual doctrine. Though they had made some progress in the way of truth by leaving their little all to follow him: though they daily heard his precepts, and saw his practice, that living comment upon his doctrine—yet nothing could rectify their false notions, nothing could wean them from their vain desires of secular grandeur and magnificence. When our Lord informed them of the necessity of sufferings, the benefits of poverty, the blessedness of persecution, it was all a riddle to them. They understood none of these things; these sayings were hid from them, neither knew they the things that were spoken, Luke, xviii. 34. Even after the resurrection of Christ the cloud was still upon their minds, and they were yet hankering after an immediate possession of worldly grandeur and dominion. Lord, say they, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? Acts, i. 6.

Christ

8 And ^b he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9 ¹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God :

10 And they knew that it was he which sat

^b If. 35. 6. Mark, 2. 11, 12. John, 5. 8, 9.

¹ Ch. 4. 16, 21, 22.

Christ no longer opposed their carnal prejudices, but referred them to the Holy Ghost for full information and conviction.

According to the promise of Christ, the Holy Ghost came. Immediately, all darkness, error, and mistake fled before him. They understood, they believed, they taught, they practised, they were ready to lay down their lives for those truths, which before they could not receive, they could not bear, nor endure. The cross of Christ was no longer an offence to them, but their boast and their glory; and they rejoiced, that they themselves were counted worthy to partake of it, and to *suffer shame for his name*.

Such and so effectual were the fruits of the Spirit, enlightening the minds of the apostles as a Spirit of truth. We are, in the next place, to consider him as a Spirit of holiness. He is not only, by way of eminence, the Holy Spirit, but also *the hallowing*, that is to say, *sanctifying* Spirit, whence all holiness in the creatures is derived. It would be endless to mention the places of Scriptures where this property is ascribed to him. It is of more concern, how to explain the precise meaning of the word *holiness*, which is to be considered in two respects; first, as it is proper to God alone, and, secondly, as it is the privilege and duty of a creature. According to the first sense, we may say, *Thou only art holy*, as *Thou only art the Lord*. This holiness peculiar to God, consists in the singularity of his nature, even that surpassing transcendent excellence, which leaves all creatures at an infinite distance beneath his majesty.

It is a common error in men's notions of God, that they conceive of him as *one Being among many*, greater indeed, and higher, and better than all the rest, but yet *as one among others*, one that may be named with them, and however superior, yet not absolutely distinct from the rest. This is a wrong conception, for God is not only *Unus* but *Unicus*—He is one Alone, the First, without any second or like. But this is a subject to which no speculations can do justice, and which should naturally sink the mind into the profoundest devotion. Suffice it then to say, that this sublime exaltation and infinite distance of the Creator from the creatures, constitutes his *holiness*. The Hebrew word signifies *separation*, and, when applied to God, imports that unconceivable elevation, whereby he is distinguished, and stands alone in his universe. Thus we read; *There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside Thee*. There is none beside Him: He is a whole genus by himself; and this surpassing singular excellence, which excludes all possible comparison, constitutes his *holiness*; and the exercise of it tends solely to the promoting of his own glory. *He is glorius in (or by) holiness*, says Moses; and the angels incessantly celebrate him by this title, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts: heaven and earth are full of thy glory*. The holiness of God is founded, as was said, in the *supremacy of his nature*; and it is perpetually exercised in maintaining that supremacy, in treating himself worthily, ex-

erting all his attributes, and directing all his acts, to one certain point, which is his glory, the exaltation of his nature, the effulgency of his excellence. The reason why God does all things for his own glory is, because that is the end most worthy of God; his supreme excellence requires it of him as a due to himself by the eternal laws of righteousness: truth and justice make this necessary in God. The glory of God therefore being the end most worthy of God, and all his acts centering therein, all his acts are holy, that is to say, pure from all alloy of inferior motives, from every thing that does not inflexibly promote that end.

Such is the holiness of God. The creatures too are holy, when they prosecute the same end that God does, the end for which he created them; that is to say, *the glory of God*. We call things or persons holy, when they are separated from common use, and dedicated to the service of God, devoted to his glory: to apply them to any other is to *profane* them. All the laws of God are boundaries set to fence in the way that leads to God's glory; and we never transgress those laws, but we at the same time deviate from it. And therefore St. Paul defines sin to be *a falling short of the glory of God*. *All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*. Holiness, on the contrary, aims all our actions aright, making the glory of God our scope and design. In a word, every action directed to that end, is a holy action, and leads us on towards the participation of the divine glory which we had regard to in performing it; and when it is said that the Holy Ghost sanctifies Christians, the meaning is, that he infuses this general motive, extinguishing the narrow principles of covetousness, pride, and sensuality, and exalting our nature to the noble disinterested purpose of glorifying our Maker.

Those corrupt motives of covetousness, sensuality, and pride, cleave intimately to our souls in the present depraved state, rendering all actions that proceed from them, *unholy*: and the Spirit of God does then sanctify us, when it disengages us from those corrupt motives. To *wash, cleanse, baptize with the Holy Ghost*, and *sanctify*, are commonly synonymous in Scripture; hence the phrase of *being baptized with the Holy Ghost*, which is elsewhere called *being baptized with fire*, to signify the universal and intimate purification of the inmost springs of action thereby. With this view the prophet Malachi compares the Spirit to a *refiner of gold or silver*, destroying the dross, and separating all heterogeneous particles from those metals by force of fire, till they are reduced to perfect purity. Thus the Spirit sanctifies the soul, by abolishing all fordid inclinations, by purging away the multiplicity of carnal desires, and reducing all the powers of the mind to one simple constant pursuit, *viz.* that of God's glory. This renders the soul holy, that is to say, pure, all of a kind, concentrated in the end of its creation, even the glory of its Maker.

To shew how the apostles were thus sanctified, were to relate their history, which is but one continued narrative of

for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and ^k they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

^k Ch. 2. 7, 12. & 4. 13. Mat. 9. 33. & 12. 23.

of their holiness. They were purified from all corrupt principles of action. The love of *riches* moved them not: for they had all the treasures of the faithful laid at their feet, without any other concern than for the right distribution of them in charity. The love of *ease and pleasure* moved them not: for their life was spent in incessant labours: they traversed the face of the earth, doing good, and suffering evil in all the parts that they visited. *The love of glory and applause* moved them not, for they gladly suffered reproach in their Master's cause: and when divine honours were offered to two of them at Lystra, they rent their clothes, and expressed a greater concern for the misplaced reverence of the multitude, than for all the ill usage they had ever met with. And lastly, the *love of life itself* moved them not, when the glory of God required them to resign it. They rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to die in so great and good a cause. They went cheerfully to death, although the wit and malice of their persecutors had so circumstanced it with a horrid variety of tortures, that only the *manner* of dying was the punishment, and death itself the deliverance.

Such was the holiness of the apostles: it was the purity of their hearts, the unity of their desires, all meeting in one point, the glory of God.

This *one thing* only they desired: this *one thing* only they pursued: they pursued it through poverty, infamy, and distress; through numberless toils and torments. Death in vain came athwart their passage; they leaped the gulph, and were received into glory, that glory for which they had been so zealous.

If we would arise where they are ascended, we must follow their steps; we must *be holy, as they were holy*; that is to say, we must absolutely prefer the glory of God to all other considerations; for heaven stands open to none but saints; and *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*.

That we may not be disheartened in so arduous a work, there are the greatest encouragements, in the third place; namely, that this *Spirit of holiness* is also a Spirit of *power*, inspiring zeal, magnanimity, and fortitude, sufficient to surmount all difficulties that occur in the arduous paths of duty. And of this also the apostles were very remarkable instances.

Our Lord, having had a long experience of their natural weakness and pusillanimity, commanded them, when he appeared to them after his resurrection, to live retired for a time, and *wait for the promise of the Father*. But, said he, *ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and then ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.*

And his prediction was gloriously accomplished as soon as the Holy Ghost came. The zeal which inflamed their hearts, found a ready channel into their tongues: their tongues were as tongues of fire, communicating through grace, their sacred ardour to the hearts of all that heard them.

That conceit of the ancients, who represented their fa-

mous orator as brandishing flames of lightning with a thunder-bolt, was never so nearly verified as in the apostles: they flashed conviction into the minds of their hearers, and bore down all opposition of reluctant passion or prejudice with a force and energy most irresistible. They made those very Jews, who had lately condemned our Lord, and with bloody cries solicited Pilate for his crucifixion, now condemn themselves with bitter remorse and compunction. It is said, *they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?* Three thousand were thus converted under the power of the Holy Spirit, in one day and one place; which, considering the natural weakness of the preachers, with the rooted prejudices and noted obstinacy of the audience, we may account one of the greatest miracles of our religion.

The apostles bear witness of Christ, not only before his friends, or even persons indifferent, but before those that murdered him—even those apostles who had deserted him shamefully at his being first seized, so far were they from bearing witness for him at his trial: Peter, in particular, who, trembling before a servant-raid, had three times renounced him with oaths, *now standing up with the eleven, lift up his voice and said: Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words.* You see he makes no timorous apology, he uses none of the little arts to gain benevolence; but, conscious of the divine authority wherewith he stood invested, he charges his hearers with all the enormity of their crime. *Ye have killed (said he) the Lord of life: he tells them, that the person, whom they had with wicked hands crucified and slain, was the Messiah; and he proves him to be so, by bearing testimony of his resurrection: him God hath raised up from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.* And he backs his own evidence with irrefragable arguments from scriptures, which he at the same time explained with such force and perspicuity, as extorted assent from the most obdurate. Is this the illiterate fisherman? Is this the carnal disciple who presumed to rebuke his Lord, when he first mentioned the cross to him? Is this the fugitive apostate, the abjuring Peter? But *with God all things are possible*: Peter had now received the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Power, whose property it is to strengthen us with might in the inward man, to create a new heart, and renew a right spirit within us.

Thus have we endeavoured to represent to our readers this Holy Spirit in his operations of truth, holiness, and power. We would now only add a word or two concerning the disposition by which we must prepare our hearts to receive him: and this, as our Lord teaches us, is earnest and persevering prayer. We have his direction, Luke, xi. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.—If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* The terms, you see, are very easy, are highly reasonable: if we do not perform them,

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

¹ Ch. 5. 12. John, 20. 23.

we shall be without excuse. But if by humble, fervent, incessant prayer, we seek from our heavenly Father the gift of his Spirit, we shall infallibly receive it, we shall be enlightened, purified, and confirmed in all goodness, we shall advance from strength to strength, till, if faithful to death, we become meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The great promise here receives its accomplishment in the mission of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples. We have,

1. The time: *when the day of pentecost, the fiftieth from the passover, was fully come, in the morning, they were all with one accord in one place*; it being the first day of the week, which they observed in memory of their Lord's resurrection, and was consecrated also now by the pouring out of the Spirit upon them. No longer strifes or discord divided them; united in fervent charity, they waited the fulfilment of their Master's promise. *Note*; (1.) They who wait upon God in the assembly of his saints, shall find him by his Spirit still present in the midst of them. (2.) God will delight to dwell with those whose hearts, by fervent love, are united in his service.

2. The manner in which the Holy Ghost descended. *Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, an emblem of the Spirit's divine energy on the minds of men; and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, signifying the illuminating, warming, and purifying influences of the Spirit upon their souls, and the amazing gift of tongues bestowed upon them, with that freedom of utterance, whereby they were enabled to preach the gospel among all nations; and it sat upon each of them; the Holy Ghost, in all the fulness of his miraculous operations, now taking up his constant residence in them, to qualify them for the arduous service to which they were ordained. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; not only the apostles, but all the disciples; experiencing such divine joys and consolations as they had never experienced before; and began to speak with other tongues, in all the variety of languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance, suggesting both the matter and words, and enabling them with the greatest copiousness and most forcible energy to declare the wonderful works of God, in the gospel of his dear Son.*

2dly, Such an extraordinary occurrence was soon spread abroad, and brought a vast concourse together. We have,

1. The persons. *Devout men who dwelt at Jerusalem, out of every nation under heaven; both Jews, and proselytes, who were now assembled at the feast of Pentecost, or, as some suppose, had taken up their residence there, in expectation of the speedy appearing of the Messiah.*

2. The amazement which filled them at hearing these men, who were poor illiterate Galileans, speak with such fluency and propriety all the various languages and dialects

of their respective countries, *Parthians, Medes, &c.* They could not, therefore, but with wonder and surprize, observe to each other how astonishing was this miracle, and question what could be the meaning of it, and whether it ushered in the long-expected kingdom of the Messiah? for they heard them speak in their several native tongues the great things of God, respecting the redemption which was in Jesus Christ, and the glorious privileges obtained by his death, resurrection, and ascension, for all believers.

3. Some *mocking, said, These men are full of new wine; a cavil most wicked, absurd, and blasphemous.* Probably these were inhabitants of Jerusalem, the scribes and Pharisees, who, not understanding the languages which the inspired disciples spoke, thought the whole to be nonsense, and would fain have branded them as drunkards, that they might prejudice the people against them by this most malicious falsehood. *Note*; There are still too many to whom the great things of God appear unintelligible; and because they are themselves destitute of spiritual understanding, and are perfectly ignorant of divine and experimental truths, they brand the preachers of them as enthusiasts, *speaking evil of the things they know not.*

3dly, In answer to the malicious cavil of these enemies to the truth, Peter, the zealous speaker, and now inspired by peculiar influences from on high, arose, and boldly addressed to these mockers the awakening discourse contained in this chapter.

1. *He stood up with the eleven, to shew the falsehood of the charge, and to vindicate himself and his brethren from so malicious an accusation: and directing his discourse aloud to the Jews who were present, begs attention to the words of truth and soberness, which he was about to utter. Note*; We must not return a sharp answer to a reviling accusation, but *with meekness answer those who oppose themselves against us.*

2. He denies the calumny, and shews it to be as absurd as malicious. *These men are not drunken, as ye suppose and would insinuate, seeing it is but the third hour of the day, but nine o'clock in the morning; and till that hour, on the sabbaths and festivals, the Jews usually did neither eat nor drink; nor was it at all probable, that so many as they were, they should have been guilty of such a debauch, or dare appear intoxicated on so solemn an occasion.*

3. He explains to them an affair which they counted so strange, which some admired and others ridiculed. This was the accomplishment of the prophecy of Joel, Ch. ii. 28—32. which he cites at large; for though himself inspired, the Spirit was not given to supersede the Scriptures, but to enable us to understand them. God had promised in respect to the last days, the days of the Messiah, which ushered in the last dispensation of grace, *I will pour out of my Spirit, in a more extraordinary measure than ever before, upon all flesh, upon Gentiles as well as Jews: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, foretelling future events, Ch. xxi. 9, 10. and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;*

God

12 ¶ And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us,

as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

13 ^a The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and

^m Pf. 115. 1. John, 15. 5. 2 Cor. 3. 5.

ⁿ Ch. 5. 30. Exod. 3. 6, 15, 16. & 4. 5. Luke, 20. 37, 38.

God in these ways revealing to them his mind and will: and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, on persons of all conditions, I will pour out in these days of my Spirit, as from an inexhaustible fountain, and they shall prophesy: and I will shew wonders in heaven above, dreadful prodigies in the air, which were the prelude to the approaching ruin of the Jewish nation, for their obstinate infidelity and rejection of the Messiah; and signs in the earth beneath, dire presages of impending woes: blood and fire, and vapour of smoke, the blood of the people shed by the invading foe whose devastations should spread through the country, and the smoke of their cities consumed in flames which should obscure the sky. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, suffering unusual eclipses, or looking red, through the dusky clouds of smoke; or this may signify the approaching total dissolution of their government, before that great and notable day of the Lord come, when he shall execute such condign vengeance on his murderers, as no nation, since the burning of Sodom, ever suffered, and when he shall be glorified in his judgments. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever, discerning the signs of these times, shall call on the name of the Lord, the Almighty Jehovah, Jesus, spoken of in this prophecy, placing their dependance on him alone for salvation, and in fervent prayer making their application to him for help, and persevering in faith and love to him,—they shall be saved by his power and grace from all the evils they fear in time or eternity, and be made partakers of his eternal glory. Lord, pour out a spirit of prayer and supplication upon me, that I may be of this blessed number!

4. He improves this occasion in order to preach to them Jesus, whose gift this Spirit was, which now was shed abroad so abundantly upon them, entreating their attention to the important truths that he was about to deliver.

[1.] He reminds them of his well-known life and character—Jesus of Nazareth, a name which they gave him by way of reproach, but a man approved of God among you; evidently signalized with his peculiar favour, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which he wrought in proof of his divine mission, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; bearing his attestation to the character that he assumed; and they themselves had been eye-witnesses of these wonderful works.

[2.] They had, notwithstanding, rejected his credentials, and hung him on a tree. Him, this glorious Messiah, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ordained as a sacrifice to divine justice, ye have taken and seized as a criminal, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; engaging the Gentile governor to bring him to this ignominious death; and his innocent blood is now upon your heads.

[3.] God had raised him, notwithstanding all their enmity, rage, and malice; having loosed the pains of death, judicially discharging him from the grave, and from all the

torrows of death, which as the substitute of the fallen race, and more especially of them who perseveringly believe, he consented to endure, because it was not possible that he should be holden of them. The dignity of his person, the perfection of his sacrifice, and the prophecies concerning him, rendered it impossible that he should remain longer the prisoner of death; whom by dying he had destroyed, and, as a triumphant conqueror, rose to lead captivity captive.

[4.] He shews that this was foretold by the royal Psalmist, who personating Jesus, the true Messiah, thus speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; he walked under the constant sense of his Father's presence, and with an eye to his glory; for he is on my right hand, to support and carry me through my arduous undertaking, that I should not be moved with any of the sufferings of life, or the terrors of death. Therefore did my heart rejoice in his power, faithfulness, and love, and my tongue was glad, praising him for the experience of his almighty grace: moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope, entirely satisfied of a glorious issue, and entering the grave in the fullest assurance of a speedy resurrection; because, or that thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, to abide, like other departed spirits, in the invisible world; nor his body in the dust; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption, and putrify in the tomb: being the holy one of God, and having by a perfect obedience to death, even the death of the cross, completed the great atonement, he had a right to a speedy discharge from that lowest step of his humiliation. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, which lie through the gates of death; and Christ, the first-fruits of those that slept, is gone before; having raised himself to an endless life, and leading his faithful people after him to a glorious immortality: thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance, in that state of bliss and blessedness to which, as Mediator, he should be exalted: and what is here primarily spoken concerning the great Head of the church, is true of every real member of his body mystical perseveringly cleaving to him. (1.) They live for God, designing his glory as their end, and resting upon his promises, his power, and grace, as their abiding support, comfort, and joy. (2.) They die in hope, committing their souls into the hands of a faithful Creator, and rejoicing in the prospect of eternal life and glory which the gospel sets before them, and of which faith assures them.

[5.] He comments on the text that he had quoted. Great and respectable as the patriarch David was, the head of the royal race of Judah, yet he saw corruption; and they, as reasonable men, and his countrymen, if they dispassionately considered these words, must needs be convinced that the Psalmist spake not this of himself; he dying, and being buried, as other men; and his tomb being extant to that day: but being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, Pf. cxxxii. 11. that of the fruit of his

of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath ° glorified his Son Jesus; whom ^p ye delivered up, and determined to let *him* go.

° John, 7. 39. & 12. 16. & 13. 31, 32. & 17. 1, 5. Ch. 2. 36. & 5. 31. Eph. 1. 20. to Phil. 2. 8—11. Pf. 110. 1—7. Mark, 15. 1, 9. John, 18. 40. & 19. 15. Luke, 23. 1, 14. & 18. 30. & 19. 12, 15. Ch. 2. 23. & 4. 26—28. & 5. 30. P Mat. 27. 2, 18, 20.

joins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne, as Israel's king, in the most exalted sense, reigning in the hearts of his believing people—he seeing this before, by the spirit of prophesy, spake of the resurrection of Christ, whom he personates when he says, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus, who lately lay in the grave, the son of David after the flesh, the person of whom he David, as a prophet, speaks, hath God raised up; whereof we all are witnesses: having been his constant followers before his death, and having often seen, conversed, and ate and drank with him since his resurrection, till the day that we beheld him ascend up to heaven.

[6.] The gifts of the spirit were the fruit of his exaltation. *Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted to the mediatorial throne, and possessed of the most transcendent dignity and glory, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, the purchase of his obedience to death, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and bear; the flames of fire, and gift of tongues, which appeared to them so strange. And his ascension also David had foretold, Pf. cx. 1. For David is not ascended into the heavens, as the Person, in whose name he speaks, evidently was; but the Lord Jesus is gone thither, as he saith himself, The Lord God the Father, said unto my Lord, the Messiah, Sit thou on my right hand, in the highest dignity, and possessed of universal dominion and authority, until I make thy foes thy footstool; until sin, satan, death, and every enemy of the Redeemer and his faithful people, shall be finally and for ever destroyed.*

[7.] He warmly applies the matter to their consciences. *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, as a truth most infallible and certain, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ; and there could not be a greater aggravation of their wickedness than this, that whom the Lord had glorified, they had crucified; nor a more tremendous consideration, than that he was now exalted to a throne of glory to execute vengeance on all his murderers, who obstinately persisted in their impenitence.*

4thly, The power of the Spirit upon the apostles themselves appeared gloriously evident in the boldness wherewith he inspired them, as well as in the miraculous gifts with which he endued them: and we have also a proof of his energetic influence on the consciences of the hearers, accompanying his own word in the mouths of his servants.

1. Many of the hearers, struck with conscious guilt at what they heard, *were pricked in their heart with sharp and deep convictions of their sin and danger, and, in great distress of conscience, said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do, to avert the dire vengeance that we have provoked, and to obtain pardon for a deed so atrocious? Note; (1.) When the Spirit of God opens the conscience of the sinner to discern his hell-*

deserving guilt, his hard heart then is broken with the most fearful apprehensions of his danger. (2.) Ministers are the physicians to whom convinced sinners should apply, and they have balm to cure the mortal wound which sin has made in their souls. (3.) They who truly feel their lost estate, cannot but desire, above all things, to know if yet there may be hope.

2. Peter, in the name of his brethren, *said unto them, Your case, however dangerous, is not desperate, Repent—under a sense of redeeming love be deeply humbled for your guilt and ingratitude; and with deep self-abhorrence turn unto the Lord, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ; professing your faith in him as the true Messiah, and sincerely yielding up yourselves to him as his willing subjects; for the remission of sins, purchased by him, and freely bestowed on the chief of sinners; and herewith also ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, of his comforting and sanctifying influences; as also (it is probable) of his miraculous powers in respect to many. For the promise, of pardon and the Holy Ghost, or the great promise made to Abraham and his seed, is unto you, and to your children, his descendants, and to all that are afar off, Jews or Gentiles, even as many as the Lord our God shall call to this high and glorious dispensation—all such shall have the invaluable opportunity of becoming members of the Messiah's peculiar kingdom here below, and of enjoying the higher glories awaiting faithful Christians in his kingdom above. Note; No sinner need despair; the gospel holds forth, through the blood of Jesus, a free pardon to the most guilty of the sons of Adam; and he that believes, shall be saved.*

3. The apostle enlarged on this subject. *And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation; come out from among them, and be ye separate; renounce the false tenets and corrupt practices of the scribes and Pharisees, that you may escape the plagues ready to descend upon this sinful people, abandoned to their infidelity and destruction. Note; They who would be saved among Christ's faithful people, must be separated from the ways of this wicked world, and from the familiar society of careless sinners, shunning their assemblies, as a man dreads the house infected by the plague.*

4. Great was the effect produced by this discourse, through the Spirit's mighty energy. No less than three thousand souls immediately embraced, and *gladly received, the word of gospel grace; and, believing in a crucified Redeemer now risen from the dead, made open profession of their faith, and were baptized in his name. Note; (1.) The salvation which is by Jesus Christ, is glad news to the sinner who is pricked to the heart with a sense of his guilt and danger. (2.) They who are truly turned to the Lord, will boldly make profession of his name, and join themselves to the society of the faithful, whatever danger or reproach they may be exposed to thereby.*

5thly,

14 ⁹ But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you ;

15 And killed the * Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead ; whereof we are witnesses.

⁹ Mat. 27. 20. Mark. 15. 11. Luke, 23. 18, 25. John, 18. 40. Ch. 13. 28. & 7. 52. & 22. 13. with Rev. 3. 7. Heb. 7. 26. John, 1. 4. & 3. 15, 16, 35. & 5. 21, 26. & 6. 40. & 10. 10, 28. & 11. 25. & 14. 6, 19. & 17. 2. Col. 3. 3, 4. 2 Tim. 1. 10. 1 John, 5. 11, 20. * Or *author*.
¹ Ch. 1. 3. & 2. 24, 27, 31, 32. & 10. 39, 40. & 13. 30—37. & 17. 31. Rom. 1. 4. & 4. 25. & 6. 4. & 8. 11. 1 Pet. 1. 21.

5thly, We have the practice of the primitive church.

1. They were united in holy ordinances. *They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, professing their faith in Christ and his gospel, and attending on the apostles' ministry and fellowship, maintaining the closest communion with them and each other; and in breaking of bread, celebrating the Lord's supper, and in prayers, social and public, continuing daily with one accord in the temple at the stated hours of service, and praising God for all the inestimable blessings bestowed, through Jesus Christ, upon them.* Note; They who have tasted of the blessing of communion with God, will delight to maintain it in the diligent use of all holy ordinances.

2. A solemn awe restrained their enemies from molesting them. *Fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles, so that it evidently appeared that God was with them.* Note; God can put his bridle in the jaws of persecutors, and say, Touch not my prophets, and do my anointed no harm.

3. A spirit of most noble and disinterested charity appeared among them. *All that believed were together; they were of one heart and mind, and assembled in several companies, as many as conveniently could meet in one place, and had all things common, each casting his all into the common stock; and as the necessity of the times was urgent, they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man of their society had need.* And as they assembled daily with one accord in the temple, so did they break bread from house to house, provided out of the common stock, eating their meat together with gladness and singleness of heart; fervent in love to each other, thankful to God, and conscious of their own undissembled simplicity and sincerity before him. Note; Who should rejoice, if the children of God do not?

4. They were highly esteemed, and their numbers daily increased. They had favour with all the people; their undissembled piety commanded respect; the miraculous powers with which so many of them were invested, excited reverence; and their charitable actions abounded; and the Lord so eminently blessed their ministrations, that there were added to the church daily such as should be saved, or the saved. See the original Greek, and the note on ver. 47.

CHAP. III.

Ver. 1. *Now Peter and John went up together, &c.]* About that time, according to Grotius and several others; as it does not seem to suit so well with the original, to take it to imply no more than that Peter and John went up together to the temple. It may suffice, once for all, to observe, that the Jews divided the time from the rising to the setting of the sun, into twelve hours, which were consequently, at different times of the year, of unequal length, as the days were longer or shorter. The third hour therefore was nine

in the morning, and the ninth three in the afternoon; but not exactly: for the third was the middle space between sun-rising and noon; which if the sun rose at five, (the earliest hour of its rising in that climate,) was half an hour after eight; if at seven, (the latest hour of its rising there,) was half an hour after nine, and so on. The chief hours of prayer were the third and ninth; at which seasons the morning and evening sacrifices were offered, and incense, as an emblem representing prayer, burned on the golden altar. Though by the death of Christ all sacrifices, and other things required in the ceremonial law, were utterly abolished, and a new covenant was introduced, yet, that the weak might not be offended and estranged from his divine religion, our Lord suffered his disciples to frequent the assemblies of the Jews, and in some points to comply with the observance of the law, till a more pure and spiritual form of worship could conveniently be established. This is the reason why we find the apostles so frequently in the temple, at the stated hours of prayer.

Ver. 2. *A certain man, lame from his mother's womb]* The inveteracy of this man's infirmity, the notoriety of it to most of the Jews, on account of the place where he was laid, not to mention other circumstances which here occur, were sufficient to prove the reality of the miracle, and to render it more conspicuous. The gate here called beautiful, for its richness and curious workmanship, is by Josephus called "The Corinthian gate." About one hundred and eighty years before this, the city of Corinth had been taken and burned by the Romans; and, in the burning of the city, multitudes of statues and images of brass, gold, and silver, being melted down and running together, they made that mixture which thence was called Corinthian brass, and which the ancients valued above gold or silver. This gate, on the east side of the temple, was made of that brass, and it exceeded the other gates in its dimensions, and in its workmanship, as well as in the richness of the metal, though most of them were covered over with silver or gold. It was thirty cubits high, and fifteen broad, and was added by Herod the Great.

Ver. 6. *Silver and gold have I none;]* This was after the estates were sold, Ch. ii. 45. and plainly shews how far the apostles were from enriching themselves by the treasures which passed through their hands. By his mentioning gold as well as silver, which a beggar like this could not expect to receive, he probably meant to speak of himself, as continuing still a poor man, and not merely to say that he had no gold about him. How unlike those of his supposed successors are St. Peter's words and actions! Can the bishop of Rome either say or do the same?

Ver. 8. *Walking, and leaping, and praising God.]* It was prophesied, Isaiah, xxxv. 6. that the lame man should leap as an hart. Now was that prophecy fulfilled, as well as by our Saviour's curing multitudes that had been lame. Nothing

16 And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as *did* also your rulers.

18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

^a Power and authority. Ver. 6. Ch. 4. 7, 10. ^b Ver. 6. Ch. 14. 9. Luke, 7. 50. ^c 1 Pet. 1. 21. Mat. 15. 28. ^d Luke, 23. 34. John, 7. 26, 48. & 16. 3. Ch. 11. 27. ^e 1 Tim. 1. 13. ^f 1 Cor. 2. 8. ^g 2 Cor. 3. 14. &c. ^h Mat. 3. 2. & 14. 17. ⁱ Il. 43. 25. & 44. 22. & 55. 7. Ch. 2. 38. ^j Nch. 1. 4. ^k Pf. 51. 1, 2, 9. & 103. 14. ^l 2 Tim. 1. 18. ^m Pf. 17. 15. Luke, 16. 25. ⁿ Kev. 17. 14, 15. ^o Rom. 11. 25. ^p 2 Theil. 1. 7, 10. ^q Ch. 1. 11. & 17. 31. ^r Ver. 22, 24. Ch. 10. 43. ^s Col. 2. 17. ^t Ch. 1. 11. ^u Heb. 1. 3. & 4. 14. & 8. 1. & 10. 12, 13. ^v Rom. 8. 21. ^w 2 Pet. 3. 13. with 1. 21. ^x Luke, 1. 70.

thing can be more beautifully descriptive of the wondering exultation, the joy and astonishment of this man, than the words before us.

Ver. 21. *Held Peter and John,*] The man still hung about his two benefactors, as fearing perhaps that he should lose the use of his limbs again, if he parted with them; for he could scarce yet, for joy, believe his own sense and experience. See on John, x. 23.

Ver. 13. *The God of Abraham, &c.*] This was wisely introduced here by St. Peter in the beginning of his discourse, that it might be evident he taught no new religion inconsistent with the Mosaic, and was far from having the least design to divert their regard for the God of Israel into any other channel. *Whom ye delivered up,* was peculiarly addressed to the rulers and sanhedrim; *and denied,*—renounced or disowned him for your king, was more particularly addressed to the common people.

Ver. 15. *Killed the Prince of life,*] Even him to whom the Father had given to have life in himself, John, v. 26. and whom he had empowered to give eternal life to those who believed in him. There is a peculiar beauty and energy in the contrast between their *killing the prince of life,* and *their interceding for a murderer, a destroyer of life.* The Jews had the testimony of the prophets,—the prediction of Christ himself,—the evidence of the Roman soldiers, of his body's being no where to be found; of the women, the disciples and apostles to whom he had appeared, many of whom bore witness before the Sanhedrim to his resurrection; and who, having just now wrought a miracle upon a lame man, declare that they had done it in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom, say they, you have crucified, but God hath raised from the dead. This surely was evidence sufficient to convince any reasonable and unprejudiced person, and consequently to acquit our Lord of the promise of giving that evil generation sufficient proofs of his being risen from the dead.

Ver. 16. *And his name through faith in his name*] *And by faith in his name he hath strengthened this man, whom you see and know; yea, his name, and the faith which is in him, hath given him this perfect soundness before you all.* Heinsius. Dr. Heylin renders it, *And his name, through our faith in it, hath procured strength to this man, whom you see and know. The*

faith, I say, which is by him, hath effected this perfect cure, which you all behold.

Ver. 17. *I wot that through ignorance*] *I know,—I am sensible, &c.* Probably if it had not been so, they would have been immediately destroyed, or reserved to vengeance, without any offer of pardon. Yet it is plain that their ignorance, being in itself highly criminal, amid such means of information, did not excuse them from very great guilt. See the note on John, ix. 41.

Ver. 19–21. *Repent ye therefore, &c.*] Dr. Benson paraphrases these verses thus: “As there is great ground for hope and encouragement, let me intreat of you to *repent*, and immediately accept of Jesus as the Messiah; that your sins may be blotted out, and the happy and refreshing times may come upon you from the presence of the Lord. I speak not [merely] concerning the safety and consolation which the embracing Christianity will at present afford you; but [also] of the approach of that glorious time, when God shall send again this same Jesus, who is appointed beforehand to be the judge of the world, and your Saviour, if you believe and obey him. I know you expect a temporal Messiah, to reign in this very age among you here upon earth, and to free you from your present subjection to the Romans; but in vain do you expect it: for the heavens have received him, and there he must continue till the grand time of the restoration of all things. Nor do I speak of things wholly new and unheard of; for these things run through the prophets in general, from the beginning of the Mosaic dispensation, unto the sealing up of prophecy at the death of Malachi.” The phrase *may be blotted out*, ver. 19. alludes to the erasing of any thing which is committed to writing. Instead of *when the times of refreshing shall come*, the Greek should be rendered, according to the above paraphrase, *that seasons of refreshment may come*. As calamities are compared in scripture to drought and excessive heat; so likewise deliverance from them is represented under the image of a very cool and refreshing breeze. The word ἀποκαταστάσις, rendered *restitution*, may be well and properly explained of regulating the present disorders in the moral world, and the seeming inequalities of providential dispensations. *Since the world began*, is in the original, ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς,

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have

spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

^e Deut. 18. 15—18. Ch. 7. 37. ^f Jer. 23. 5, 6. Gal. 4. 4. Rom. 8. 3. Heb. 2. 11, 12. ^g John, 1. 17, 18. Heb. 3. 2—5. ^h Mat. 17. 5. Heb. 12. 25. ⁱ Deut. 18. 19. Heb. 2. 2, 3. & 10. 20. & 12. 25. Exod. 23. 21. 1 Sam. 2. 25. ^k Luke, 24. 25, 27, 44. John, 1. 45. Ch. 10. 43. & 17. 27. & 26. 22, 21 & 8. 25. Rom. 7. 21. 1 Pe. 1. 10—12. ^l Ps. 50. 7. & 81. 8—10. Ch. 2. 39 & 13. 26. ^m Gen. 17. 9. & 18. 18. & 22. 18. & 27. 4. & 28. 11. Gal. 3. 8, 16. Ch. 2. 30. Rom. 15. 8—12, 16, 10. ⁿ Mat. 10. 5, 6. & 15. 24. Luke, 21. 47. Ch. 13. 25, 26, 38, 40. 2 Pet. 3. 9. ^o Pl. 72. 17. Eph. 1. 3. Gal. 3. 9, 13, 14, 22. ^p Dan. 9. 24. Mal. 3. 1—3. Mat. 1. 21. 1 John, 3. 5. 8. Ver. 19.

ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς, that is, from the beginning, of what they usually called the age then present, that is, of the Jewish dispensation: in opposition to which the kingdom of Christ was called *ἀπὸν μέλλον*, the age to come. See on 2 Tim. iv. 16. To confirm this, it may be observed, that he here begins with Moses, and says nothing of the patriarchs before Moses, particularly nothing of Abraham; but when the writers of the New Testament run back as high as Abraham, the phrase then is *πρὸ χρόνων ἀνθρώπων*, before the times under the law.

Ver. 22, 23. *A prophet shall the Lord, &c.*] See the note on Deut. xviii. 15, &c. The word *hear*, ver. 23. signifies to obey. One cannot imagine a more masterly address than this, to warn the Jews of the dreadful consequence of their infidelity, in the very words of Moses their favourite prophet; out of a pretended zeal for whom, they were ready to reject Christianity, and to attempt its destruction.

Ver. 24. *From Samuel, &c.*] All the prophets from Samuel, and as many as have spoken afterwards. Or, and as many of the following ones as have spoken.

Ver. 26. *Unto you first*] Accordingly the gospel was, by the grace of our blessed Redeemer, every where offered first to the Jews. Had it been otherwise, humanly speaking, many who were converted in this method, might have been exasperated and lost. The word *ἀναστήσας*, here rendered *having raised up*, does not refer to the resurrection from the dead, as it generally does in other places, but to the word *ἀνὰ στή*, ver. 22.—raising him up as a prophet in Israel. The next clause may mean, “God sent his Son Jesus to bless you with the highest blessings; namely, to save as many of you as will accept his grace, from your greatest enemies; that is, from your sins, and from the deserved punishment.” Many commentators, however, give the sentence a different turn, rendering the last clause upon your turning every one of you, &c. or every one of you turning, &c. that is, “All those of you who through grace turn from sin, shall be entitled to his blessing.” But the former seems to me the preferable reading, as the great gospel blessing is the conversion of sinners. Nor can it be any reasonable objection to say, with Orobio, that Christ did not in fact turn every one of them from their iniquities, since it must be allowed, that he took every such

step as was proper for that purpose, consistently with his divine perfections.

Inferences.—Happy are those souls, who are so formed for devotion, that the proper returning seasons of it, whether public or private, are always welcome! Doubly delightful is that *friendship*, which, like this of Peter and John, is endeared, not only by taking sweet counsel together, but by walking to the house of God in company! Psalm lv. 14.

If we desire that this devotion should be acceptable, let us endeavour not only to lay aside all the malignant passions, and to lift up holy hands without wrath; but let us stretch out our hands in works of benevolence and kindness. To our piety, let us add the most diffusive charity which our circumstances will permit; and there are none whose circumstances will forbid every exercise of it. As for those who have neither silver nor gold,—such as they have, let them give.

The holy apostles, we see, had not enriched themselves, by being entrusted with the distribution of those goods which were laid at their feet; but had approved themselves faithful stewards. The members of Christ were far dearer to them than any temporal interest of their own; and fatally, most certain, would the true church, in all ages, have been mistaken, if it had measured the worth of its pastors by their wealth. They bestowed nevertheless a much more valuable bounty. And if it be more desirable to heal men's bodies than to enrich them, how much more advantageous is it to be the instruments of healing their souls? Which, if it be ever accomplished, must surely be in the same name, even that of Jesus of Nazareth. May he strengthen the feeble powers of fallen nature, while we are attempting to raise men up! And may spiritual health and vigour, when restored, be improved, like the cure wrought on this lame man, in the service of God, and in a thankful acknowledgment of his goodness!

We are not to wonder, that, as the name of Jesus, their great Deliverer, is incomparably precious to all that truly believe, such have also some peculiarly tender friendships for the persons, by whose means he has wrought this good work upon them. O may many such friendships be formed now, and

CHAP. IV.

The rulers of the Jews, offended with Peter's sermon, (though thousands of the people were converted that heard the word,) imprison him and John. After, upon examination, Peter, boldly avouching the lame man to be healed by the name of Jesus, and that by the same Jesus only we must be eternally saved, they command him and John to preach no more in that name, adding also threatening. Whereupon the church fleeth to prayer: and God, by moving the place where they were assembled, testified that he heard their prayer, confirming the church with the gift of the Holy Ghost, and with mutual love and charity.

[Anno Domini 33.]

AND as they spake unto the people, ^a the priests, and the ^{*} captain of the temple,

^a Ch. 5. 17. Hosea, 6. 9. Luke, 22. 52. John, 18. 3. ^{*} Or ruler. ^b Mat. 22. 23. Ch. 23. 8. ^c Ch. 5. 17, 24. & 7. 54. & 13. 45. Gen. 3. 15. Neh. 2. 10. Job, 5. 2. Eccl. 4. 4. ^d 1 Cor. 15. 20. Ch. 3. 13—21, 26. & 23. 8. Mat. 22. 23. ^e Mat. 10. 17—22. & 24. 9. Luke, 21. 12—18. John, 16. 2, 3. Ch. 5. 18. & 16. 23, 21. ^f See ch. 2. 37, 41, 47. Gen. 49. 10. Il. 45. 24. & 49. 24, 25. John, 12. 24. & 14. 12. Rom. 10. 17. ^g Mat. 26. 5, 57. & 27. 1. Luke, 3. 2. John, 11. 47, 49. & 18. 13, 14. Pf. 2. 1, 2. & 3. 1.

and be perfected in glory! And, in the mean time, may the ministers of Christ be watching every opportunity of doing good, and, especially, when they see men under any lively impressions which tend towards religion! May they have that holy mixture of zeal and prudence, which taught the apostles now to speak a word in season—a word which proved so remarkably good, and was owned by God in so singular a manner, for the conversion and salvation of multitudes that heard it!

Happy the minister, whose heart is thus intent upon all opportunities of doing good, as these apostles were. Happy that faithful servant, who, like them, arrogates nothing to himself, but centres the praise of all in *him*, who is the great Source from whom every good and perfect gift proceeds. Happy the man, who is himself willing to be forgotten and overlooked, that God may be remembered and owned! He, like this wise master-builder, will lay the foundation deep in a sense of sin, and will charge it with all its aggravations on the sinner, that he may thereby render the tidings of a Saviour welcome, which they can never be till this burden has been felt. Yet will he, like St. Peter, conduct the charge with tenderness, and respect, and be cautious not to overload, even the greatest offender.

We see in this speech of St. Peter the absolute necessity of *repentance*; which therefore is to be solemnly charged upon the consciences of all, who desire that *their sins may be blotted out of the book of God's remembrance*, and that they may share in that *refreshment*, which nothing but the sense of his pardoning love can afford. Blessed are those that have experienced it; for they may look upon all their present comforts as the dawning of eternal glory to their persevering souls; and having *seen Christ* with an eye of faith, and received that *important cure*, which nothing but his powerful and gracious name can effect, may be assured that *God will send him again*, to complete in all his faithful saints the work he has so graciously begun, and to reduce the seeming irregularities of their present state into everlasting harmony, order, and beauty.

In the mean time, let us adore the wisdom of his provi-

and the ^b Sadducees, came upon them,

2 ^c Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached ^d through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them, and ^e put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now even-tide.

4 Howbeit ^f many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

5 ^g And it came to pass on the morrow, that ^h their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

6 And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas,

dence, and the fidelity of his grace, which have over-ruled the folly and wickedness of men to subserve his own holy purposes, and have accomplished the *promise* so long since made of a *Prophet to be raised up to Israel like Moses*, and indeed gloriously superior to him, both in the dignity of his character and office, and in the great salvation which he was sent to procure. This salvation was *first* offered to *Israel*, which has rendered itself so peculiarly unworthy by *killing the Prince of Life*. May we rejoice that it is now *published to us*, and that God has condescended to *send his Son to bless us*, sinners of the Gentiles, in turning us from our iniquities! And viewing this salvation in its true light, may we remember, that if we are not willing to turn *from iniquity*, from *all iniquity*, from those iniquities which have been peculiarly *our own*, it is impossible we should have any share in it!

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Among the many miracles performed by the apostles, one notable one is recorded in this chapter.

1. The apostles by whom it was wrought, were Peter and John: they were going up to the temple together at the stated hour of prayer, being *the ninth hour*, or three o'clock in the afternoon.

2. The poor object, on whom the miracle was performed, was a beggar, a cripple from his mother's womb, who lay *at the Beautiful gate of the temple*, which was made of Corinthian brass, more precious than gold, and asked *alms of them that entered into the temple*: seeing Peter and John, therefore, about to enter, he asked of them *an alms*. Note: (1.) Those who are poor, and incapable of working, are the true objects of charity. (2.) They who are drawn to the temple by the love of God, will have their hearts enlarged in tenderest compassion toward the wants of the necessitous.

3. Peter and John, looking earnestly at him, bid him attend to them, as about to shew him a singular favour; and the poor man, expecting an alms, looked attentively at them: when Peter addressed him, saying, *Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have*, and what silver and gold

never

and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

^b Mat. 10. 17. & 24. 9. Ch. 5. 27. Mark, 13. 9.

7 And when they had ^b set them in the midst, they asked, ' By what power, or by what name, have ye done this ?

^b Exod. 2. 14. Mat. 21. 23. John, 1. 18. Ch. 7. 27.

never could procure, give I thee : in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk ; by his authority I speak, and his power shall enable thee for what I command. Then taking him by the right hand, he lifted him up, and immediately the astonishing cure was wrought, his feet and ancles received strength. Note ; (1.) The riches of grace are infinitely more valuable than the treasures of both the Indies. (2.) According to our abilities, we must be ready to communicate of the gifts of God with which he has entrusted us, whether temporal or spiritual. (3.) In this impotent man, every sinner may read his own case and cure. [1.] By nature, without grace, from our birth, thus spiritually paralytic are we. [2.] The temple is the place where the poor impotent sinner should be found, for there the Lord dispenses the alms of his grace. [3.] The ministers of Christ say not in vain *arise and walk*, to those who have no power of themselves to help themselves, but come penitently to Jesus ; for he, in whose name they speak, does, by his Spirit accompanying their word, enable the helpless but believing soul for that which they enjoin. [4.] Christ first lays hold of the awakened sinner by the hand of his grace, and then the sinner lays hold of Christ by the hand of faith, and feels an unusual power communicated to his paralytic soul.

4. The lame man, transported with joy at the strange alteration which he instantly felt, *leaped up* with astonishing agility, and stood firm on his feet, and *walked* about before all present in token of his perfect cure, and entered with his benefactors into the temple, *walking, and leaping, and praising God*. Note ; (1.) If our souls have received a spiritual cure, then will our hearts and lips be filled with praise and thanksgiving to the God of all grace, and we shall be happy in employing the strength he has given us, in walking in his holy ways. (2.) They who have found a blessing from the ministry of Christ's servants, will not fail to accompany them into the temple, that they may reap farther benefit from their prayers and discourses.

5. The people who beheld him, were struck with wonder and surprize at seeing him thus walking and praising God, knowing that it was the same cripple who had lain at the gate of the temple ; and whilst, as in an ecstasy, he hung about Peter and John, expressing his unutterable gratitude for this mercy received by their means, the people gathered round them in the part of the temple called Solomon's porch, *greatly wondering* at this amazing miracle, and at those who wrought it. Note ; They who have been made the instruments of good to our souls, cannot but be dear to us, and embraced with peculiar affection.

6dly, St. Peter, beholding the concourse of people assembled on this occasion, improves so happy an opportunity, to preach the gospel to those who seemed so affected with the miracle before them. A word in season, how good is it !

VOL. I.

1. He humbly disclaims all the honour of the miracle, which was due to his Master alone. *Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this*, when so much greater cures have been before performed among you by the Lord Jesus ? or *why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk ?* Note ; (1.) The most successful ministers must be the most humble ; the more they are admired of others, the lower they must lie down at the feet of Jesus, ascribing to him alone the praise. (2.) We are too apt to idolize the men and ministers, who have been made signal instruments of good to us ; but we should look farther, even to him who alone *giveth the increase*.

2. He preaches to them that Jesus, whom they had crucified, by whose power alone this miracle was wrought. *The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, that covenant-keeping God, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus*, owning him in this high character ; not only by all the miracles which he had wrought, but by his resurrection from the dead, and ascension to heaven ; *whom ye delivered up as a malefactor into the hands of the Roman governor, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, as your King Messiah, requiring his crucifixion ; when he, convinced of his innocency, was determined to let him go. But ye, instigated by the priests and rulers, with savage barbarity denied the holy One, and the Just, whom none could ever convince of sin, and whose spotless purity none could impeach ; and as a most provoking aggravation of your guilt, desired a murderer to be granted unto you, in preference to him, and killed the Prince of Life, the author and fountain of natural, spiritual, and eternal life ; whom God hath raised from the dead ; defeating all the malice of his enemies, rolling away the reproach of the cross, and exalting him to a state of the most transcendent glory ; whereof we are witnesses ; have seen and conversed with him after his resurrection, and are endued with these miraeulous powers by him, to make our testimony more regarded. And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know ; acting under his authority, and trusting on his power, this incontestable miracle has been performed : yea, the faith which is by him, exercised upon him as the object, and wrought in us by him as the author, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all ; for this thing was not done in a corner, but publicly in the temple ; and the perfection of the cure was evident to every beholder.*

3. Yet dreadful as their guilt was, he means not to drive them to despair. *And now, brethren, exceeding sinful as your conduct has been, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers ; I persuade myself that many, I would hope the most, who were engaged in that black deed, were blindly hurried on by their passions and prejudices, and knew not what they did ; else they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, 1 Cor. ii. 8. But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled ; and*

6 M

though

8 Then Peter, ^k filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

9 If we this day be examined of the ^l good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

^k Ver. 31. Mat. 10. 19. Luke, 12. 11, 12. Jer. 8. 9, 18, 19.

^l Ch. 3. 7.

though this be no extenuation of your wickedness, yet since the very end of his dying was, in order to obtain remission of sins for the most miserable and desperate, there is still hope, even for those whose hands are red with his blood. *Note;* (1.) Love bids us hope the best, even of the vilest; and not to impute to them worse motives than may really have influenced them. (2.) The wickedness of men God can overrule, and bring good out of their evil.

4. He exhorts to an immediate penitent return to him whom they had crucified. *Repent ye, therefore, of this atrocious deed; and, since there is yet hope towards God, be converted:* turn to this Jesus, as the true Messiah; laying aside your pride and prejudices, yield up your hearts to his guidance and government, and fly to the atoning blood of his cross, which was shed for this very purpose, *that your sins, however great, numberless, and aggravated, may be blotted out, and your guilt cancelled, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;* those joyful seasons of consolation which now you will experience, when turning unto him you shall be filled with joy and peace in believing, and shall also find favour with him, and, if faithful unto death, be acknowledged by him, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints: in his presence then, if you perseveringly cleave to him, shall you possess bliss unutterable, and under his shadow enjoy an eternal rest from all the burdens of sin, sorrow, and temptation. For *he shall send Jesus Christ, this Jesus whom he hath made both Lord and Christ,* and appointed the Judge of quick and dead, even him *which before was preached unto you, in all the sacred oracles, and by his own blessed ministry; whom the heaven must receive, whither we have seen him ascend, and where he now sits enthroned in glory, until the times of restitution of all things;* when the mystery of godliness shall be finished, and his eternal kingdom shall finally come at the great day of his appearing to judge the world. *Note;* (1.) The great inducement to evangelical repentance, is the promise of pardon and forgiveness. (2.) They who truly turn to Jesus, shall find refreshing and rest to their souls, and reconciliation with a pardoning God. (3.) Though Christ be now exalted to his throne, we expect his coming a second time: Oh that we may be prepared to meet him! then shall it be a *time of refreshing* indeed; when, seeing him face to face, his faithful followers shall all be changed most perfectly into the same image, be like and with him for ever.

5. He supports what he had said by an appeal and reference to the scriptures, which they professed to believe. For these are the things *which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began,* concerning the kingdom of his Messiah. For instance, *Moses,* that great lawgiver, in whom you glory, he bore a noble testimony to Jesus, and truly said unto the fathers in the wilderness, *A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren,* sprung from the stock of Abraham, *like unto me;* who shall with far greater dignity be a Mediator between

God and you; shall deliver you from worse than Egyptian bondage, and, from the most intimate knowledge of God, shall reveal to you his mind and will, if you believe in him: *him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you;* embracing his doctrines, obedient to his precepts, and observant of his institutions with implicit faith, unbounded love, and unreserved submission; yielding up your souls to his guidance and government. *And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will not hear that prophet, and believe and obey him, shall be destroyed from among the people, cut off by some notorious stroke of divine vengeance, or finally and eternally separated from the faithful. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, in whom the spirit of prophecy revived, and those that follow after, in a long succession, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days; speaking of the Messiah, his sufferings, glory, and kingdom, from its beginning on earth, till its consummation in heaven.*

6. He draws a most encouraging motive from their relation to the prophets, to receive their word, and believe in the Messiah, of whom they testified. *Ye are the children of the prophets, their disciples, and descended from the patriarchs, and heirs of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed, which Seed was Christ, whose salvation shall extend to all nations; therefore, being the immediate offspring of the great Father of the faithful, Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sending him in the human nature, and raising him from the dead, hath sent him to bless you, by his own ministry and labours, and now, by investing us with power and authority to preach his gospel, in which the most powerful motives are urged, in order to your conversion; and which his Spirit makes effectual in turning away every one of you, that believe in him, from his iniquities, and bringing you to pardon and salvation.* *Note;* (1.) Jesus is come to be the blessing of the world. Without him, the curse and wrath of God must have for ever abode upon us all. (2.) Iniquity is the cause of all our misery; when Christ comes to the sinner, he not only pardons his guilt, but converts his soul, and thus effectually recovers him to the life of grace, in order to bring him, if faithful, to the life of glory.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1, 2. The priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, &c.] These three kinds of men, on different accounts, were prejudiced against the apostles. The *priests* were offended, because the apostles, whom they looked upon only as private men, undertook to teach publicly; the *Sadducees* were displeased, because, in testifying the resurrection of Christ, they effectually preached that doctrine which they disclaimed and detested, the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead; and the *captain*, who was placed with a band of soldiers near the temple, in order to guard it, seeing such a crowd of people gathered together about the apostles, began to apprehend a tumult.

Ver.

10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," whom ye crucified, whom

God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11 ° This is the stone which was set at

Or power or authority. Ver. 7. Ch. 3. 6, 16. ° Ch. 2. 23, 24. & 3. 13—15. & 13. 27—30. Mat. 20. 18, 19. & xxvi—xxviii. Mark, xiv—xv. Luke, xxii—xxiv. John, xviii—xx. ° Pl. 118. 22. Mat. 21. 42. If. 18. 16. & 49. 7. & 53. 3. Rom. 9. 33. 1 Pet. 2. 7, 8.

Ver. 3. For it was now even-tide.] Or, evening. As Peter and John went up to the temple at three in the afternoon, this expression makes it probable that some hours might be spent in preaching to the people; and consequently, that what we have in the former chapter, is only an abstract, or brief heads of the discourses that they made on this occasion, which probably is the case in general with the speeches recorded by the sacred historians, as well as by others.

Ver. 4. The number of the men was about five thousand.] Dr. Beason concludes, that five thousand men were converted on this occasion, besides the three thousand mentioned before, chap. ii. 41. If it had been said, as there, that so many were added to the church, it would have determined the sense as he and others understand it; but the use of the word ἐγένεθη here, became, favours the interpretation, that the whole number, including those who had been converted before, became about five thousand. See ch. i. 15. in the Greek. It is hardly to be thought, unless it were expressly asserted, that another day should be so much more remarkable for its number of converts, than that on which the Spirit descended. However, supposing only two thousand were now converted, it is a glorious proof of the truth of Christianity; and no example can be given of the philosophers, or any other teachers, succeeding so gloriously in making converts to such holy and self-denying doctrines.

Ver. 6. And Annas the high-priest, and Caiaphas,] See the note on Luke, iii. 2. John and Alexander were evidently persons of great note among the Jews at this time; and it is not improbable, as Dr. Lightfoot and others suppose, that the former might be the celebrated Rabbini Jochanan Ben Zaccai, mentioned in the Talmud, the scholar of Hillel; and that the latter might be the Alabarch, or governor of the Jews at Alexandria, brother to the famous Philo-Judæus, and in great favour with Claudius Cæsar. Josephus mentions him often, and tells us among other things, that he adorned nine gates of the temple with plates of gold and silver. Of the kindred of the high-priest, is read by some, Of the pontifical family. Dr. Hammond explains this of the twenty-four members of the Aaronic family, who presided over the twenty-four courses; others refer it to those who were nearly related to Annas and Caiaphas; but Grotius thinks that it includes the kindred of those who had lately been in the office of high-priest, which, he says, made them members of the Sanhedrim. These were the very persons who had procured the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore they thought themselves highly concerned to suppress his disciples and their doctrine.

Ver. 7. And when they had set them in the midst,] It was the custom for the Sanhedrim to sit almost in a circle, or oval, and to set the prisoners in the midst of them: St. Peter and St. John being so placed, the court demanded of

them, "By what power, human or diabolical, angelic or "divine, have you cured this man; whose name have you "invoked to the working of this miracle; or from whom "had you your authority to preach so publicly to the "people?—From us you had it not, though we alone "have the authority to give a commission to any man to "do so?"

Ver. 9. Made whole;] Σέσωται, he is cured, or saved. See the note on ver. 12.

Ver. 10. By the name of Jesus, &c.] The time of Christ's resurrection was that of the celebrating the passover, the most solemn festival of the Jews; the scene was in Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea, and at that time crowded with Jews, who came thither from all parts of the earth, to keep the passover. The actors and witnesses were the chief priests and elders, Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, and the Roman soldiers who guarded the sepulchre. Now, if the account of guarding the sepulchre had been false, it is not to be doubted, but the chief priests and elders, who are said to have obtained the guard, and sealed the door of the sepulchre, would, by some authentic act, have cleared themselves of the folly and guilt imputed to them by the evangelist. All the several charges upon the whole government of Judea, might have been answered at once by an attestation from the chief priests, setting forth, that they never demanded a guard to be set at the sepulchre, confirmed by the testimony of the Roman soldiers, (many of whom were probably at Jerusalem when the gospel was written,) denying that they were ever upon that guard. This, not only the reputation of the chief priests, but their avowed malice to Christ, and aversion to his doctrine and religion, required; and this they would probably have done at all events, had they been at liberty to propagate and invent what lie they pleased. But that a guard was set at the sepulchre, was, in all likelihood, by the dispersion and flight of the soldiers into the city, too well known in Jerusalem for them to venture at denying it: for which reason they were obliged to invent a lie consistent with that known fact, however absurd and improbable the lie might appear, when it came to be considered. Now, as the report put into the mouths of the Roman soldiers by the chief priests and elders, is no proof of the falsehood of this fact, but rather of the contrary; so does the naming the scene, the actors, and the witnesses, form a very strong proof of its being true, since no forger of lies, willingly and wittingly, furnishes out the means of his own detection; especially when we consider that this account is related by that evangelist, who is said to have composed his gospel for those Christians who dwelt in Judea, many of whom then living were probably at Jerusalem when this thing was done,—not to mention again the absurdity of the report of the disciples coming by night, and stealing the body, as it stands in the evangelist, and taking it, as it was afterwards prudently amended by

nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12 ^p Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven

given among men, whereby we must be saved.

13 ¶ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were ^q unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled ;

^p John, 14. 6. & 3. 18, 36. Mat. 1. 21. Ch. 10. 43. Rom. 3. 24. 1 Tim. 2. 5, 6. ^q Ch. 2. 7, 12. Mat. 4. 18—22.

the Sanhedrim, and propagated by an express deputation from them to all the synagogues of the Jews throughout the world ; in which, without making any mention of the Roman guard, they say no more than that the disciples came by night, and stole away the body,—taking it, we say, in the manner in which these wise counsellors were, on mature deliberation, pleased to put it, it may be sufficient to observe, that the theft charged upon the disciples was so far from being proved, that it was not so much as ever inquired into. And yet the accusers were the chief priests and elders of the Jews ; men in high reverence and authority with the people, vested with all the power of the Jewish state, and consequently furnished with all the means of procuring informations, and of gaining and extorting a confession. And what were the accused ? men of low birth, mean fortunes, without learning, without credit, without support ; and who, out of pusillanimity and fear, had deserted their Master, upon the first occasion offered of shewing their fidelity and attachment to him. And can it be imagined that the chief priests and council would not have made inquiry into the fact, the belief of which they took so much pains to propagate, had they themselves been persuaded of the truth of it ? And had they inquired into it, can it be supposed that out of such a number of mean persons as must have been privy to it, no one, either from honesty, or religion, or fear of punishment, or the hope of reward, would have betrayed the secret, and given them such intelligence as might have enabled them to put the question of the resurrection out of all dispute. For had it been once proved that the disciples stole away the body of Jesus, their word would hardly have been taken for his resurrection. But how did these poor men act ? Conscious of no fraud or imposture, they remained in Jerusalem a week or more, after the report of their having stolen their Master's body was spread over the city, and in about a month returned thither again : not long after which they asserted boldly, to the face of their powerful enemies and accusers, the chief priests and elders, that *God had raised from the dead that same Jesus whom they had crucified.* And what was the behaviour of these learned rabbins, these watchful guardians of the Jewish church and state ? Why, they suffered the disciples of Jesus, charged by their order with an imposture tending to disturb the government, to continue unquestioned at Jerusalem, and to depart thence unmolested ; and when, upon their return thither, they had caused them to be seized and brought before them, for *preaching through Jesus the resurrection,* what did they say to them ? Did they charge them with having stolen away the body of their Master ? Nothing like it : on the contrary, not able to gainsay the testimony given by the apostles to the resurrection of Jesus, vouched by a miracle just then performed by them in his name, they ordered them to withdraw, and conferred among themselves what they should do with them.

Ver. 11, 12. This is the stone, &c.] St. Peter's mentioning Christ as the *head of the corner*, naturally led to the thought of a spiritual and eternal salvation, which it was Christ's principal design to bring in ; and with relation to which alone this, and its kindred phrase, the *chief corner-stone*, are always used by our Lord and his apostles : see Luke, xx. 17. Eph. ii. 21, 22. 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7. And this spiritual benefit is called *salvation* about forty times in the New Testament ; whereas I do not find, that it once uses the noun *σωτηρια*, *salvation*, for miraculous cures ; no, nor for any merely temporal deliverance at all, unless in Acts, vii. 25. where Stephen says, that *Moses supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them ; or, as it is in the Greek, would give salvation to them :* and even that deliverance might be called by this name, because it was typical of the more glorious one by Jesus Christ. And St. Peter here speaks of a salvation which every one needs, including himself and all Israel : but surely it could not be said of himself and the whole council, and of all the people of Israel, ver. 10. that they needed miraculous cures in the name of Christ, by which, in that respect, they must be saved. I therefore can by no means think that this strong and lively passage is to be sunk and restrained, as some contend it should, to the case of working miracles : on the other hand, there seems to me to be a great beauty in the occasion that the apostle took, and in the gradation which he made, from the temporal deliverance which had been wrought in healing the poor cripple by the power of Christ, to that of a much nobler and more important kind, which is brought in by Christ to impotent and sinful souls ; he therein following the admirable custom of his great Lord and Master, who often took occasion from earthly to speak of spiritual things ; as particularly when, upon his having mentioned the miracle of the loaves, he discoursed at large concerning himself as the Bread of life. John, vi. 26—58. The 12th verse may be thus paraphrased : “ Nor is the spiritual and eternal salvation, to which his being the Head of the corner principally refers, to be found in any one whatsoever besides himself : for there is no other person of sufficient dignity, merit, and power, whose name can be pleaded “ or depended upon for salvation ; or whom God has graciously appointed or granted to the men of this lower “ world, by whom, *δει*, it is fit, or meet and worthy of “ God, that any of us should be saved ; or by whom we “ ought to expect, or ever can have, deliverance from sin “ and misery, from the curse of the law, and the wrath “ to come.” Raphelius, in a remarkable note on this text, endeavours, among other things, to prove that *ὄνομα*, or the name of a person, was a manner of speaking used in reference to one, regarded as God and the Author of salvation. See Raphel. ex Herod. p. 329.

Ver. 13. Unlearned and ignorant men,] *Illiterate men, and in private stations of life ; ἀγράμματοι καὶ ἰδιῶται, men*

' and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14 ' And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, ' they conferred among themselves,

16 Saying, " What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us ^x straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name

of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, ' Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 ^a For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21 So when they had further ^a threatened them, they ^b let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, ^c because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for ^d that which was done.

22 For the man was above ^e forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

23 ¶ And being let go, they went ^f to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

^{*} Mat. 10. 1—4. Ch. 1. 2, 3, 8, 13, 21. & 10. 39. [†] Ver. 10, 16. Ch. 3. 8—12. [‡] Ver. 1, 5, 6. [§] John, 11. 47, 48. & 12. 18, 19. Ch. 3. 9. Ver. 14. ^{||} Ch. 5. 28, 40. [¶] 1 Theff. 2. 16. Pf. 2. 1—3. John, 15. 18—21. Mat. 10. 22. [‡] Exod. 1. 17. Ch. 5. 29. Gal. 1. 10. [‡] Mat. 10. 27. Mark, 16. 15. Ch. 1. 8, 22. & 2. 32. & 3. 15. & 10. 39, 41. & 22. 15. & 5. 32. & 13. 31. [¶] 1 John, 1. 1—3. [‡] 2 Peter, 1. 16. [‡] Ver. 17, 18. Ch. 5. 28, 40. [¶] Pf. 31. 15. Luke, 21. 18. [‡] Ch. 5. 26. Mat. 14. 5. & 21. 26. Luke, 20. 6, 19. & 22. 2. [‡] Ch. 3. 6—11. & 5. 13. Ver. 16. [¶] Ch. 3. 2. John, 5. 5. Luke, 13. 16. Mat. 9. 20. [‡] Pf. 119. 63. & 15. 4. & 16. 3. Prov. 13. 20. Ch. 1. 13. & 2. 46. & 12. 12.

of no education, nor in any public rank of life, as the priests and magistrates were: *And they took knowledge of them, περιεβασθη, would read more properly, and they knew them.* Grotius observes, that the rulers, having often been present when Christ taught publicly, might have seen Peter and John near him, though perhaps they might have observed them more particularly the night that Jesus was taken, when they had attended their Lord to the house of Caiaphas.

Ver. 16. *A notable miracle*] *Γνωσιν, a signal and well-known miracle; one which could neither be doubted nor disproved.*

Ver. 17. *But, &c.*] "*Nevertheless:*" The word *Αλλα* is frequently used in this sense both by sacred and prophane writers.

Ver. 18. *Not to speak at all, &c.*] That is, privately; nor to teach, that is, publicly. This is the very thing which men, conscious of the truth of the apostles' testimony, and self-condemned, would do,—stop their mouths by violence, as they knew they could not answer them any other way.

Ver. 19. *Whether it be right in the sight of God*] As they professed to believe the being, and infinite perfections of God, they must, on their own principles, easily see the absurdity of expecting obedience to their commands from good men, who believed themselves divinely commissioned. There is a passage which bears some resemblance to this in the apology of Socrates, as recorded by Plato. When they were condemning him to death for teaching the people, he said, " O ye Athenians, I embrace and love you; but I will obey God rather than you; and if you would dismiss me, and spare my life, on condition that I should cease to teach my fellow-citizens, I would rather die

" thousand times, than accept the proposal." What are ten thousand subtillies of the antient philosophers, when compared with a sentiment like this. See Plato, Soerat. Apol. p. 23.

Ver. 21. *They let them go, &c.*] This dismissal was not intended as an acquittal; for it was customary among the Jews to try any accused person after his discharge, when new proofs started up against him. The *threatening* mentioned in the foregoing sentence, might possibly have included some declaration of this sort. Dr. Heylin reads the last clause, *Who all glorified God, &c.* So much wiser were the people than those who were over them. Nothing could contribute more to illustrate the miracle, than the circumstance mentioned, ver. 22. It shews that the man's case was desperate, and that his disorder was so inveterate and confirmed, as to be beyond the reach of medicine; yet was he in one moment completely cured by the word of the apostles. Who, after reading this account of the manner in which the rulers treated these apostles, could ever imagine that the disciples stole the body of Jesus, or that the chief priests and elders themselves believed they did? But it may perhaps be objected, that this account comes from *Christian* writers;—and could the objectors expect to meet with it in *Jewish* writers?—We might expect indeed to find in their writings some proofs of this charge upon the disciples; and had there been any, the chief priests, the adversaries of Christ, would doubtless not have failed to produce them. But the progress which Christianity made at that time in Jerusalem, is a stronger argument than even their silence, that no proof of this charge either was, or could be made. Could the apostles have had the imprudence to preach, and could so many thousand Jews have been weak enough to believe upon their testimony,

24 And when they heard ^e that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, ^h which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is :

25 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, ⁱ Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things ?

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy ^k holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, ^l both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 ^m For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings : and grant unto thy servants, that with ⁿ all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 ^o By stretching forth thine hand to heal ; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 ^p And when they had prayed, the place ^q was shaken where they were assembled together ; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

32 ^r And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul : neither said any of *them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common.

33 ^s And with great power gave the apostles

^e Pf. 103. 1, 2, & 107. 1, 2, &c. ^h Gen. i. ii. Exod. 20. 11. Jer. 32. 17. ⁱ Pf. 2. 1—3. with ver. 27—29. Mat. 16. 18. ^k Heb. 7. 26. Luke. 1. 35. 11. 61. 1. John, 10. 36. Ch. 3. 14. & 2. 36. Pf. 2. 6. ^l Luke, xxii. xxiii. Mat. xxvi. xxvii. Mark, xiv. xv. John, xviii. xix. Ch. 2. 23. ^m Mar. 26. 24, 53. Luke, 22. 22. & 24. 25—27, 41. Ch. 2. 23. & 3. 18. & 13. 27—29. ⁿ Ch. 9. 27. & 13. 46. & 14. 3. & 19. 8. & 26. 26. & 28. 31. Eph. 6. 19, 20. Ezek. 2. 6. 11. 58. 1. 2 Theff. 3. 1. ^o Ch. 2. 22. & 3. 6—12, 16. & 5. 12, 15. & 9. 34, 40. & 19. 12. ^p Ch. 16. 26. 2 Cor. 10. 4, 5. Joel, 2. 28. Ch. 2. 4. ^q Ch. 2. 44—46. Ezek. 11. 19. 1 Cor. 1. 10. Eph. 4. 3—6. Ver. 34—37. 1 Pet. 3. 8. 2 Cor. 13. 11. ^r Rom. 15. 19. Mat. 7. 29. 1 Theff. 1. 5. 1 Cor. 2. 4. Ch. 1. 8. & 2. 28. & 5. 29.

testimony, that Christ was risen from the dead, had it been proved that the disciples had stolen away his body ? An infidel may, if he pleases, believe this ; but let him account for it if he can.

Ver. 24. *Lord, thou art God, &c.*] The sense is, “ Lord, thou hast all power, and thy word is fulfilled. Men do rage against thee, but their rage is in vain.”

Ver. 27, 28. *For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, &c.*] We must here observe, that *the hand of God* most frequently in the Old Testament relates not so much to his power, as to his wisdom, and providential dispensations. So Job, xxvii. 11. *I will teach you by the hand of God*, that is, by his wisdom, in his providential dispensations. Ecclef. ii. 24. *That a man should enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God* : here *the hand of God*, is his favour, or gracious providence. See also Ezra, vii. 9. viii. 18. 22. Neh. ii. 8. 18. The phrase being here joined with God’s counsel, and applied to what was done by Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers, and also by the Jews, toward the crucifixion of the holy Jesus, — to which actions so highly displeasing to God, his power could not actually concur, or effectively incline them, — we have great reason here to prefer this import of the phrase before the other ; and then the meaning of the words will be, that Jews and Gentiles were assembled to accomplish those sufferings of our Saviour for mankind, which God had foretold, and by foretelling had determined should come to pass, according to those words of St. Paul, Acts, xiii. 27. *They that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets, — have fulfilled them, in condemning him, fulfilling all that was written of him*, ver. 29. As therefore St. Peter and St. Paul, by calling the Jews to repentance for this sin in cru-

cifying the Lord of life, evidence that their sin was not the less, because they did by it fulfil the counsel of God’s holy will and kind intentions to mankind, so do they consequently evidence, that God’s foreknowledge and determination of a thing future, does not impair the liberty of men’s wills in the accomplishment of it ; as all the ancient fathers have declared in this particular. At the same time we fully grant, that it is grace alone which gives to man the will or power to think, speak, or do any thing that is good.

Ver. 29. *That with all boldness, &c.*] Compare Prov. xvi. 1.

Ver. 31. *And when they had prayed, &c.*] God of old testified his acceptance of the sacrifices or prayers of the pious by sending down fire from heaven, or by appearing after some peculiar manner in the cloud of glory : but now the token of acceptance was, that the house where they were assembled was again shaken, and there was a second effusion of the Holy Spirit, perhaps attended with the like sound, and with the like appearance of a glory, as there had been at first on the day of Pentecost. It does not appear that they had by this second effusion any further knowledge communicated ; but they were hereby comforted after the discouragements which they had met with from the Sanhedrim ; and as they had prayed for fortitude, and a power of working more miracles, their prayer was heard, fresh courage infused, and further miraculous powers conferred, to assist them in their work, and to enable them to proceed cheerfully, and with an undaunted steadiness and resolution.

Ver. 32. *Of one heart and of one soul* :] This is a proverbial expression for the most intimate and endearing friendship.

witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus : and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked : for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet : and distribution was made unto every man

according as he had need.

36 And ¹ Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 Having land, ² sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

¹ John, 1. 16. Luke, 2. 52. Ch. 2. 4, 47. 1 Cor. 15. 10. ² Ver. 32, 37. Ch. 2. 45. & 5. 1-3. Mark, 10. 21. James, 1. 27. 1 John, 3. 17. Luke, 12. 33. & 16. 9. 1 Tim. 6. 19. ³ Not Mat. 13. 55. Mark, 19. 40. ⁴ Mat. 19. 29. Luke, 12. 33. & 16. 9. 1 Tim. 6. 19. Prov. 11. 24. 25. & 3. 9. Eccl. 11. 1, 2.

Ver. 33. And with great power gave the apostles, &c.] The word *ἀπέδιδεν*, rendered *gave*, signifies the restoring of something which is given as a charge, or intrusted to another. If it be taken in that sense here, it may serve to illustrate what is said, ver. 20. Several commentators understand the last clause of this verse, of the *grace* or *favour* which they had among the people, on account of their love, charity, zeal, and good conduct. See the note on ch. ii. 47. Diodati explains the word *χάρις*, "by the blessing of God, and the good will of the people."

Ver. 35. And laid them down, &c.] Orobio the Jew, in his conference with Limborch, has meanly insinuated, that it was no small advantage to poor fishermen to be treasurers of so considerable a bank; and some of our late infidels have hence in a more indecent manner taken occasion to asperse the apostles of our Lord, as if their conduct was influenced by worldly motives, and temporal views; and as if they greatly advanced their circumstances in life by turning apostles. But their whole character,—their upright, generous, and disinterested behaviour, their readiness to sacrifice their lives for the sake of truth and the welfare of mankind, shew that they were far above falsifying such a trust as this, for the sake of a little money. Accordingly, they very willingly transferred the management of this affair to other hands, ch. vi. 2, 3, &c. But we ought to take the whole history together; and then, besides the honourable testimony given to them by St. Luke in this verse, namely, that *they distributed unto every man, of that charity, according as he had need*; we must further consider, that God continued to them the power of working numerous, astonishing, and beneficent miracles; and that he enabled one of them to strike two of the members of the church dead upon the spot, for treachery and dissimulation, with respect to this very charity. And can we suppose that God would continue to shew such peculiar regard to men, who would embezzle part of a public charity, or make a bad use of any part of it? It must raise in every honest mind a just indignation to see such ungenerous reflections thrown out against the apostles of our blessed Lord, who patiently endured poverty and reproach, hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, bonds, scourgings, and imprisonments, and, after all, a violent death, to promote truth and righteousness on the earth. One can hardly help suspecting, that they themselves are men of extraordinarily bad hearts, who are so ready to charge others upon all occasions with dishonest designs and corrupt views; and it seems to intimate, what some

men would have done upon the like occasion. Where is the infidel to be found, who ever gave such proofs of his honesty as the apostles of our Lord have done! Men of that stamp, we know, have generally chosen to fall in with the established religion, and not to suffer any thing for their particular sentiments, how contrary soever to those of professed Christians around them.

Ver. 36, 37. Joses,—surnamed Barnabas,] Considering how common the names of *Joses* and *Joseph* were, there seems no just reason to conclude, as some have done, that this was the *Joseph* mentioned ch. i. 23. nor does there seem any reason to conclude that this *Joses* was called a *son of consolation*, to express the great consolation the brethren received from the sale of his estate. The name seems rather to refer to his extraordinary abilities for the ministerial work, and to those gifts of the Spirit, whereby he was enabled both to *comfort* and *exhort*; for the word *παράκλησις* implies both. See ch. xi. 23. As Barnabas was a Levite, he could not have sold or alienated his paternal inheritance; (see Lev. xxv. 34.) but the *land* or estate here spoken of might either have been some bequest made by will, or some purchased land in Judea, to which he might have a title till the next jubilee; or perhaps some land in Cyprus: and we may suppose it mentioned either as the first foreign estate sold, or as of some extraordinary value.

Inferences.—In the instance before us in the former part of this chapter, we may observe the natural but detestable effects of a proud, bigoted, overbearing temper, even where it seems least excusable. The Sadducees themselves, though they believed no future state of retribution, yet persecuted the apostles as eagerly, as if they, like some other Jews, had expected to merit heaven by their severity to them. Compare John, xvi. 2.

On the other hand, it is delightful to observe the zeal and courage with which Peter and John defended the cause of their crucified Redeemer, even in the presence of those by whom he had so lately been condemned. Thus can God give *power to the feeble*, and increase the *strength of them that have no might*, Isai. xl. 29.

The testimony which they bore is well worth our regard: *There is salvation in no other; neither is there any other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.* O that the ends of the earth might hear and reverence that name! That millions to whom it is yet unknown, may learn to build upon it all their hopes of salvation! May we never

bc

CHAP. V.

After that Ananias and Sapphira his wife, for their hypocrisy, at Peter's rebuke, had fallen down dead, and that the rest of the apostles had wrought many miracles, to the increase of the faith; the apostles were again imprisoned, but delivered by an angel; bidding them to preach openly to all: when, after their teaching accordingly in the temple, and before the council, they were in danger of being killed; but through the advice of Gamaliel, a great counsellor among the Jews, their lives were preserved under the providence of God, and they were only beaten: for which they glorified God, and ceased no day from preaching.

[Anno Domini 33.]

BUT a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2^b And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why^c hath Satan filled thine heart^d to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to^e keep back *part* of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words^f fell down, and gave up the ghost: and^g great fear

^a 2 Tim. 2. 20. John, 6. 70. Phil. 3. 19. ^b Ch. 4. 37. Josh. 7. 1. Mal. 3. 8, 9. Rom. 2. 22. ^c 1 Tim. 6. 10. 2 Kings, c. 20. ^d John, 33. 2, 27. & 8. 44. Luke, 22. 3. ^e Or no deceiv. Pl. 94. 7. 1f. 29. 15. Hof. 11. 12. ^f Num. 30. 2. Deut. 23. 21. Eccl. 5. 4. Pl. 50. 24. Prov. 20. 25. Ver. 2, 4, 9. Rom. 2. 21, 22. ^g 2 Cor. 10. 6. Numb. 14. 36, 38. Ver. 10. ^h Ch. 2. 43. Ver. 17. Pl. 119. 120.

be ashamed to own it, nor afraid to adhere to it! but speak of it with such a favour, and defend it with such a zeal, that they who are round about us *may take knowledge of us, that we have been with Jesus*, and trace the genuine effects of our intimate acquaintance with him.

Never was there an instance of a more memorable combat between the force of *evidence* and of *prejudice*; nor a more impudent attempt to bear down the cause of unquestionable truth by brutal violence, than that which this chapter holds out to us. But *great is the truth, and it will prevail*. May the ministers of the gospel never want that courage in the defence of it, which these holy men expressed; but always *judge it infinitely more reasonable, more safe, and more necessary to obey God than man!* Never may we be ashamed to profess our reverence and love to him, who is our supreme ruler, and our most bountiful friend! and may he give us such an inward and heart-influencing sense of the worth and sweetness of his gospel, as may effectually prevent our betraying or neglecting it.

The present season was indeed the golden age of the church; and it is impossible to trace the memoirs of it, if we love the cause of Christ, without a secret complacency and exultation of mind. How amiable and how venerable do the apostles and primitive converts appear in the native simplicity of the Christian character! And what a glory did the grace and Spirit of God put upon them; far beyond all that human establishments, splendid dignities, or ample revenues, could ever give to those who have succeeded them! while *the multitude of them had one heart and one soul*; and each was ready to impart to his brethren whatever he himself possessed. How high a relish of pleasure must they have received, and how must their joys have been multiplied by each of their number!

Thus does divine grace, when once it powerfully enters into the heart, open it into sentiments of generosity and love. Thus does it conquer that selfish temper which reigns so frequently in the minds of sinful men, and makes them like wild beasts, rather than like brethren to each other. Providence does not indeed call us *entirely to give up our possessions*, or to introduce a community of goods

among Christians, in circumstances so different from those which we have now been surveying. Yet surely it is always our *duty*, and will be our highest interest, to remember, that we are not *original proprietors* of what we possess, but *stewards*, who are to manage what is entrusted to our care, for the honour of our great Master, and the good of his family here on earth; continually ready to resign any part, or even the whole of it, whenever these important ends shall require such a resignation.

In the mean time, it behoves us frequently to *lift up our hearts* to the great and ever blessed God, who *bath made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them*, that he would support and extend the progress of that gospel in the world, which he hath so graciously begun to plant. *Kings may still set themselves, and rulers take counsel against it*; but he knows how to turn their counsels into foolishness, and their rage into shame. He hath anointed Jesus his holy Son with the oil of gladness, and placed him on his throne in heaven; and all the united malice and fury of his enemies can do no more, than what shall make part of his *wise and gracious scheme* for the government of his faithful people. Let us then pray that he would *give freedom of speech* to all who are employed in pleading his cause, and that he will plentifully anoint them with the effusion of his Spirit! Nor let the *signs and wonders which were done by the name of Jesus* in former ages, fail to encourage us in the hope, that he will never *desert a scheme* which he once so illustriously interposed to establish; and, consequently, let them animate us to exert ourselves in its service, whatever labours, threatenings, or dangers, may meet us in our way.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The success of the gospel could not but provoke Satan's enmity; and the inveterate enemies of the name of Christ cannot be expected long to be at rest.

1. The apostles continued to teach the people, and, as their grand subject, *preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead*. They both testified the certainty of his resurrection, and affirmed, that he was raised up for this purpose,

came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

pose, to be the author of spiritual and eternal life to all his believing persevering people, who should be raised up by him at the last day, to a glorious immortality.

2. Multitudes of their hearers believed: five thousand converts were added to the church, notwithstanding the enmity to which they saw their preachers exposed; so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed. *Note*; Where the gospel meets with the greatest opposition, it is usually attended with the most remarkable success.

3. The priests, the captain of the temple, who presided over the watches, and the Sadducees, grieved and vexed to the heart, that the doctrine of Jesus, which they had taken such pains to suppress, should now spread with such amazing rapidity; and that he whom they had ignominiously crucified, should be exalted as the resurrection and the life, as the author of all blessedness in time and eternity; rushed upon the apostles suddenly, seized them as criminals, and committed them to safe custody for the night, it being eventide, that they might be brought before the Sanhedrim the next day. *Note*; They who preach Christ faithfully, must prepare to suffer for him.

2dly, No sooner was the morning returned, than we have,

1. The court assembled to try the innocent prisoners; but little justice can be expected, when their judges are known to be their avowed and inveterate enemies. The rulers, elders, and scribes, the high-priest Annas, who now enjoyed that dignity, with Caiaphas, who had sat in the chair the year preceding, with John and Alexander, persons of distinguished note, and others of the high priest's kindred, were all leagued against two poor fishermen, to try if their power could not intimidate, or their learning confute, or their authority silence them.

2. The prisoners are arraigned. They set them in the *midst*, to answer before their judges the interrogatories which they chose to put to them, and haughtily demanded, by what power, human, divine, or diabolical; or by what name, by virtue of whose authority, or by the invocation of what name, have ye done this?

3. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, endued with singular boldness, and directed by the immediate influence of the Spirit, according to Christ's promise, (Mark, xiii. 11.) said unto them respectfully, addressing them as magistrates and men of rank, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we be examined as criminals, this day, of the good deed done to the impotent man; and you demand information, by what means such an act of mercy and power was performed, and he is made whole; we with pleasure appear to give you the fullest satisfaction. Therefore, be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, whom it highly concerns, that by the name, the precious, powerful, all-prevailing name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye have treated with the highest contempt, and most ignominiously crucified, but whom God raised from the dead, disappointing the impotent malice of his murderers: even by him, by this once despised, but now glorified Jesus, and by no power of our own, by

VOL. I.

no magic charm, but by faith in him alone, *dash this man stand here before you whole*. This Jesus is the stone spoken of Psalm cxviii. 22. which was set at naught of you, who by station and office should be builders of God's spiritual temple, but which is now exalted of God, and become the head of the corner, by which the church of God is supported and knit together. Neither is there salvation in any other; there is no spiritual or eternal salvation out of him, by the deeds of the law, or by any human power whatsoever; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved; God having appointed him to be the only Redeemer from sin, death, and hell; and all who believe not in him, must therefore perish everlastingly. *Note*; (1.) Salvation is every sinner's great concern. (2.) Of ourselves we have nothing but misery, sin, and wrath, and have no power of ourselves by nature to help ourselves. (3.) Christ alone can save a sinful soul, by the merit of his blood, and by the operation of his divine Spirit. (4.) God freely offers him in the gospel to the miserable, and invites all men to believe on him to the saving of their souls. (5.) They must inevitably and eternally perish, who neglect so great a salvation.

4. Such an answer quite confounded the court. When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, their undaunted courage, their readiness of speech, and powerful elocution; and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, had been brought up at none of the public seminaries, at the feet of none of their rabbins, nor had ever the least advantages of education; they marvelled at the intrepidity, wisdom, and eloquence which appeared in them; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus, in whose company they recollected they had seen them formerly; and beholding the man which was healed standing with them, who probably came ready to bear testimony for them, and to do honour to his benefactors, to whatever danger it might expose him, they could say nothing against it; the miracle was too notorious to be contradicted. *Note*; (1.) In Christ's cause, even before the greatest, we may well boldly stand forth; he will bear us through. (2.) They who have been with Jesus, will carry the marks of it visibly about them: like Moses on the mount, their faces will shine, and their holy and heavenly conversation proclaim their Master's glory.

3dly, How to punish those against whom they had no charge to lay, they knew not; yet fain would they brand them, if possible, with some mark of infamy.

1. In order to consult upon the case the more freely, they commanded the apostles to be led out of the council-chamber, while they conferred among themselves, saying, what shall we do to these men? our difficulties are greater than ever; for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it; so that to attempt it, would but expose our own characters: but, that it spread no further among the people, neither the fame of the miracle, nor the doctrine of Christ, in confirmation of which it was wrought, let us straitly

6 N

threaten

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? and she

said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that

threaten them, on pain of our highest displeasure, and at the peril of suffering the punishment due to their contumacy, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. Thus they hope, by silencing the ministers, to suppress the doctrines of the gospel. *And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus; breathing forth their impotent malice.* Note; (1.) The enemies of the gospel often join in close cabal how to suppress the growing progress of the truth; but he who sitteth on the heavens, laughs them to scorn. (2.) Many faithful ministers of Jesus, for the truths which they have maintained, have met the frowns and threatenings of proud priests and prelates, who would fain intimidate and silence them, that they should speak no more in the name of Jesus; but they despise their menaces; they are prepared to suffer, but will not be silent.

2. The prisoners give in their answers; they needed no premeditation to reply, and said unto them, *Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.* Can it be possible we should be silent, when acting under his express injunctions; or how can we thus acquit ourselves to our consciences, or mankind, for whose sake we preach this salvation of Jesus? Your commands therefore being incompatible with the superior obedience that we owe to God, cannot possibly be observed; *for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard; a necessity is laid upon us, and woe unto us if we preach not the gospel.* Note; (1.) Where the injunctions of men are contrary to the word of God, we must not hesitate a moment which we shall obey. (2.) They who have experimentally known the salvation which is in Jesus, and tasted its sweetness, cannot but delight to spread the favour of his name, and to make all men, as far as their influence reaches, know the grace which is in him.

3. Unable to fix the least accusation against the apostles, they were compelled reluctantly to let them go, repeating their former threatenings, to try if that would intimidate them, and *finding nothing how they might punish them, as they earnestly wished to do—because of the people, who would have risen up against them for such a flagrant act of injustice; for all men glorified God for that which was done; the multitude in general were convinced that this was the finger of God, and could not but adore him who had enabled these men to perform this act of power and mercy; for the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed, and had been so long known by the people, that the cure was rendered thereby the more singular and astonishing.* Note; (1.) God can put his restraints upon persecutors, and prevent them, by various considerations, from doing all the mischief to which they are inclined. (2.) They who in old age are cured by the gospel word, are more eminent monuments of divine mercy.

4thly, No sooner were the two apostles dismissed than,

1. They returned to their own company, not ashamed or afraid to join them, notwithstanding all the threatenings of the priests; and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them, and most probably their reply. Note;

We must never desert the society of our brethren. The world has its end, if it can confine our religion to our closets, and prevent our open profession of it, by joining those who appear on the Lord's side.

2. *When they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God, in prayer and praise, with one accord, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, speaking as if animated by one soul, and said, Lord thou art God, infinite in power, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; the great Creator and governor, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, and all events directed by thy providence and under thy controul; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things, endeavouring to suppress the glorious gospel of Jesus? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.* And now this prophecy is eminently fulfilled; *for of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed as the true Messiah promised so long before, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, conspiring to destroy the adorable Redeemer; but, in the execution of their barbarous and malicious design, thou didst overrule their wickedness for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done, bringing to thyself the greatest glory, to the Redeemer the greatest honour, and to lost souls a free and full salvation.* And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, restrain and disappoint their rage and malice; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, openly and zealously preaching thy gospel, in nothing dismayed by their adversaries; and own them in their testimony, *by stretching forth thine hand to heal: and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus; by the authority derived from this thy incarnate Son, and to the glory of his great name.* Note; (1.) In all our dangers, we should make application to him who is able to help us. (2.) All the wickedness and wrath of man shall turn to God's praise, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain. (3.) The sin of persecutors is not the less malignant, because God overrules it to subserve purposes of his own glory. (4.) God takes cognizance of all the malice of his people's foes, and hears their threatenings; therefore we need not fear them. (5.) They who are to preach the gospel to a gainsaying world, need to be often secretly looking up to God for boldness, that they may not, through fear or shame, be unfaithful to men's souls. (6.) Tokens of God's blessing and presence with us, are comfortable encouragements to us to persevere, even through much tribulation.

3. Their prayer receives an immediate answer from God. *When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, as a sensible token of the divine presence in the midst of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, feeling a growing ardour in their souls, experiencing fresh measures of strength, courage, and consolation communicated to them; and they spake the word of God with boldness.* Note; When God is for us, we need neither fear nor care who are against us.

5thly,

ye have ^b agreed together to ¹ tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the fact of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.

^a Gen. 3. 6. ¹ Exod. 17. 2. Numb. 14. 22. Pf. 78. 18, 56. & 95. 8, 9. ¹ Cor. 10. 9. Ver. 3, 4.

5thly, How beautiful is the scene presented to us in the concluding paragraph of the chapter! how unlike the schisms and divisions which have since unhappily rent the church of Christ!

1. *The multitude of them that believed, vast as the accessions lately made had been, were of one heart, knit together in love, united in sentiment, and seemed as it were actuated by one soul.*

2. *With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, proving the fact by incontestable evidence, and enforcing the truths connected therewith, confirming their testimony with signs and wonders, and preaching with the most intrepid boldness and zeal the glorious gospel committed to them; and great grace was upon them all, the most evident tokens of the divine favour rested upon them; and the effects of it were an entire contempt of the world, and most fervent love and charity towards all men.*

3. *They had all things common, and none said that ought of the things which he possessed, was his own, but freely gave up all for the general service; hence there was not any among them that lacked, the poorest being equally supported out of the common stock, while the richer members of the church, as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and of their own accord freely brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet, as trustees for the goods of the community; and distribution was made unto every man, by these faithful stewards, according as he had need. And Jesus, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation), probably from the admirable faculty that he possessed of speaking peace to wounded consciences; a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, either in Judea or in his own country, sold it, and brought the purchase money, which seems to have been very considerable, and laid it at the apostles' feet; a noble instance of enlarged and disinterested charity deserving a particular memorial. Note; (1.) What we have in the world is not *our own*, but God's; and, whenever he is pleased to call for it, should be employed in his service. (2.) If we are not called now to the same exercise of charity as in those days of the church's infancy, yet the rich must remember that they are still but God's almoners, and should approve themselves faithful stewards of the gifts entrusted to them. (3.) Objects of real need have a title to our relief according to our ability, especially those that are of the household of faith. (4.) One bright example provokes the zeal of others; and none who shew themselves faithful to Jesus and his cause, shall be forgotten by him.*

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1, 2. *But a certain man, &c.]* In Psalm cx. where our Saviour is prophetically described in the person of a king advanced to the throne of divine majesty, glorious and triumphant, it is said, that *his people, in the day of his power, should offer him free-will-offerings*; which alludes to

the Eastern custom of bringing presents to their kings on their inauguration. This prophecy was fulfilled in some small degree, in a temporal sense, as we find in the foregoing chapter; when, after Christ's ascension into heaven, and his inauguration was proclaimed by the descent of the Holy Ghost, they, who by believing in him acknowledged him their king, dedicated their goods to his service, selling their lands, &c. and laying down the money at the apostles' feet, to be distributed for the relief of the poor. But the consecration of the heart to him, makes infinitely the superior sense of the prophecy. Among those who had joined the church, there was one Ananias, who, as if he had intended to imitate the zeal and liberality of Barnabas, sold a possession of land for the supply of this charitable fund: but, after he had sold it, he conspired with his wife Sapphira privately to keep back part of the price, and yet publicly to deliver in the remainder as the whole price. St. Peter, who had the gift of discerning spirits, and probably received a direct revelation from heaven on the present occasion, immediately detected this lying and deceitful behaviour.

Ver. 3. *Why hath Satan filled thine heart, &c.]* The phrase rendered *filled thine heart*, signifies *emboldened*, as appears from the Septuagint version of Esther, vii. 5. and Eccles. viii. 11. *To lie to the Holy Ghost*, is expressed, ver. 4. by *lying unto God*, a plain proof that the Holy Ghost is God. The verse may be thus paraphrased: "But, upon this, the Holy Spirit, under whose direction St. Peter acted, immediately suggested to him the fraud, and the awful manner in which the divine wisdom saw fit to animadvert upon it: in consequence of which inward suggestion, looking sternly upon him, he said, O! Ananias, why hath Satan, through thine own wickedness in yielding to his temptations, filled thine heart with such a degree of covetousness, falsehood, folly, and presumption, that thou shouldst audaciously attempt to impose on the Holy Spirit himself, under whose special direction we are; and to secrete part of the price of the land which thou hast sold, when thou pretendest to have brought the whole?"

Ver. 4. *Whiles it remained, was it not thine own, &c.?* That is, "Before it was sold, was it not thine? and being sold, was not the money paid thee, and in thine own power?—Thou hast therefore no excuse for what thou hast done;"—for there were two cases, which might have been pleaded by Ananias, in excuse for his bringing part of the price;—if either he had not been the whole and sole proprietor of what was sold, or had not received the whole purchase-money. As for the first, it is a self-evident truth, that a man can sell no more than what belongs to him; so that if Ananias had been owner only of a part, he could dispose only of a part. Secondly, though he were the whole and sole proprietor of the land, and so had a right to sell it; yet, had not the whole purchase-money been received, he might still have been excused for bringing but a part. But Ananias could plead neither of these

10 ^k Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the Ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church,

and upon as many as heard these things.

12 ¶ And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and ^m they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

^k Ver. 5. ^l Mark, 16. 17, 18. John, 14. 12. Ch. 2. 22. 43 & 3. 6, 7. & 4. 30. & 9. 37, 40. & 13. 11. & 14. 3, 8. & 16. 16. & 19. 5, 11, 11. & 20. 9. & 23. 8. Rom. 15. 19. 2 Cor. 12. 12. Heb. 2. 4. ^m Ch. 2. 46. & 3. 11. & 4. 32. John, 10. 23.

these excuses; for St. Peter urges, "While it remained unfold, did it not remain thine? or wert not thou owner and proprietor? And when it was fold, was not the money it was fold for in thy possession?" The first words, *while it remained*, &c. shew that Ananias was not obliged or forced to sell his possession, but might have retained it if he pleased; which plainly shews, that contributing to the charitable fund, was not a matter of necessity, but purely voluntary. The whole verse may be thus paraphrased: "While you had the estate in your own possession, was it not a property which you might have kept, if you would? And after you thought fit to sell it, was not the money at your own disposal? You were under no necessity, either of selling it at all; or, afterwards, if you were minded to add any thing to the common stock for the use of the church, you were at full liberty to put in, either a part, or the whole of the price, just as you pleased: Why then have you thus freely consented to Satan's temptation, who could not have forced you to it? You have herein been guilty of a most abominable and aggravated lie, not to man only, but to the Holy Spirit himself, who, you know, eminently dwells and works in us, and who is truly and properly the heart-searching God, and will not be mocked; but will severely avenge the affront, in jealousy for his own glory, and to deter others from any such further insults upon him to the corrupting of the church."

Ver. 5. And Ananias hearing these words, &c.] This severity was not only righteous, considering that complication of vain glory and covetousness, of fraud and impiety, which the action contained; but was wise and gracious, both as it served to vindicate the honour of the blessed Spirit, so notoriously affronted by this attempt to impose on those, who had been so lately and eminently anointed by his extraordinary effusion; and farther, as it tended most effectually to deter any dishonest persons from joining the Christians, merely for the sake of a present alms, to which, by a fraud like this, many might on easy terms have purchased a pretence, who would also, no doubt, have proved a great scandal to a profession taken up on such infamous motives. (Comp. ver. 13.) This likewise was a very convincing attestation of the apostles' most upright conduct in the management of the sums with which they were entrusted, and indeed of their divine mission in general; for none can imagine, that St. Peter would have had the assurance to pronounce, and much less the power to execute, such a sentence as this, if he had been at the same time guilty of a much baser fraud of the like kind, or had been *being* the Holy Ghost in the whole of his pretensions to be under his miraculous influence and direction.

Ver. 6. And the young men arose, &c.] They were per-

sons of an inferior rank, who were usually employed in this office. They stripped, swathed him,—*συνέβιβλαν*,—and afterwards carried him to his grave. The Jews now inter their dead within twenty-four hours at farthest from the time of their death, and generally much sooner.

Ver. 11. And great fear came upon all, &c.] In the striking narrative before us, we have an example of the severest temporal punishment inflicted throughout the New Testament; a punishment inflicted by the apostle, not out of a spirit of passion, cruelty, or revenge, but by a prophetic spirit; not by the sword of the magistrate, or by any power of his own, but by a miraculous and divine power; punishing a notorious lie, which was made to tempt or try the Holy Spirit in the beginning of his peculiar economy or dispensation. Thus was the dignity of the Spirit of God vindicated, and the honour of the apostles of our Lord maintained: for hereby it was plain, that they had the spirit of truth and of power, by which they could easily detect and punish the spirit of falsehood; and that they made no pretensions to the Spirit, in which that Spirit would not bear them out. This was exercising the apostolic rod: but we must always remember, that the power was that of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that the apostles had only an impulse of the Spirit upon their minds, by which they were enabled to forestal such extraordinary and divine judgments. Porphyry accused St. Peter as cruel, for inflicting this punishment; to which the ancients well answered: "The apostle did by no means pray for their deaths; but by the prophetic spirit denounced the judgment of God upon them, that the punishment of two persons might be for the instruction of many." Indeed, such severity in the beginning of Christianity was highly proper, in order to prevent any occasion for similar punishments in future. Thus Cain, the first murderer, was most signally punished by the immediate hand of God, as were Sodom and Gomorrah, which, in the early ages, were distinguished for their filthiness and abominations. Thus, upon the erecting of God's temporal kingdom among the Jews, Nadab and Abihu were struck dead for offering strange fire before the Lord; and Korah and his company were swallowed up alive by the earth, for opposing Moses, the faithful minister of the Lord; and lastly, Uzzah, for touching the ark, fell by as sudden and remarkable a divine judgment, when the kingdom was given to be established in the house of David, to teach Israel a reverence for God and divine things. Nay, in establishing even human laws, a severe punishment upon the first transgressors often prevents the punishment of others, who are deterred from like attempts by the suffering of the first criminals. And the effect in the present case was accordingly; for a great dread and unusual awe

fell

13 ^a And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14 ^o And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women;)

15 Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick * into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least ^p the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16 There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were ^q healed every one.

17 ¶ ^r Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with ^s indignation,

18 ^t And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 ^u But the angel of the Lord by night

opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people ^x all the words of this life.

21 And when they heard *that*, ^y they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. ^z But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 Saying, ^a The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high ^b priest and ^c the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they ^d doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

^a John. 9. 22. & 17. 42. & 19. 38. or 1 Kings, 17. 18. Luke, 5. 8. 2 Sam. 6. 9. 1 Sam. 6. 19, 20. If. 33. 14. Ch. 2. 41, 47. & 4. 21, 33. ^o Ch. 2. 41, 47. & 3. 4. & 6. 7. If. 45. 24. Gal. 3. 28. Ch. 10. 34. ^p Or in every street. ^q Ch. 19. 12. John, 14. 12. Mat. 9. 21. & 14. 36. ^r Mark, 16. 17, 18. & 6. 56. & 7. 37. Mat. 12. 15. & 14. 14. ^s Ch. 4. 1. ^t Or envy. Job, 5. 2. Prov. 27. 4. Eccl. 4. 4. ^u Ch. 4. 3. & 16. 23, 24. Mat. 10. 17-22. & 21. 9. John, 16. 2, 3. ^x Pl. 34. 7. Ch. 12. 7-10. & 16. 25, 26. Heb. 1. 14. ^y Mark, 16. 15. John, 12. 50. & 6. 68. & 17. 3. 1 John, 1. 1-3. ^z Ch. 21. 13. John, 8. 2. ^a Ch. 4. 1, 5. John, 7. 48. Mat. 26. 3. & 27. 1, 5. Ver. 17, 21. ^b Ver. 19. ^c Gr. priests. 2 Kings, 25. 18. ^d Ch. 4. 1. Luke, 22. 4, 52. John, 18. 3. ^e Ch. 4. 16, 24. John, 11. 43, 48. & 12. 18, 19.

fell upon all the Christian church; and not upon them alone, but upon all others also who saw or heard of what had happened. We may just remark, that this is the first place in which the word *church* is mentioned; and here is a native specimen of a New Testament church, called by the gospel, initiated by baptism, animated by love, united by holy and divine fellowship, and disciplined by the exemplary punishment of hypocrites.

Ver. 13. *And of the rest, &c.*] That is, the people held them in distant admiration, and presumed not, on any false pretence, to join them, if not truly converted; which yet it appears by the next verse many were, who readily came into a full and solemn profession of the gospel; as indeed the late miracle was a glorious, though a dreadful demonstration of its truth. The word *κοινωνοι*, rendered *join*, signifies to *associate* or *unite with*; to *adhere* or *cleave to*.

Ver. 15. *That at least the shadow, &c.*] The efficacy of St. Peter's shadow in curing ditterspers, is so far from being natural, or likely to enter into the minds of any, that nothing but the force of truth could have rendered it credible; and it must have been experience which first gave the idea of it. For the sick being exposed in the streets where the apostles passed, that they might receive from them a cure by their prayers and the imposition of hands, they found that the shadow of Peter had the sacred power;

and this unlooked-for experiment became afterwards a means of their faith and expectation.

Ver. 17. *The sect of the Sadducees,*] The Sadducees, as they denied the resurrection from the dead, and a future state of rewards and punishments, were the most constant and impious enemies to Christianity. Grotius and other commentators have concluded from this text, that the high-priest and his kindred were Sadducees. Josephus also affirms, that some of the high-priests were of this sect.

Ver. 20. *All the words of this life.*] *The whole doctrine of life.* Heylin—"that glorious gospel with which you are charged, on which the eternal life of man so evidently depends, and by which alone their final happiness can be secured." See 2 Tim. i. 10.

Ver. 21. *Called the council—and all the senate, &c.*] *The whole Sanhedrim, and all the elders of Israel, ἄρχαι τῶν ἡγεμονῶν.* Some render it *the Sanhedrim, even, or that is to say, the whole senate of the children of Israel.*

Ver. 24. *They doubted of them, &c.*] *They were in great perplexity about the apostles, and what this matter might come to.* Heylin. It might be rendered more literally, *They were in great doubt concerning them, (namely, τὰς λέγουσας, these words, or this report,) what this could be—that is, whether they had procured their liberty by corrupting the keepers,*

or

25 ° Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them † without violence: for ‡ they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27 And when they had brought them, † they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, † Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and † intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 ¶ Then Peter and the *other* apostles an-

swered and said, † We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 ° The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 ° Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32 And ° we are his witnesses of these things; and *so is* also † the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

33 ¶ When they heard *that*, they † were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named † Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

° Ver. 20, 21. † Without binding them. Mat. 27. 2. ‡ Ch. 4. 21. Mat. 14. 5. & 21. 26. Luke, 20. 6, 10. & 22. 2. Pf. 76. 10. Ver. 13. † Ch. 4. 7. Mat. 10. 17. Mark, 13. 9. † Ch. 4. 18, 21. † Ch. 2. 23, 36. & 3. 13-15. & 4. 10. † Ch. 4. 19. Gal. 1. 10. Exod. 1. 17. 1 Thess. 2. 5, 6. Deut. 12. 32. & 5. 32. † Ch. 2. 24-32, 36. & 3. 13-15. & 13. 27-37. & 10. 38-40. 1 Peter, 2. 24. & 1. 21. † Pf. 110. 1. & 89. 27, 28. Heb. 2. 8-10. Phil. 2. 9-11. Eph. 1. 20-23. Ch. 2. 23, 36. & 3. 15, 26. & 11. 18. & 13. 38, 39. Luke, 24. 47. † Ch. 1. 8. & 2. 32. & 10. 39, 41. John, 15. 27. † John, 15. 26. & 16. 7, 13, 14. & 14. 16, 17, 26. Heb. 2. 4. 1 Peter, 1. 12. Ch. 2. 4. † Ch. 7. 54. & 13. 45. Prov. 27. 4, 5. John, 5. 2. † Ch. 22. 3. & 4. 15. & 23. 9.

or whether there might not be something miraculous in the deliverance of persons whom such extraordinary circumstances had attended.

Ver. 26. *For they feared the people, &c.*] This may seem a surprizing change in the people, considering the eagerness with which they demanded that Christ should be crucified: but if we consider that the common people, in many cases, judge without the fixed and inveterate prejudices which entangle the minds of their superiors; and how much the beneficent and incontestable miracles wrought by the apostles, must have affected them, we shall be the less surprized at so great and sudden a change; especially if it be considered also, how vehemently they longed to throw off the Roman yoke, and regain their ancient liberty; for which they still retained a passionate concern, notwithstanding they had been so often disappointed. From the many evident miracles worked in confirmation of our Lord's resurrection and ascension, and the strong proofs that there were of his being the Messiah, very probably they were still ready to hope that he would some way or other bring about the deliverance which they so much expected and desired; and therefore they overawed their superiors from putting the apostles to death, or doing them the harm which they would otherwise have done them.

Ver. 28. *This man's blood upon us,*] That is, the odium and the guilt of it. See Matth. xxvii. 25.

Ver. 30. *Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree,*] Whom ye crucified. Heylin. Literally, *Whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree.* See Deut. xxi. 23. Instead of raised up, some read *hath raised up.*

Ver. 31. *Him hath God exalted, &c.*] "Even him has God not only raised to life, but likewise, by a glorious

" operation of his almighty power, has exalted to the
 " greatest dignity, honour, and universal dominion in
 " heaven and earth, that he may live and reign on high,
 " with all authority and grace, as a prince enthroned in
 " all the glory, majesty, and power of his kingdom, and
 " as the only and all-sufficient Saviour, able and willing
 " to give to all that believe, inclusive of those very Jews
 " that crucified him, the most necessary and inestimable
 " blessings, even repentance, by the divine operations of
 " his Spirit; and the free and full pardon of all their
 " trespasses through faith in his blood."

Ver. 32. *And so is—the Holy Ghost,*] The testimony arising from this miraculous communication of the Spirit to Christians at that time, entirely removes the objection from Christ's not appearing in public after his resurrection; for had there been any imposture, it certainly would have been easier of the two to have persuaded people at a distance that he had so appeared to the Jewish rulers, or even to the multitude, and yet had been rejected, than that he had given his servants such extraordinary powers; since, had this assertion been false, every one might have been a sufficient witness of its falsehood, without the trouble and expence of a journey to Jerusalem, or any other distant place. See Ch. x. 41.

Ver. 33. *They were cut to the heart,*] The word *διεσχίζοντο* expresses the action of those, who, through rage, grate with their teeth, as it were with a saw; from the word *σείω*, which signifies *to cut with a saw.* See Ch. vii. 54.

Ver. 34. *A Pharisee, named Gamaliel,*] He is said to have been the son of good old Simeon, mentioned Luke, ii. 25. and was the person at whose feet St. Paul was brought up. He was a man in so great esteem among the Jews, that Onkelos, the author of the Targum, is said to have burned

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

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 was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were

dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the pre-

* 1 Kings, 20. 22. † Kings, 6. 9. ‡ Mat. 10. 17. § Mat. 24. 11, 24. ¶ Ch. 8. 9. ** 1 Pet. 2. 2. †† Thess. 2. 17. ††† Or believed. †††† Luke, 1. 1. & 13. 1. ††††† Ver. 36. †††††† Pf. 9. 16. & 7. 16. ††††††† Job, 20. 5. †††††††† Ver. 35. ††††††††† Pf. 76. 10. ††††††††† Ch. 23. 9. †††††††††† Prov. 21. 30. ††††††††††† II. 8. 10. †††††††††††† Mat. 15. 13. & 21. 25. ††††††††††††† Mat. 16. 18. †††††††††††††† Luke, 21. 15. ††††††††††††††† Ch. 34. 21. †††††††††††††††† Rev. 17. 14. ††††††††††††††††† 1 Cor. 1. 25. †††††††††††††††††† Phil. 1. 28. ††††††††††††††††††† Ch. 2. 41. & 4. 4, 33. & 6. 10. & 7. 51. & 23. 9. †††††††††††††††††††† Mat. 10. 17. & 21. 35. & 23. 24. ††††††††††††††††††††† Luke, 20. 10. †††††††††††††††††††††† Mark, 12. 5. & 13. 9. ††††††††††††††††††††††† Ch. 4. 18.

burned seventy pounds weight of perfumes at his funeral; and the Jews have this saying concerning him, "From the time that Rabbin Gamaliel the Old died, the honour of the law failed, and purity and Pharisaism died."

Ver. 36. *Rose up Theudas, boasting himself, &c.*] *Pretending to somewhat extraordinary.* Heylin. *Theudas* was a very common name among the Jews; the person therefore here mentioned most probably was one among the many leaders who, as Josephus informs us, took up arms in defence of the public liberties, when the grand enrolment and taxation were made by Cyrenius, in the days of Archelaus: for that this was not the *Theudas* mentioned by Josephus under the character of a false prophet (who drew a great number of people after him, with a promise of dividing Jordan before them, but was defeated, and beheaded, most of his followers being also slain or imprisoned) is plain from hence, that he appeared when Fadus was procurator of Judea; that is, according to the best calculations, at least ten years after this was spoken. The *Theudas* here mentioned seems to have been supported by smaller numbers than the second of that name: but, like that second, he perished in the attempt. As his followers were dispersed, and not slaughtered, like those of the second *Theudas*, survivors might not talk much of him, and Josephus might not think it worth his while to make a particular mention of him, though his history might be well known to Gamaliel, and the people of those times. This account of *Theudas* renders all the criticisms upon the beginning of the next verse entirely useless. *In the days of the taxing* might be read, *In these days of the taxation, or enrolment*; meaning those same days, or at the same period of time, when *Theudas* appeared. The reader will find in Josephus's 18th book of his Antiquities, an account of Judas of Galilee. See also the notes on Matth. xxii. 16. xxiv. 3, 4. Luke, ii. 2.

Ver. 37. *And all,—as many as obeyed him,*] Dr. Lardner has justly observed, that the word rendered *dispersed*, by no means implies that these men were destroyed. Gamaliel's reason will for ever hold good against all persecution and

intolerance. See the note on Luke, xiii. 1, 2. We may just observe, for the classical reader, that there is in Homer's Iliad, E. 606. a line very similar to what Gamaliel says, ver. 39.

ΕΙΜΕΤΕ ΜΗΔΕ ΘΕΟΪΣ ΜΕΥΕΘΑΙΜΕΝ ΪΦΙ ΜΑΧΕΣΘΑΙ.

The words *lest haply* are to be connected with *let them alone*, ver. 38. and all that comes between it to be read in a parenthesis. "This speech of Gamaliel seems to me (says Dr. Benson,) to have been made, partly in opposition to the Sadducees, partly out of policy, to fall in with the popular sentiments at that time concerning the apostles, that the people might still keep up their veneration for him and for the other leading men among the Pharisees. But he seems to have spoken after that manner chiefly from an expectation of a temporal deliverance, and a strong desire to see it accomplished by the apostles of Jesus, rather than not at all."—With what principle or view soever Gamaliel made it, his speech had so good an effect upon the Sanhedrim, that, instead of putting the twelve apostles to death, they called them in, and only ordered them to be scourged. "This, (says the Doctor,) I suppose, was the inflicting upon them what St. Paul calleth *the forty stripes save one*, 2 Cor. xi. 24. For the Romans did then allow the Jews to make use of that punishment as they thought proper."

Ver. 41. *Rejoicing, &c.*] The punishment ordered by the Sanhedrim, some suppose, was inflicted in some open market-place, whereby the sufferers were exposed; and therefore it is said, says Dr. Lardner, that *they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame*. But in ver. 40. the apostles are represented as called in, and beaten with rods; or scourged before the Sanhedrim; and then, in this verse, as departing from the Sanhedrim, *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be exposed to infamy for the sake of his name*. If they were scourged in the presence of the Sanhedrim, that was certainly being exposed before the highest and most venerable court among the Jews, and suffering great infamy in the esteem of the whole nation. We may observe,

fence of the council, 'rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 'And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

^a Ch. 15. 25. Mat. 5. 10—12. Rom. 5. 3. Jam. 1. 2. 1 Peter, 4. 13. & 1. 6. 2 Cor. 6. 10. & 12. 10. Phil. 1. 29. Heb. 10. 34. ^c Gal. 6. 9, 10. Ch. 2. 47, 46. Ver. 12. Luke, 21. 37. & 22. 53.

serve, that the corrupt and persecuting world begins with *mocking*, ch. ii. 13. thence proceeds to *cavilling*, ch. iv. 7. to *threats*, ver. 17. to *imprisoning*, ch. v. 18. to *blows*, ver. 40. to *slaughter*, ch. vii. 58. A sure mark of the truth is joy in affliction, such as is true, deep, and pure.

Ver. 42. *And in every house,*] Κατ' οἶκον, in the house where their upper-room was. See on ch. ii. 46.

Inferences.—Who can behold, without humble reverence, the awful instance of the divine severity recorded in this chapter, so well calculated to impress the minds of these new converts, and to prevent any of those *frauds*, which the *charity* of those who were most zealous in their profession, might have occasioned in some others. Hence we may learn how hateful falsehood is to the God of truth, and how strictly cautious we should be to avoid it; not only shunning every *direct lie*, but the taking undue advantage from any ambiguities of expression; and, in a word, all recourse to the arts of equivocation and insincerity. God is a *swift witness* against every one who *loveth or maketh a lie*; and he only knows how soon such treacherous lips as those here before us, may be sealed up in eternal silence.

How miserably does Satan delude the heart which he once fills! But how peculiarly fatal is the delusion, when he leads men to sins which especially affront the HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD!—that Spirit who rested on the apostles, and taught them to discover hidden things of darkness, so that they who *tempted* him, fell in the attempt, and became a sign. *O may integrity and uprightness ever preserve us!* (Pf. xxv. 21.) and while we avoid all the kinds and arts of dissimulation, let us peculiarly detest those which would offer a double insult to the God of heaven, by taking their dress from the religion which his own Son hath planted.

The church is never more happy than when the sons of falsehood are deterred from intruding into it. If its members are less numerous, it is a sufficient balance that it is more pure. We see in this chapter what singular *miracles were done by the apostles*,—*miracles equal*, and, in some respects, (as it appears by these instances, and in perfect accomplishment of our Lord's own express prediction, John, xiv. 12.) *superior* to those which Christ performed in the days of his ministration here below. When will the happy time come, in which men shall express as great a concern for *their souls*, as they here did for their *bolies*? When shall the streets and assemblies be filled with those, who, from a sense of their *spiritual maladies*, shall apply to the ministers of Christ for healing?—Let it always be remembered, that whatever *they do* for this happy purpose, it is indeed *their Master* who does it by them, and that all their most assiduous applications, separate from his *blessing*, can effect no more than the *shadow of Peter* would have done,

if the *power of Christ* had not wrought on those over whom it passed.

Which shall we survey with the greater surprize, the continued *courage* of the apostles, or the continued *malice* of their persecutors? Again they seize them; again they imprison them; but how vainly do these feeble worms, amidst all the pride of dignity and power, oppose the counsels of Omnipotence!

The angel of the Lord opens the door of their prison, and leads forth his faithful servants to renewed liberty,—an office which this celestial Spirit could not but perform with delight; as it was no doubt with unutterable pleasure that he gave them their errand to go and publish with undaunted freedom and zeal *the words of this life*, of this gospel, which enlivens dead souls, and points out the road to a happy immortality. O that the folly of too many of those who heard it, and who still hear it, had never converted it into a *favour of death!*

Yet behold, the council renew the attack! The same madness which instigated the Jews to seize Jesus, when they had been struck to the ground by his miraculous power, (John, xviii. 6.) now animates these wretches to continue the destruction of persons, whom God himself had just before rescued from their hands: as they had formerly plotted that of Lazarus, (John, xii. 10.) who had by a yet more astonishing wonder been recalled from the grave. To what fatal extravagances will not prejudice hurry the mind? Against what convincing evidence will it not harden it?

Ye shall be brought before councils for my sake, says our Lord, and it shall be for a *testimony against them*, Matth. x. 18. And such was this repeated admonition, which these holy prisoners, then at the bar, gave to the *Judges of Israel*. Still they urge the divine authority of their mission; still they proclaim HIM as Head of the church and world, whom these very men had so lately crucified in so outrageous and contemptuous a manner. They point to *Him*, whom these priests and rulers had insulted on the cross, as *now exalted at the right hand of God*; and urge them to seek *repentance and remission of sins* from *Him*, to whom they had denied the most common justice due to the meanest of men.

Thousands of the people had fallen under this charge; and *Jesus the Prince* had taken them under his protection: *Jesus the Saviour* had washed them in his blood. But, through what is too frequently the fatal prerogative of greatness, these *princes of Israel* had hearts too high for the discipline of wisdom, and were *enraged against* these humble ministers of the Son of God, who nevertheless addressed them with all the respect which fidelity would allow, and could gladly have poured forth their blood for the salvation of those who so cruelly thirsted for it. They *gnashed* on these faithful ambassadors *with their teeth*, as if they would have devoured them alive; and justly will *gnashing*

CHAP. VI.

The apostles desirous to have the poor regarded for their bodily sustenance, as also careful themselves to dispense the word of God, the food of the soul, appoint the office of deaconship to seven chosen men: of whom Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, is one: who is taken of those whom he confounded in disputing, and after falsely accused of blasphemy against the law and the temple.

[Anno Domini 34.]

AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there

arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

^a Exod. 1. 12. Mat. 13. 31, 32. Mc. 7. 16. Ch. 2. 41, 45, 47. & 4. 4, 24. & 5. 11, 28. Ver. 7. ^b 1 Cor. 1. 20. Heb. 13. 1. ^c Jews who lived among the Greeks, and spoke the Greek tongue. Ch. 9. 29. & 11. 20. ^d James, 1. 27. 1 Tim. 5. 3—5, 16. Ch. 4. 35. ^e Exod. 18. 17. 2 Cor. 9. 16. 2 Tim. 2. 4. Ch. 4. 35. ^f Deut. 1. 13. Ch. 16. 2. & 14. 23. & 1. 21. 1 Tim. 3. 7. Ver. 8.

of flesh be the eternal portion of itself, who thus outrageously rejected the counsel of God against themselves.

But God raised up a guardian for the apostles, where perhaps they least expected it; and the prudence of Gamaliel, for a while, checks the fury of his brethren. Gamaliel had attentively observed former events; which is indeed the way to learn the surest lessons of wisdom that are to be learned any where, except from the word of God. He had seen some ruined by their seditious zeal;—and let those who call themselves Christians, take heed how they rashly rise up against legal authority, lest taking the sword, they perish by it. Judiciously does he admonish the council, to take heed lest they be found fighters against God. May divine Grace ever guard us from that fatal error into which all who oppose the gospel, whatever they may imagine, assuredly fall. They cannot indeed abolish it, but they dash themselves in pieces against it: *Be wise therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth!*

For reasons of state the apostles were to be scourged, though their judges were inwardly convinced, that it was at least possible their message might be divine. Deliver us, O Lord, from that policy which leads men to imagine any evil so great, as that which may offend thee! The punishment which these excellent men suffered, was infamous; but the cause in which they endured it, rendered it glorious! Nor could those stripes be half so painful to their flesh, as an opportunity of thus approving their fidelity to their Lord, was delightful to their pious souls. Well might they triumph in bearing the scourge for Him, who bore the cross, and died on it, for them. Let us arm ourselves with the same mind, if, in a severer sense than this, we should be called for his sake to *resist even unto blood.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The purest societies on this side heaven have some hypocrites.

1. Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, willing to appear among the foremost of the disinterested disciples of Jesus, sold a possession, and publicly brought a part of the money, which they would insinuate was the whole; and laid it at the apostles' feet, while their covetous hearts secretly reserved a part, and still halted between God and Mammon; though they desired to make a fair show in the flesh, and thought to impose upon the apostles. *Note:*

Hypocrites may go far in appearances, and forego for a while some temporal advantage, or endure loss; but their heart is not right with God, and therefore there is still a reserve made, which serves to make them more eminently miserable, parting with many of the comforts of this world, and yet having no portion in a better.

2. Peter, who knew by divine revelation the falsehood of this pretended disciple, said unto him, *Why hath Satan filled thy heart with such covetousness and falsehood, to lie to the Holy Ghost;* either to think thus to impose upon the apostles, who were endued with the discernment of spirits by the Holy Ghost; or by pretending to act under his impulse and influence, when in fact he was under the spirit of the devil; *and to keep back part of the price,* though intimating that the land was parted with for pious purposes, and devoted to the service of the church. *While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?* both the sale and surrender of the price being a voluntary act, and none were compelled to do either, but were left to their own pious zeal? *Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?* and harboured the suggestion of Satan to contrive so base a deed? *thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God,* to that eternal Spirit which resided in the apostles, who searcheth the hearts of all men, and from whom nothing is hid, nothing is secret. *Note:* (1.) Nothing betrays persons more frequently into the sin of lying, than the affectation of appearing high in others esteem. (2.) They who conceive falsehood in their hearts, are filled with Satan; a lying spirit is one of his strongest resemblances. (3.) The Holy Ghost is God omniscient. Let those whom pride, worldly-mindedness, or a maintenance, drives into the ministry, take heed how they presume to declare that they are inwardly moved by him, lest, like Ananias and Sapphira, their lie be detected, if not here, yet hereafter, to their everlasting confusion.

3. Behold a fearful example of divine vengeance! No sooner had Peter spoken, than Ananias fell down, and gave up the ghost, struck by an invisible hand, as the just punishment of his wickedness, and to make an example to deter others from such impious hypocrisy. *And great fear came on all them that heard these things:* it impressed an awe upon the minds of those who had joined themselves to the church, and served to keep off from the society of the apostles.

4 ⁵ But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 ¶ And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose ^b Stephen, a man full

¹ 1 Tim. 4. 13—16. ² 2 Tim. 4. 2. ³ 1 Cor. 9. 16. & 4. 2. Ch. 2. 42. & 20. 31. ^b Ch. vii. & 22. 20. & 11. 24.

apostles, those who would have been spots in their assembly.

4. The young men present, removed the corpse, wrapped it in grave-clothes, and buried it.

5. Sapphira, the wife of Ananias, who was privy to his falsehood, but ignorant of what had passed, about three hours after joined the assembly; and, being required of St. Peter to answer if they had sold the land for so much, she, without hesitation, affirmed the lie, foolishly presuming that none could disprove it. Her doom therefore is pronounced; being the partner of her husband's sin, she shares his punishment. *Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? how astonishing is your stupidity, as well as monstrous your wickedness, to attempt imposing upon the omniscient God? behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband, are at the door, and shall carry thee out.* Instantly, death-struck, she fell at his feet, and they carried her out, and buried her with her husband; whilst all the church were filled with reverence and godly fear at that Jealous God, who thus appeared the avenger of falsehood and hypocrisy; and all others, that heard these judgments, were afraid of provoking or tempting the apostles, whose very word seemed clothed with death. *Note;* (1.) It is truly grievous, when near relations serve to encourage each other in iniquity. (2.) God, though patient under numberless provocations, is pleased to make some sinners monuments of his vengeance, that men may hear and fear, and do no more wickedly.

2dly, We are told,

1. Of the many and great miracles performed by the apostles, in proof of their divine mission; and so much were the people in general convinced of the mighty powers which they possessed, that they brought forth the sick in beds and couches, and laid them in the streets, *that at least the shadow of Peter passing by, might overshadow some of them*, persuaded that this would be effectual to work a cure: and from the country vast multitudes of patients, sick, and vexed with unclean spirits, were brought to them, *and they were healed every one*: none being rejected who made application to them.

2. Of the vast veneration in which the apostles were held. *They were all with one accord in Solomon's porch*, appearing and teaching publicly in the temple with the greatest unanimity among themselves: *and of the rest durst no man join himself to them*; none durst make a hypocritical profession of Christianity, who were not conscious of the simplicity of their hearts, being terrified with the doom of Ananias and Sapphira: *but the people magnified them*, held them in the highest veneration, and spoke of them with the greatest esteem, beholding the wonders which they wrought, and the presence and power of God evident in the midst of them.

3. Of the vast accession of converts made to the church. *Believers were the more added to the Lord*, and made open profession of their faith in Christ, *multitudes both of men and women*; so mightily grew the word of God and increased.

3dly, It cannot be supposed that the inveterate enemies of the gospel would long be quiet, or Satan rest when his kingdom was falling to ruins before the gospel word.

1. The apostles are seized and imprisoned. The hand of the high-priest was first in this transgression, supported by the Sadducean sect, who could not endure the testimony borne to the resurrection of Jesus, which radically struck at all their tenets: exasperated to fury, they could contain no longer, and, with lawless violence, laid hands on them; and, to put the greater disgrace upon them, dragged them to the common prison among the vilest malefactors. *Note;* (1.) The success of the gospel is a vexation to wicked men, and, when they have power in their hands, the disciples of Jesus will feel their oppression. (2.) It is Satan's artifice, by endeavouring to make the ministers of Christ despicable, to prejudice the people against them.

2. The Lord miraculously delivers his servants, by the hand of an angel, from their confinement. The commitment was illegal; therefore the great Judge of all sends his messenger to discharge them honourably: and, by his power opening the prison doors, *he said, Go, stand and speak in the temple, to the people, all the words of this life*; not the least intimidated by all the malice of their inveterate foes, but in their very ears, in the temple, the most public place, must they declare the life giving truths of the gospel word, and the offensive doctrines of a risen Redeemer. *Note;* (1.) God can make the most lonesome prison a paradise of delights, when he manifests his presence there. (2.) They who are put in trust with the gospel, must not shun to declare, in the most public manner, the whole counsel of God, however offensive it may prove, and whatever may be the consequence to themselves.

3. Without delay they obey the heavenly command, and early, as soon as the temple doors were open, they went thither, and boldly taught as before, fearless of any consequences. *Note;* When duty calls, no danger must deter us.

4. An extraordinary council was assembled by the high-priest and his abettors, consisting not only of the Sanhedrim, *but of all the senate of the children of Israel*. And now, ready to proceed to trial, the prisoners are commanded to be brought forth; when, big with expectations of their appearing in chains before them, they are astonished with the report of their officers, that the prison was safe as they left it, and the guards upon duty, but none of the prisoners, whom they had committed thither, were to be found. Such an account threw them into the greatest perplexity; they knew not what course to take, and began to be under terrible apprehensions *wherunto this would grow*: when, to their greater confusion, tidings are brought them, that the men whom they sought, and had the evening before committed to prison, were preaching openly in the temple, in defiance of all their menaces. *Note;* (1.) They who fight against God, must needs involve themselves in many troubles. (2.) The Lord can deliver his people out

of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a profelyte of and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, Antioch:

¹ Ch. 8. 5, 26. & 21. 8.

of all their trials, in spite of the malice of their most envenomed persecutors.

4thly, We have,

1. The peaceable submission of the apostles to the officers who came to seize them a second time in the temple, but who dared not use violence, for fear lest the people should have risen upon them, who held in just veneration the character of the apostles. The captain of the temple therefore, with his attendants, spoke them fair; and they, not unwilling nor afraid to appear before the council, consented to go with them.

2. The insolent reprimand given them by the high-priest, for daring to disobey the charge given them. *Did not we straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name?* and you have treated our orders with contempt; and behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, most detestable and pernicious as it is; and intend to bring this man's blood upon us, both to expose us to the people, and lay the guilt of it at our doors, as if we had murdered an innocent man, and one whom you cry up so highly. But had not the apostles told them before, they must obey God rather than man? and had they not themselves invoked the blood of Jesus upon them, when Pilate would have let him go? Why then should they be angry?

3. The apostles boldly replied, *We ought to obey God rather than men*; and, far from softening any of the truths they declared, or the accusations they brought against them as the murderers of the Son of God, to their faces they dare declare it, and charge this atrocious deed on their consciences. *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus*, testifying his highest approbation of him, *whom ye slew and hanged on a tree*, with the most impious cruelty and injustice; *him hath God exalted with his right hand* to a throne of glory in the heavens, *to be a Prince and a Saviour* to his faithful saints, *to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*, freely and fully pardoning the transgressions of all who by true faith turn unto him, and working that conversion and faith in their hearts by the power of his grace. *And we are his witnesses of these things*, appointed by him, and speaking with the greatest assurance the truths that we most certainly know; *and Jesus is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to those that obey him*, who, in all his miraculous gifts, as well as by the mighty energy of his gospel on our own hearts, and the hearts of others, attests the truths which we declare. *Note*; (1.) Christ, as a Saviour, offers the free and full remission of their sins, be they never so many, great, or aggravated, to those who fly to him as their refuge. (2.) The promises of pardon are the great motives of evangelical repentance. (3.) All who embrace Jesus as their Saviour, submit to him as their Prince; they who would reign with him, must be ruled by him. (4.) Besides all the great and glorious external evidences of Christianity, every obedient believer has the internal witnesses of the Spirit in his heart, which is to him instead of a thousand arguments.

4. *When they heard this*, far from submitting to the Saviour, and seeking the remission of sins which he is exalted

to give, *they were cut to the heart*; malice, indignation, and rage, burned in their bosoms; and instantly they took counsel to slay them, resolving to rid themselves at once of their troublers, and murder them together. *Note*; The bosom of the wicked, when triumphant in iniquity, is a present hell; whilst, even in their sufferings for righteousness' sake, the faithful feel their heaven begun.

5. To check the fury of these zealots, Gamaliel, a man of more moderate counsels, arose. He was a Pharisee, a doctor of law by profession; and his high reputation among the people gave him weight and influence in the assembly. He commanded to put the apostles forth a little space, that he might speak more freely. Whereupon addressing his brethren, (1.) He advises them not to act too rashly. *Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves, what ye intend to do as touching these men*, lest by some hasty resolution, you bring guilt upon your souls, and provoke God's displeasure. (2.) He instances in the ruin of some late rebels, who soon came to nothing; which would now be the case with these men, if the matter was a mere human contrivance. Theudas and Judas had arisen, and collected a number of followers; but both were quickly destroyed, their followers dispersed, and their attempts abortive: and they might reasonably expect that the same would be the issue of the present disturbance if the thing was a mere artifice of deceivers, without embroiling themselves, and taking the matter out of God's hand. Therefore, (3.) His advice is for the present to refrain from these men, and let them alone, and wait awhile to see what course matters may take; for if this counsel, or this work be of men, a mere invention of the crafty, or the folly of deluded enthusiasts, it will come to nought, the deceit will be soon detected, and their attempts end in their own confusion, without our interfering; but if it be of God, though you oppose it with never so much violence, ye cannot overthrow it, and resistance would be as vain as impious. Therefore wait quietly the event, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God; the madness of which is evident, and the consequence of which would be your own confusion and ruin. *Note*; (1.) Persecution for conscience' sake is as absurd as it is wicked. (2.) They who oppose Christ's ministers and gospel, fight against God; and the issue of that conflict must needs be fatal to his enemies.

6. Gamaliel's counsel so far prevailed as to rescue the apostles from immediate death; but their enemies could not so entirely abate from them as to discharge them unhurt; their rage must be vented on their backs, though restrained from their blood: they called in the apostles, and, having ignominiously and severely scourged them as malefactors, dismissed them, with the most express injunctions of never more speaking in the name of Jesus, at the peril of all the pains and penalties which would attend their disobedience.

7. With admirable constancy the apostles bore their sufferings, and boldly persisted in their glorious work. They departed from the presence of the council, without a word of reproach or reviling, patiently submitting to their indignities,

6 Whom they set before the apostles : and, when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

* Ch. I. 24. & 13. 3. & 8. 17. & 14. 23. 1 Tim. 4. 14. & 5. 22. 2 Tim. 1. 6. Mat. 19. 13.

1 2 Theff. 3. 1. Ch. 12. 24. & 19. 20. Col.

2. 6. Ver. 1.

ilities, and, so far from being ashamed or intimidated, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. This reproach was their highest honour, these stripes their glory; and, so far from desisting and being silent, as they were commanded, *daily in the temple*, in defiance of their persecutors, and in every house where they resorted, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. He was the great theme of all their discourses; and the great salvation which he had purchased, they explained and enforced, inviting all to come and share their mercy, and believe to the saving of their souls. Note; (1.) When, for the sake of Jesus and his truth, we are called to suffer, we should take pleasure in reproaches, and rejoice at the insults that we meet with: they shall issue to our more abundant glory. (2.) A crucified Jesus must be the constant subject of our ministrations; and publicly when called into the pulpit, and privately when visiting from house to house, *him* should we ceaseless teach and preach.

CHAP. VI.

Ver. 1. *There arose a murmuring of the Grecians, &c.]* Or, *the Hellenists*. There is not all the light which some have wished for concerning the distinction of the Jews into Hebrews and Hellenists; but the following appears the most probable account. The Jews who inhabited Judea, and those of the eastern dispersions, generally retained the Syro-Chaldaic, which in the New Testament is called the Hebrew language; but those of the western dispersions generally made use of the Greek, the language which then prevailed very generally. The former were called Hebrews, and the latter Hellenists, or Græcising Jews; and of this sort were most of the Roman, Grecian, and Egyptian Jews, as well as the "Profelytes of righteousness" of the western dispersions. After the time of Ezra, the scriptures of the Old Testament were read to the Jews in their synagogues in their original Hebrew, and interpreted in Chaldee, because the common people had forgotten the original Hebrew by living so long in Chaldea. But the Jews who were planted at Alexandria in Egypt, seemed generally in process of time to have forgot both the Hebrew and the Chaldee; and by conversing so much in a Grecian city, to have fallen into the use of the Greek language. Hence a translation of the scriptures for the use of the common people became necessary; and part of the version which goes under the name of the Septuagint, was made by some of the learned men among the Jews there; and is thought to have been first made use of in that city instead of the Chaldee interpretation: for we are to observe, that the Jews did not any where, at that time, publicly read the scriptures in any other language than the Hebrew. Hence then it is probable, that these Jews were called Hellenists, because of their using the Hellenistick, or Greek language; and by that name they came to be distinguished from the Hebrew Jews, who used only the Hebrew tongue. These different cus-

7 ¶ And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company

toms are said to have made a sort of schism between them; in allusion to which, St. Paul seems to have mentioned it among the Jews, that he was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, (see Philip. iii. 5.) that is, a descendant of that sort of Jews who were most highly esteemed upon the account of their using the Hebrew language, 2 Cor. xi. 22. The Syriac version has rendered Ἑλληνιστῶν, by the Jews who understood, or spoke Greek. That these Hellenists were not all of them profelytes of righteousness, as some aver, seems indisputable from St. Luke's observation, ver. 5. that Nicolas was a profelyte of Antioch. It may possibly be hence inferred, that some of the Hellenists were profelytes of righteousness. But as he alone, of all the seven deacons, is said to have been a profelyte, it is very unlikely that all the Hellenists were such; for it is highly probable that others of the seven deacons were Hellenists, as well as Nicolas; whereas, by saying that Nicolas was a profelyte, St. Luke seems to have intimated that all the other six deacons were Jews by birth, as well as religion, though some of them might be Hellenists, and others Hebrews.

While Satan's kingdom fell before the preaching of the gospel like lightning from heaven, and the number of the Christians increased exceedingly, the Hellenists, or Græcising Jewish Christians, complained of the Hebrew Christians; because in the daily distribution of the charity, their widows, who were poor or sick, or burdened with the care of children, were either wholly neglected, or at least not made equal with the widows of the Hebrews. It is highly probable, that they esteemed the widows of the Græcists, agreeably to their prejudices, less worthy and honourable; and perhaps no land had been sold out of Palestine to raise or support the fund, but what Barnabas had sold in the island of Cyprus; and therefore they might think that the Hellenists had not an equal claim, as the Hebrews had been the chief contributors. The apostles, undoubtedly, acted a very faithful part in the distribution of money raised by the sale of lands. But they could not do all things. Perhaps they intrusted some who had been proprietors of the estates sold, who would naturally have some peculiar regard to the necessity of their neighbours, as being best acquainted with them. And if any suspicions arose, as to the sincerity of their character, and the reasonableness of their pretensions, these strangers would naturally be least capable of giving satisfaction.

Ver. 2. *The multitude of the disciples]* That is, the whole body of Christian converts; they being the persons to whom satisfaction was then due. And *serve tables*, is in the Greek διακονῆν τραπέζαις, to minister to, or take care of the tables, that is, of the poor; —to attend to the distribution of charitable gifts among them.

Ver. 3. *Of honest reports,]* Of good credit Heylin.

Ver. 5. *And they chose Stephen,]* Some have thought that Stephen was one of the seventy; but it seems a precarious conjecture. The termination of most of these names makes it probable.

of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 ¶ And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 ° Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 ° And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 ° Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

12 ' And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,

13 ' And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law :

14 ' For we have heard him say, That this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the * customs which Moses delivered us.

15. And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an ° angel.

° Rom. 1. 5. & 16. 26. 2 Thess. 1. 8. John, 12. 42. * 1 Cor. xii. Eph. 4. 11. Ver. 3, 5; 10, 15. Ch. 6. 55. ° Ch. 13. 45. & 17. 28. Eccl. 4. 4. Prov. 18. 6, 7. P Mat. 10. 19, 20. Luke, 21. 15. Ch. 7. 51. Ex. d. 4. 12. II. 54. 17. Ver. 5, 8, 15. Jer. 1. 9, 18. ° Mat. 26. 59. 1 Kings, 21. 10, 13. Ch. 13. 50. & 14. 2. & 17. 5, 13. Mark, 15. 11. ° 1 Kings, 21. 10, 13. Pf. 27. 11. & 35. 11. Ch. 21. 21. Pf. 56. 5. Luke, 19. 43, 44. Daniel, 9. 26. Ch. 7. 37, 48. Mal. 1. 11. Mat. 24. 2. & 26. 61. ° Or ritus. ° Exod. 34. 30. Mat. 28. 3.

probable that they were Hellenists; — a supposition which agrees very well with the occasion of their election. *Nicolas* was not a Jew born, but a profelyte of Antioch, whom they were the more willing to fix in this office, as his peculiar relation to the Grecians would make him especially careful to remedy any neglect of them which might have insensibly prevailed. Some ancient writers tell us, that he fell into great errors in the decline of life, and became the founder of the sect of the Nicolaitans, mentioned Rev. ii. 6. 15. But it seems much more probable, that the founder of this sect, considering how common the name was, might be some other person so called.

Ver. 7. And a great company of the priests] We learn from Ezra, ii. 36—39. that 4289 priests returned from the captivity; the number of whom was now probably very much increased. It is certainly wonderful that a great multitude of the priests should embrace the gospel, considering what peculiar resentments they must expect from their unbelieving brethren, and the great losses to which they must be exposed in consequence of being cast out of their office. But the grace of God was sufficient to animate and support them against every objection; and it is very probable, that the miracle of *rending the veil of the temple*, and the testimony of the guards to the truth of the resurrection, might contribute considerably towards their conversion, in concurrence with the miraculous gifts and powers of the apostles; the most convincing proofs of which they saw before their eyes in their own temple.

Ver. 9. The synagogue of the Libertines,] These were Jews born at Rome, whose grandfathers had been in slavery there, and then made free. Great numbers of Jews taken captive by Pompey, and carried into Italy, were set at liberty, and obtained their freedom from their masters. Their children, therefore, would be *libertini*, in the proper sense of the word. Agreeably to this, the Jews banished from Rome by Tiberius are spoken of by Tacitus as of the *libertine* race, who might easily constitute one of the 480 synagogues, said to have been at Jerusalem.

Ver. 11. Blasphemous words against Moses, &c.] There is no reason to believe that Stephen knew the mystery of the abolition of the Mosaic law, which the apostles do not seem immediately to have understood: and it is much less probable, that he openly taught what St. Paul himself, many years after, insinuated with so much caution. See Gal. ii. 2. This, therefore, seems to have been the inference which they drew from what he taught concerning the destruction that he denounced on the Jews, if they continued in their unbelief: but it was a very precarious inference, as the city and temple had been destroyed before without any repeal of the law, and therefore they were false witnesses. Compare ver. 13, 14.

Ver. 15. Saw his face, &c.] Many commentators interpret this as a proverbial expression of the majesty and beauty of his countenance, arising from the transport of inward joy in the consciousness of his innocence, and the expectation of glory, though he had so cruel a sentence and execution in view. And upon this, the translation of 1729 takes the unpardonable liberty of rendering it, *they saw an air of majesty in his aspect*; but it seems rather to mean, that there was a supernatural splendour on his face, resembling that of Moses when he came down from conversing with God on mount Sinai. They reckoned that his preaching of Jesus to be the Christ; was to destroy both Moses and the law; and God bears witness to Stephen with the same glory as he did to Moses, when he gave the law by him. The Jews never devised or conceived anything greater of their forefathers, or their most illustrious prophets, than what they now beheld in the countenance of Stephen. In this view, it was indeed a most astonishing instance of the incorrigible hardness and wickedness of their hearts, that they could murder a man on whom God put such a visible glory, similar to that of their patriarchs and prophets, and their great legislator in particular. But we know what little impression other miracles made upon them, the truth of which they were compelled to acknowledge. See ch. iv. 16.

Inferences.

he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.

6 And God spake on this wife,¹ that his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage,

Gen. 15. 13. & 50. 24. 1 Peter, 2. 11. Exod. i—v. & 12. 40. Gal. 3. 17.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The admirable peace and harmony of the church suffer some slight interruption, and yet good arises out of this great evil. We have,

1. The cause, whether real or imaginary, of the discontent which appeared among some of the members of the church. *In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied*; for the sufferings of the apostles, so far from checking the progress of the gospel, proved its furtherance; *there arose a murmuring of the Grecians, or Hellenist Jews, who were chiefly foreigners, and were so called from the Greek language, which they spoke, and held in their synagogues, against the Hebrews, who were inhabitants of Judea, and made use of the Hebrew language in reading the Old Testament; and they complained, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations, as if there was a partiality shown to the poor who were Hebrews, and theirs either passed over, or scantily supplied.* As the Hellenist Jews lay under some kind of disadvantage as foreigners, they were jealous lest they should be slighted; for those who are poor, are too apt to be querulous, to eye with jealousy what is bestowed on others, and to clamour, as if any kindness done to them was an injustice to themselves. *Note*; (1.) Money matters are too often the causes of much dissatisfaction even among those who profess to be dead to the world. (2.) In the best ordered church some imperfections will be found, and the most careful pastors may hear of some real or pretended cause of complaint.

2. The apostles propose an excellent expedient to remove all cause of murmuring; and this not only for the satisfaction of others, but for their own relief; their necessary employment, in preaching the word of God, being too much interrupted by minding these secular concerns. They assembled *the multitude of the disciples*, it being a matter of common concern, and said, *It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables*; these avocations of providing for the poor, diverting them too much from the great business of preaching the gospel, and governing the church. *Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business*, men of established reputation and integrity, endued with a distinguished measure of the gifts and graces of the Spirit to enable them for the faithful discharge of their office, and whose wisdom and prudence are eminent, that they may manage the church's flock to the greatest advantage. These were to be chosen by the people themselves, who could not afterwards reasonably find fault with the persons of their own appointment; and the apostles would *ordain them* to their office, that they might be invested with due authority, and that those who were concerned might know to whom they must apply in these matters: *but we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*, as our more immediate and proper employment. *Note*; (1.) They who are appointed to any holy office, even the lowest in the

church, may here behold the requisites thereto. They must be persons of *blameless character, men of parts and abilities* for the discharge of their trust, *with wisdom*, and above all experimentally *acquainted with the grace of God* in their souls, and partakers of the Holy Ghost. To ordain persons immoral, ignorant, destitute of experimental religion, and to count them fit for ministering in the church, who are fit for nothing else; how shocking! how contrary to the apostolical practice! and what a scandal must such be to the office they bear! (2.) Diverged as much as possible of worldly cares, Christ's immediate ambassadors should be occupied wholly in his work and the service of immortal souls, preaching his gospel in season and out of season, and watering with their prayers the labours of the pulpit, that God may give the increase.

3. The proposal met with general approbation, and, after serious deliberation, the church, with joint concurrence and perfect unanimity, made choice of seven persons, whose names are recited, and seem to be of the Hellenist Jews; which would most effectually serve to silence all future murmurings among them. Stephen stands first in the catalogue, with a most honourable testimony borne to him; he was *full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*, a man eminent for gifts and graces. Philip, who follows him, we find afterwards successfully employed in preaching the gospel, ch. viii. Of the rest we have no particular account, unless Nicolas, as some have suggested, was the founder of that sect which St. John mentions with abhorrence, Rev. ii. 6, 15. These seven being presented to the apostles, *they prayed* with them and for them, that they might be qualified for their work, and approve themselves faithful, and then, by the imposition of hands, solemnly separated them for this service, to which they were chosen.

4. The church continued to increase greatly, the intestine murmurs being silenced, the apostles being more disencumbered, and all zealously attending to their several charges. Thus the gospel word spread its blessed influence around; *the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem*, where, during our Lord's ministry, few comparatively seem to have believed in him; and what is still more astonishing, and to be reckoned among the chief wonders of grace, *a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith*, who had been the most inveterate enemies of Christ and his gospel, but now embraced the profession of Christianity, and proved, by their holy conversation, the unfeigned faith which was in them. *Note*; True faith in Jesus as a Saviour, ever produces sincere obedience to him as our Master.

2dly, Stephen, the first of the seven deacons, not only discharged the office to which he was appointed, but also appeared a zealous preacher of the gospel.

1. *He was full of faith and power*; endued with an eminent measure of courage and zeal for Christ, and, in confirmation of the truths that he preached, *did great wonders and miracles among the people*.

and entreat *them* evil four hundred years.

7 And ^k the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after

that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

8 ^l And he gave him the covenant of cir-

^k Gen. 15. 12. Exod. vii.—xiv. 1^l lxxviii. cv. cxxxv. cxxxvi. Ch. 23. 17. —24. & 35. 23. & xlvii. Exod. 1. 1—4. 1 Chr. 1. 34. & 2. 12. Mat. 1. 2.

^l Gen. 17. 9, 14. & 21. 2—4. & 25. 26. & 29. 31—35. & 30. 5

2. He appeared a bold disputant against those who opposed the cause of truth. *There arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, such Jews as were honoured with the freedom of the city of Rome, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.* These Hellenist Jews and proselytes, being generally the greatest zealots for Judaism, and perhaps being eminently skilled in Grecian literature, thought they could soon confute and confound this zealous advocate for Christianity, and challenged him to a public disputation. Probably Saul of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, was among the foremost of them. Stephen declined not the opportunity of vindicating the glorious truths of the gospel; and this he did with such clearness of argument, force of reasoning, energy of diction, and piercing application, that *they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake*: confounded, silenced, and unable to make any reply which carried the shadow of argument.

3. Enraged at being thus baffled, and instigated by malice and revenge, *they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God*; endeavouring by perjury and murder to silence him for ever, whose arguments they felt themselves so utterly unable to answer. *And, working upon their prejudices and passions, they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and in a popular tumult they came upon him, and caught him, as a criminal, and brought him to the council, as a blasphemer; and set up false witnesses which they had hired, and instructed what to swear against Stephen, who said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, the temple, and against the law. For we have heard him say, what fully amounts to the charge we produce against him, that this Jesus, the contemptible Nazarene, who was crucified, shall destroy this place, this sacred house, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us; abolishing all the ceremonial institutions of our celebrated law-giver, and introducing others of his own appointment in their stead.*

Such was the charge; which, if real, was far from amounting to blasphemy; and these things actually came to pass; though probably even in this they falsified, as the apostles themselves seem not to have been yet apprized, that the ceremonial law should be utterly abolished; but whatever he might have said, we may suppose they put upon it the most malicious construction that it would bear. *Note*; It is no new thing for the faithful preachers of the gospel to be branded as blasphemers; and it is only wonderful that, when the enemies of the gospel make no conscience of an oath, they do not by more frequent perjuries attempt to blacken or destroy those whom they so much abhor.

4. God owned his suffering servant by a signal mark of his favour, visible even to his persecutors. *All that sat in*

the council, looking steadfastly on him, to observe if he betrayed any tokens of fear or guilt, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel; such deliberate courage, such undisturbed serenity, such majesty and mildness sat on his countenance; nay more, a divine splendour beamed from it, like that of Moses when he came from the mount, and seemed to make him appear more than human.

CHAP. VII.

Ver. 2. And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers,] Dr. Benson has illustrated this speech of St. Stephen in a large and very judicious manner, to whom we shall be frequently obliged; and the following introductory remarks from Dr. Ward's 39th Dissertation will serve to shew its general propriety. The charge brought against Stephen, says he, consisted of two parts: that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the temple where they were then assembled, and change the rites of Moses, Ch. vi. 14. The foundation of this charge seems to have been, that Stephen, in disputing with them, had plainly proved, that Jesus was the Messiah. Hence his accusers inferred their charge, fixing upon him their own consequences as his assertions, and that with a design to take away his life, for which reason they might justly be called *false witnesses*, ver. 13. But though Stephen had not directly asserted these things, yet were they true in themselves, and might be inferred from the law and the prophets (Deut. xv.). He could not therefore deny them; and to have owned them in express terms, would have been to give himself up to their rage and fury. The method therefore which he takes in his defence is, first, to shew them, from their writings, that all their former dispensations were to issue in that of the Messiah; and he begins with God's calling Abraham from his country and family, and promising to him and his posterity the land of Canaan for a possession; and it is remarkable, that he does not call it *an everlasting possession*, as it is called Gen. xvii. 8. which might have seemed not so consistent with their forfeiture of it upon their rejecting the Messiah. Then he observes to them, how their fathers rejected Moses, after the clearest proofs of his mission, and that they were punished for it in the wilderness; and this he does, to prepare them to consider what they might justly expect upon rejecting Christ. He reminds them likewise, that Moses himself had declared to them, that *another prophet* was to arise, like him, whom they were ordered to bear. This was the Messiah; and his being *like to Moses* must consist in his bringing in a new dispensation, and confirming it with miracles, as Moses had done. This seems to respect the latter article of the charge;—and thus far they heard him patiently. He then proceeds to speak of the temple, which relates to the former part of the accusation: and here he uses such depreciating expressions, as, though taken from the prophets, could not be agreeable to them, and very probably inflamed their minds; but when he came

circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat *Isaac*, and circumcised him the eighth day; and *Isaac* begat *Jacob*; and *Jacob* begat the twelve * patriarchs.

* Fathers of tribes.

to charge them with the murder of *Jesus*, calling him the *Just One*, that is, the *Messiah*, they could no longer bear with him; but their passions rose to such a height, that they gnashed their teeth at him, and very probably made such a disturbance, that he could not proceed in what he designed to say further; though we find that Peter had twice before taken the same method, and charged them as expressly with the death of *Jesus*, Ch. ii. and iv. but Peter had, in both cases, the advantage of a present miracle to support him, and give weight to what he said; and we find that the council were deterred by that from proceeding to extremities, Ch. iv. 16. The Jewish rulers, before our Saviour's death, were apprehensive that he designed, by gaining over the populace, to set himself up for a king; and that, in consequence of this, the Romans would come and destroy their city, John, xi. 48. This they hoped to prevent, by taking him off; but, after his death, finding that the apostles not only went on to propagate the same scheme of religion, and support it with miracles, as he had done, but also charged them with murdering him, whom his followers asserted to be the *Messiah*, they seemed now to be more immediately concerned for their own security. However, at first they endeavour to prevent the spreading of this doctrine, and to deter the preachers of it by less severities, as in the case of Peter and John; but when they found that those would not do, it is not improbable they might resolve upon greater; and thinking Stephen a proper subject for their purpose, might determine, if possible, to take away his life; which seems more likely from Ch. v. 33. where it is said, that the Jewish senate took counsel to slay the apostles, as if they had not been dissuaded by Gamaliel. However, as that could not have been done judicially, and in form of law, but by a trial before the Roman governor, who might not think their charge against him sufficient to put him to death, there might be a particular design of Providence thus to honour him with being the first martyr for Christianity, and permit him to be taken off in such a manner, as drew no civil disorders after it. For we do not find that any notice was taken of this fact by the Roman governor; though one would think that he could hardly have omitted to make some inquiries about it. But it was easy for the council to allege in their excuse, that indeed they did call that man to an account for some offences against their law, who was so far from clearing himself, that he persisted in them with blasphemy, which was a crime of so heinous a nature with them, that they could not restrain the mob from dragging him out, and stoning him immediately. Upon such a representation, the governor might think it more advisable to drop any further inquiry, than by proceeding in it to inflame so turbulent a nation. Upon the whole, this speech of Stephen, so far as it goes, seems to be a proper reply to the charge laid against him; but what he would have added further, if he had not been prevented, may be difficult to say. By the methods taken to bring about this charge, and the behaviour of the Jews at

the trial, it seems probable, that the council designed, if possible, to take away his life, as a terror to others; and Divine Providence, for wise ends, thought fit to permit them to accomplish their design.

Ver. 4. And from thence, when his father was dead, &c.] See Gen. xi. 26. 32. Abraham was not Terah's eldest, but his youngest son; though, by way of honour and distinction, Moses has mentioned him the first of the three, as being the great patriarch of the Jewish nation. For Haran was Terah's eldest son, who died in Ur of the Chaldees, his native country; and who left a daughter, called Milcah, old enough to be married to Nahor. When therefore Terah was seventy years of age, then was Haran born, being his eldest son; Nahor, his second son, was born some years after; and Abraham, his youngest son, was born sixty years after his brother Haran, and when his father Terah was one hundred and thirty years of age. Now seventy-five added to one hundred and thirty, make up two hundred and five, the age at which Terah died in the land of Charran. See Archbishop Usher's Annals, A. M. 1948.

Ver. 5. And he gave him none inheritance in it, &c.] Probably Canaan was not at that time so universally given to idolatry as Chaldea; for there Abraham met with Melchisedech, who was a worshipper of the true God; and as he was a king, very likely his subjects were not idolaters; but in Chaldea idolatry must have had a large spread, when Terah's family, nay, and most likely Abraham himself, was infected; for St. Paul calls him, Rom. iv. 5. τὸν ἀσεβῆ, an ungodly person, or an idolater; for that is the word by which he usually intends to signify an idolater. Therefore the calling Abraham into Canaan at that time, was a likely method to preserve him from the further infection of idolatry, as it removed him from his kindred, who would have been apt to have tempted him more than strangers;—and as he was directed to a land where idolatry had not then spread so much. Nay, yet further to deter Abraham, God intimated to him, that in some future generations that very land of Canaan should become notorious for idolatry, and then God would take it from the inhabitants, and give it to him for a possession, even to his seed after him; for so the sentence should properly be read. It is plain that Abraham had not a foot of land in Canaan; for he bought a burying-place to bury his dead.

Ver. 6. Sojourn in a strange land;] Some think that this is said in opposition to their sojourning as strangers in the land of Canaan, Heb. xi. 9. which was not a strange land, but theirs by divine promise. But God himself teaches us otherwise, Exod. vi. 4. where he calls Canaan the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they, that is, Abraham and his descendants, had hitherto been strangers; for they were not as yet possessed of it, though they had a good title to it. This is proper to be taken notice of, in order to explain what immediately follows. See the note on Gen. xv. 13.

Ver. 8. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision:] St. Stephen, the reader may observe, draws no inferences. If

9 ^m ¶ And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

10 And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

11 ⁿ Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

12 ^o But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14 ^p Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, ^q threescore and fifteen souls.

15 ^r So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

16 ^s And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father* of Sychem.

17 ¶ ^t But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

^m Gen. xxxvii. xxxix—xli. Pf. 105. 17—22. & 34. 19. 9—28. ⁿ Including his brethren's wives. Gen. 46. 26. Exod. 13. 19. Joseph and his brethren were buried there. 15. 13. Exod. 1. 7, 12, 20. Pf. 105. 24.

^o Gen. 41. 53—57. If. 105. 16. Deut. 10. 23.

^p Gen. xlii—xlv. ^q Pf. 105. 15. Gen. 45. 9—28. ^r Gen. 23. 6, 20. & 47. 30. & 49. 29. ^s Gen. 33. 19. Josh. 24. 32. Mat. 2. 18. 2 Chr. 1. 8. ^t Gen.

he had denied the charge laid against him, as there were two witnesses who swore against him, he had been condemned immediately. If he had owned the charge, he would likewise thereupon have fallen under immediate condemnation. If he had gone about directly to have defended the truth of what the witnesses had alleged, the Sanhedrim would not have had the patience to have heard him. As it was, he proceeded in the only possible way to be heard so long as till he had vindicated himself; that is, by laying down the premises, and leaving them to draw the proper inferences from what he said: just as our Lord, in like cases, had often spoken in parables. Now the inferences to be drawn from what was thus far said, are plainly these: 1st, That in different ages and circumstances positive and external rites have been different; and holiness was not originally confined to one particular place; as appears plainly from the history of Abraham, and from what follows concerning Moses: 2dly, That temporal prosperity, and the favour of the multitude, are not always the lot of the people of God, as appears from the cruel treatment of righteous Abraham's more immediate descendants: 3dly, That the divine favour is not confined through all ages to the observation of any one sort of positive institutions; for Abraham was in the favour of God before circumcision was instituted.

Ver. 9. Moved with envy, sold Joseph] The plain inference to be drawn from hence was, that they might learn from this example, to abate their hard thoughts of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they, in like manner, through envy, delivered into the hands of strangers, who dealt cruelly with him. Further, from the treatment which Joseph met with, they might see how holy and good persons may be treated in a cruel and unjust manner by men, and at the same time be highly in the favour of God: and therefore, in the present case, it behoved them to examine carefully, and to judge with candour: and hence too they might learn, that holiness and acceptance with God are not confined to any one particular country. For God shewed favour to

Joseph in Egypt, amongst an idolatrous and wicked people.

Ver. 14. Threescore and fifteen souls.] See the notes on Gen. xlii. 20. 27.

Ver. 16. And were carried over, &c.] It is not improbable, that the bones of the other eleven patriarchs might be carried along with the bones of Joseph, when the children of Israel went out of Egypt, Exod. xiii. 19. and be afterwards buried along with his bones, when Israel came into Canaan. There was the same reason for them to desire to be buried there, as there was for Joseph; that is, their firm belief, that God would in due time fulfil his promise, in giving Canaan unto Israel for a possession; (Comp. Gen. i. 25. Heb. xi. 22.) and accordingly some of the ancient Jews affirm that the bodies of the patriarchs were carried and buried along with Joseph's; and St. Jerome asserts, that the twelve patriarchs were buried at Sychem. It seems, that St. Stephen, rapidly running over so many circumstances of history, had not leisure, nor was it needful where they were so well known, to recite them all distinctly. Therefore he here contracts into one, two different sepulchres, places and purchases, so as in the former history, to name the buyer, omitting the seller; in the latter, to name the seller, omitting the buyer. Abraham bought a burying-place of the children of Heth, Gen. xxiii. There Jacob was buried. Jacob bought a field of the children of Hamor. There Joseph was buried. We may observe here how St. Stephen contracts these two purchases into one. This concise manner of speaking, strange as it seems to us, was common among the Hebrews; particularly when, in a case notoriously known, the speaker mentioned but part of the history, and left the rest, which would have interrupted the current of his discourse, to be supplied in the mind of the hearer.—The first land which *these strangers*, these patriarchs bought, was for a sepulchre. They sought for a country in heaven. Perhaps the whole sentence, ver. 15, 16. might be rendered thus: *So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he and our fathers, and were carried*

18 ^{*}Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20 [']In which time Moses was born, and was ^{*}exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months :

21 ² And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's

daughter took him up; and nourished him for her own son.

22 ^{*} And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 And ^b when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was op-

^{*} Exod. i. 8—22. Pf. 105. 25. & 129. 1—3. Gen. 15. 13. ['] Exod. 2. 2—10. 1 Sam. 16. 12. Heb. 11. 23. ^{*} Or fair to God. ² Exod. 2. 7. Gen. 22. 14. Deut. 32. 36. Pf. 34. 19. ^a 1 Kings, 4. 30. Luke, 24. 19. ^b Exod. 2. 11—22. Heb. 11. 24—26.

ried over to Shechem, and laid by the sons (that is, descendants) of Hamor the father of Shechem, in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money. The reader will find much on this subject in Chais's note on Gen. xxiii. 16. Houbigant on Gen. xxxiii. 19. Bischoe's Lectures, p. 607. Whitby, L'Enfant, Sir Norton Knatchbull, &c.

Ver. 18. *Another king*] Probably of another family.

Ver. 19. *So that they cast out their young children,*] *By causing their infants to be exposed.* Heylin and Doddridge.

Ver. 20. *Was exceeding fair*] Ἀεῖος; τῷ Θεῷ, fair to God; or divinely fair: for we have had occasion frequently to observe, that the word God is often made use of in the Hebrew as expressive of the superlative degree. Concerning the beauty of Moses, see the note on Exod. ii. 2.

Ver. 21. *And—Pharaoh's daughter took him up,*] All these extraordinary circumstances relating to the birth, preservation, education, genius and character of Moses, serve to aggravate the crime of Israel in rejecting him when he offered himself to them as a deliverer under so many advantages, and when the providence of God had so wonderfully interested itself in his favour.

Ver. 22. *Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,*] Where the wisdom of a man is spoken of, that which is characteristic of it must needs be meant; where the wisdom of a particular man, that which is peculiar to his quality and profession. St. Stephen in this place speaks of both: in both, therefore, he must mean civil or political wisdom; for in that the Egyptian nation was principally distinguished; and in that the true character of Moses, whether we consider his rank, his education, or his office, was eminently comprised. He became at length the leader and lawgiver of a numerous people: but more than this, St. Stephen is here speaking of him under his public character, and therefore must necessarily be understood to mean, that Moses was consummate in the science of legislation. The words indeed are, *all the wisdom* of the Egyptians: but every good reasoner knows, that where the thing spoken of refers to some particular use, (as here Moses's to the conducting the Israelites out of Egypt,) the particle *all* cannot mean *all of every kind*, but *all the parts of one kind*: in this restrained sense, *all* is frequently used in the sacred writings. But further, the concluding part of the character,—*and mighty in words and deeds*, will not easily suffer the foregoing part to admit of any other in-

terpretation. *Mighty in words and deeds*, was in a natural sense the precise character of the ancient chiefs, who, leading a free and willing people, needed the arts of peace, such as *persuasion* and *law making*—the *words*; and the arts of war, such as *conduct* and *courage*,—the *deeds*. Hence it is that Jesus, who was the prophet like unto Moses, the legislator of the new covenant, as Moses was of the old, and the conductor of our spiritual warfare, is characterized in the same words, *A prophet mighty in deed and word, before God, and all the people.* Luke, xxiv. 19. This wisdom, therefore, in which Moses was said to be versed, we conclude was the practical part of philosophy, in contradistinction to the theoretical or speculative. This is the interpretation which Bishop Warburton gives in his Divine Legation, book iv. sect. 6. Several eminent commentators, however, suppose that a general erudition is referred to. Dr. Benson gives the following paraphrase of the verse: "By this means Moses had a most liberal education, being instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians; which were then the most learned people upon earth; and, though he could not speak fluently, he became mighty and powerful both in word and deed; that is, his speeches were solid and wise, and his actions virtuous, honest, and brave." Several ancient testimonies to the extraordinary learning of Moses may be seen in Philo de Vit. Mos. lib. i. p. 470. Justin Mart. Quæst. ad Orthod. xxv. Orig. cont. Cels. lib. iii. p. 139. Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. i. p. 343.

Ver. 24. *And seeing one of them suffer, &c.*] See Exod. ii. 11. where the word is מֵכַה, *meché*, which sometimes signifies to *finite* so as to kill; and the Israelite is here represented as *καταπονημένω*, *subdued in a struggle*, and in immediate danger of his life: so that Moses had no occasion for a divine impulse in order to his doing this action; for, (not to mention, that God most probably would have supported him afterwards, and he needed not to have fled for it,) as the Egyptian had got the Israelite down, and was, as appeared by all circumstances, just going to kill him; Moses only defended the injured, and vindicated the innocent when oppressed; a thing which any person may lawfully do at any time, or in any place for a stranger, and much more for his own friend: nay, the thing was in itself so far from a crime, that it was highly laudable and praiseworthy; and what Moses might, with great reason, have

pressed, and smote the Egyptian :

25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them : but they understood not.

26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren ; why do ye wrong one to another ?

27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us ?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday ?

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight : and as he drew near to behold it, the

voice of the Lord came unto him,

32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet : for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35 This Moses, whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge ? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

^c Pf. 106. 7. & 94. 8. ¹ Cor. 2. 8, 14. ² Deut. 29. 4. ³ Exod. 2. 13. ⁴ Gen. 13. 8. ⁵ 1 Cor. 6. 7. ⁶ Heb. 13. 17. ⁷ Ch. 4. 7. ⁸ Mat. 21. 23. ⁹ John, 1. 19, 22, 25. & 2. 18. ¹⁰ Exod. 2. 14—22. & 18. 1—6. ¹¹ Numb. 12. 1. ¹² Exod. 3. 1—10. with 19. 1—3. ¹³ 1 Kings, 19. 8. ¹⁴ Exod. 3. 2, 6. ¹⁵ Mal. 3. 1. ¹⁶ If. 63. 1, 9. ¹⁷ Gen. 48. 16. ¹⁸ Deut. 33. 16. ¹⁹ Gen. 15. 13. ²⁰ Pf. 66. 12. ²¹ If. 43. 2. ²² Deut. 4. 20. ²³ Dan. 3. 27. ²⁴ John, 8. 14. ²⁵ Zech. 13. 7. ²⁶ Tit. 2. 14. ²⁷ Pf. 72. 18. & 111. 8. ²⁸ Jer. 31. 22. ²⁹ Luke, 4. 26. ³⁰ 1 Gen. 17. 7, 8. ³¹ Exod. 3. 6. ³² Mat. 22. 32. ³³ Heb. 11. 16. ³⁴ Exod. 3. 6. ³⁵ Gen. 17. 3. ³⁶ 1 Kings, 19. 13. ³⁷ If. 6. 2—5. ³⁸ Luke, 5. 8. ³⁹ Heb. 12. 21. ⁴⁰ Dan. 10. 7, 8. ⁴¹ Mat. 17. 7. ⁴² Rev. 1. 17. ⁴³ Josh. 5. 15. ⁴⁴ Exod. 3. 5. ⁴⁵ Pf. 89. 7. & 86. 9. ⁴⁶ Exod. 3. 7. & 2. 25. ⁴⁷ Gen. 29. 32. ⁴⁸ 1 Sam. 9. 16. ⁴⁹ Pf. 106. 44. ⁵⁰ Mat. 9. 36. ⁵¹ Ver. 27. ⁵² Exod. 3. 10. ⁵³ Pf. 105. 26. & 77. 20. ⁵⁴ Mic. 6. 4. ⁵⁵ Pf. 75. 7. & 113. 7, 8. ⁵⁶ Numb. 20. 18. see ver. 30—32. ⁵⁷ Heb. 12. 25, 26. ⁵⁸ 1 Cor. 10. 9. ⁵⁹ Exod. vii—xx. ⁶⁰ Numb. 21. xiv. xvi. xvii. xx. ⁶¹ Deut. iv. viii, ix. xi. ⁶² Pf. lxxviii. cv, cvi. cxxxvi. ⁶³ Neh. ix. ⁶⁴ If. 63. 7, 14.

done to the Israelite, had he been going as unjustly to kill the Egyptian. It is true, that justice could not be then had in the Egyptian court in behalf of the Israelites ; and therefore some may think it was in those circumstances imprudent. But it must be remembered, that, according to the history, Exod. ii. 12. Moses used all proper precautions, and looked every way to see whether there were any Egyptians in sight, before he ventured to rescue his brother from the hand of the oppressor, and from death : and had not the Israelites themselves discovered it, it is highly probable that Pharaoh would never have known it. So that it is easy to vindicate the justice and prudence of this action of Moses. See the notes on Exod. ii.

Ver. 25. He supposed his brethren would have understood] It appears from this passage, that Moses had received some immediate revelation from God, that he was the person who should deliver Israel : besides, knowing that there was a divine promise of deliverance made to, and retained in the house of Israel ; that he himself had been extraordinarily preserved and educated, and that the time of their deliverance was approaching, he shewed himself willing to run all hazards and dangers with the people of God, rather than continue in the splendor of the Egyptian court ; and that when the time should be fully come, he would cheerfully join and head them in order to rescue them from their bondage and cruel slavery.

Ver. 26. Set them at one again,] And would have persuaded them at peace.

Ver. 27. Thrust him away, &c.] It is plain, that the speech of this single person is represented, ver. 35. as expressing the sentiments of the whole body of the people ; as their slowness afterwards to believe the mission of Moses, when attended by miracles, seems evidently to shew that it was. See Exod. v. 20, 21.

Ver. 30. And when forty years were expired,] This circumstance might have been handed down by tradition, or received by immediate inspiration, as the express time of Moses's continuance in voluntary exile is not mentioned in the Old Testament ; and no doubt many other circumstances respecting that great legislator, which are not related in that concise history, were handed down either by tradition or by some writings then extant. Respecting the subsequent circumstances, we refer the reader to the notes on Exod. iii.

Ver. 35. This Moses, whom they refused,] As the terms of high respect, in which St. Stephen, through the whole of his discourse, speaks of Moses, tended to shew how improbable it was, that he should have spoken contemptibly of him, as the witnesses pretended ; so this circumstance of the Israelites having rejected him whom God had appointed to be a ruler and redeemer, plainly adverted to their usage of the Lord Jesus, whom they had lately rejected.

37 ¶ This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, ' A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, * like unto me ; him shall ye hear.

38 ' This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers : who received the ' lively oracles to give unto us :

39 ' To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts ' turned back again into Egypt,

40 ' Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us : for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and

offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 ^b Then God turned, and gave them up to worship ^c the host of heaven ; as it is written in the book of the prophets, ^d O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space of* forty years in the wilderness ?

43 Yea, ^e ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them : and I ^f will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44 ¶ Our fathers had ^g the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, ^h that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

¹ Deut. 18. 15—19. Ch. 3. 22. Mat. 17. 5. * Or as myself. ² Joh. 5. 14. Exod. 19. 3, 20. Gal. 3. 17, 19. Heb. 2. 2. Ver. 53. ³ Deut. 32. 47. & 30. 19, 20, 7—10. John, 6. 63. & 20. 31. Rom. 3. 2. & 9. 4. Pf. 78. 5—7. ⁴ 2 Chr. 36. 15, 16. Mat. 21. 34, 35. Neh. 9. 16. ⁵ Exod. 14. 11, 12. & 16. 3. & 17. 3. Num. 11. 5. & 14. 1—4. ⁶ Exod. 32. 1—8. & 19. 24. Deut. 9. 12, 16. 2 Kings, 17. 16. Neh. 9. 18. Pf. 106. 19, 20. ⁷ Pf. 81. 11, 12. If. 66. 4. Hof. 4. 17. Rom. 1. 23, 26, 28. 2 Theff. 2. 11, 12. 2 Chr. 15. 2. Ezek. 26. 26, 39. ⁸ Deut. 4. 19. & 17. 3. 2 Kings, 17. 16. & 21. 3, 6. Jer. 19. 13. Ezek. 8. 16. ⁹ Amos, 5. 25—27. Pf. 95. 10. ¹⁰ 2 Kings, 17. 10, 16, 17. & 16. 3. & 21. 2—6. Jer. 7. 31. & 32. 35. Lev. 20. 2—6. Deut. xiii. & 17. 2—6. ¹¹ Amos, 5. 27. 2 Kings, 17. 6. & 18. 11. ¹² Exod. xxxii. 21—22. Numb. iii, iv. vii. & 9. 15—22. & 10. 17, 21. & 16. 19. Joh. 18. 1. ¹³ Exod. 25. 22, 40. & 26. 30. Heb. 8. 5.

jected, but whom God had constituted a Saviour by the divine determination.

Ver. 37. *A prophet shall the Lord your God, &c.*] Concerning this prophecy, see the note on Deut. xviii. 15, &c.

Ver. 38. *This is he, that was in the church*] When this clause is quoted, as it has been by some great men, to prove that Christ was the person who brought Israel out of Egypt, gave them the law, conducted them through the wilderness, &c. (which is undoubtedly most true) the argument drawn from this passage is certainly inconclusive : for *he—autos*—here evidently answers to the word *ouras*, ver. 36. and to the words *ouras o Miaōns*, ver. 27. and the following clause, which expresses his being *with the angel*, plainly proves that *angel* to be a different person. The doctrine itself, that Christ was the God of Israel, the *angel* or messenger who appeared to Moses, is a great and certain truth, capable of being evinced from many passages both of the Old and New Testament ; and from the passage before us in particular, though not from the clause. The word *ekklesia*, rendered *church*, would more properly be rendered here *assembly*, as it is Ch. xix. 41. because it refers not to their being incorporated into *one church*, in the appropriate sense of that word, but to their being *assembled* round the mountain on the solemn day, when the law was given. See Exod. xix. 17, &c.

Ver. 39. *To whom our fathers would not obey,*] This is observed by Stephen more than once, and he insists upon it largely, that they might see it was no new thing for Israel to rebel against God, by rejecting deliverers sent from him. See on ver. 35.

Ver. 40. *For as for this Moses—we wot not, &c.*] *We know not.* This is the phraseology both of the LXX and of the Hebrew ; (Exod. xxxii. 1.) and has been called putting the nominative case absolute ; accordingly Daniel, xii. 2. may be thus explained : *As to the multitude who sleep in the dust of the earth, they shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* So Daniel's words would appear to be a prophecy of the general resurrection of mankind, which does not fully appear in our common English translation. Many other texts might be explained, by observing that this phraseology is used. Both Beza and Grovius have represented it as a Hebraism ; but Raphelius has shewn that it was made use of by the best Greek writers. The plain inference from all this was, " You are not the first who have rejected the laws which came from God, but evidently approve yourselves the children of your wicked forefathers."

Ver. 42, 43. *Then God turned,*] See Rom. i. 21—24. Pf. lxxxi. 11, 12. There were two sorts of idolatry ; namely, the worshipping the true God by idol mediators, and terminating their worship upon false Gods. Israel began with the former ; and for a punishment was permitted to fall into the latter. See on Exod. xxxii. 1. &c. the notes on Amos, v. 25, &c.

Ver. 44. *Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness*] As St. Stephen had been accused of blaspheming the temple, he now proceeds to speak with peculiar propriety, and with due reverence, of their sacred places, as raised by special direction from God ; and yet corrects that extravagant regard for them, and confidence in them, which the Jews were so ready to entertain.

45 ¹ Which also our fathers that came after brought in with * Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, ^k whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

46 Who ¹ found favour before God, ^m and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47 ⁿ But Solomon built him an house.

48 Howbeit, ^o the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

49 ^p Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 ¹ Hath not my hand made all these things?

51 ¶ ¹ Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always ¹ resist the Holy Ghost: ¹ as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.

52 ² Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the ² Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 ³ Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and ² have not kept it.

54 ¶ ¹ When they heard these things they were ² cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

¹ Josh. 3. 11—14. & 18. 1. Judges, 18. 31. 1 Sam. 4. 4. & 7. 2. 2 Sam. vi. 1 Chr. xiv—xvi. 2 Kings, 8. 1—14. * i. e. Joshua. ^k Exod. 34. 24. Deut. 4. 38. & 7. 1. 22. Pf. 78. 55. Ch. 13. 19. ¹ Pf. 78. 70, 71. & 89. 19, 20. 1 Sam. 16. 12, 13. Acts, 13. 22. ^m Pf. 132. 1—5. 2 Sam. 7. 1—5. 1 Chr. 17. 1—4. & 22. 7, 8. ⁿ 1 Kings, v—viii. 2 Chr. ii—vii. 2 Sam. 7. 13. 1 Chr. 17. 32. ^o Ch. 17. 24. 1 Kings, 8. 27, 47. Jer. 7. 4. ^p If. 66. 1, 2. Mat. 5. 34. & 23. 22. Pf. 115. 2, 16. Jer. 23. 21. 1 Kings, 8. 27. ^q Gen. i. Exod. 20. 17. & 31. 17. Pf. 33. 6. & civ. Jer. 32. 17. ^r Exod. 33. 3. & 32. 9. & 34. 9. Deut. 9. 6. & 10. 16. Neh. 9. 16. Jer. 6. 10. & 7. 26. & 9. 25, 26. Ezek. 44. 9. If. 48. 4. Zech. 7. 11, 12. Lev. 26. 41. ^s Luke. 7. 30. Ch. 6. 10. ^t Ver. 9, 25, 37, 40, 41. Pf. 78. 8. ^u 2 Chr. 36. 16. Neh. 9. 26. Mat. 5. 12. & 23. 31, 34, 37. & 21. 34—39. & 22. 6. 1 Thess. 2. 15. Ch. 2. 3. & 3. 13—15. & 4. 10, 27. & 5. 30. ^v Ch. 3. 14. 1 Pet. 3. 18. Heb. 7. 26. 1 John, 2. 1. ^w Exod. xix. xx. Gal. 3. 19. Heb. 2. 2. Deut. 33. 2. Pf. 68. 17. ^x 2 Kings, 17. 8—23. If. i. v. lix, & c. Ezek. xvi. xx. xxii. xxiii. ^y Ch. 5. 33. & 13. 45. & 22. 22, 23. Prov. 2. 4, 5.

Ver. 45. *With Jesus] With Joshua.* The word ἐθνῶν, rendered *Gentiles*, would more properly be rendered *heathens* in this place.

Ver. 46—50. *And desired to find a tabernacle, &c.] ἤτεταρον, made it his petition.* From the account which the Scripture gives of David, it appears how greatly he longed to find out a place for the Lord,—*an habitation*,—which is a properer word than *tabernacle* in this place. Comp. 2 Sam. vii. 2. &c. and Pf. cxxxii. 1—5. However, as he was a man of war, and had shed blood, he was not allowed to build the temple; which was deferred to the peaceful reign of his son; and hence the plain inference was, that if king David was not thought fit to build the temple, because he was a man of blood, how much less fit are they to have such a structure continued to them, who have murdered the great Messiah, king David's son and Lord. Farther, it is evident, that David and the Patriarchs worshipped God as acceptably before this temple was built, as he was worshipped afterwards; though it cannot be denied that both the tabernacle and the temple were erected according to the will and appointment of God; and, when used agreeably to the original design and intention of them, were highly to be esteemed. St. Stephen, however, goes on to convince them that they set too great a value on this temple, when they would confine to it the divine presence, and all acceptable worship, seeing that God is the omnipresent being, able to shew favour to the pious and holy in one place, as well as another, throughout the whole creation. Nay, indeed, the whole creation is too narrow a temple for the omniscient and omnipresent God.

Ver. 51—53. *Ye stiff-necked, &c.]* “ Thus have I given you a brief account of the various periods of revelation,

“ or the several dispensations of God to man, from the time in which Abraham, our renowned ancestor, was called out of idolatry to the knowledge of the true God, unto this very day when the kingdom of the Messiah has begun to take place—that seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. And what I would have you understand by all that has been said, is this: that, in various ages and circumstances, God hath made various revelations, and appointed different positive institutions;—that temporal afflictions are consistent with being in the divine favour; and that a temporal Messiah is not to be expected: but that God, who of old laid the plan for the successive dispensations, is now going to introduce the last and best of them, by erecting his spiritual kingdom under the Messiah, who is none other than Jesus of Nazareth. And, it is no wonder that you should treat him as you did; for you are a stubborn, obdurate people, who, though you boast of the circumcision of the flesh, yet are uncircumcised in heart and ears, and incorrigibly bent upon your own wicked ways. You even reject the very means which ought to bring you to repentance, refusing the gracious invitations and offers of the Spirit of God, and treading in the steps of your disobedient ancestors. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? Nay, they ever slew many who prophesied of the coming of that divine person, the Messiah, whom Abraham, Moses, Israel, David, Solomon,—the tabernacle, the temple, the law, the prophets, and all the past dispensations, did unanimously point at, and did some way or other send to prepare men for. And yet, notwithstanding all this vast apparatus of a long succession of promises, prophecies, shadows, and representations, which God from age to age hath given

55 But he, being ^b full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus ^d standing on the

right hand of God.

56 And said, Behold, I see ^c the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the

^a Ch. 4. 8, 31. & 6. 5, 8, 10. ^b If. vi. Ezek. i. x. Rev. iv. v. Mat. 3. 16. Ch. 10. 11. Dan. 7. 13. Mark, 16. 19. ^c Heb. 9. 24. & 7. 25. & 1. 3. & 4. 14. & 8. 1. Pl. 109. 31. & 110. 1, 5. ^d Ezek. 1. 1. Mat. 3. 16. Ch. 10. 11.

“ to prepare you for the reception of him;—*you*, who ought to have received him with the greatest affection and regard, and protected him from any injurious treatment from others:—*You* yourselves, I say, have basely betrayed, and wickedly murdered him. And as your sin is much greater than that of your fathers, who rejected only Moses and the prophets; you may reasonably expect (unless you speedily and sincerely repent) that the judgments of God, which followed them, will come upon you to the uttermost. Nor will it be in the least wonderful, if God should depart from you, and if what you have charged me with asserting, should come to pass; namely, that your city and temple should be destroyed, and your whole nation slain, or carried away into a long and severe captivity. I have charged you with despising and murdering the *Just One*: but how should you be supposed to attend to one who came in so low and humble a manner, when the law, in which you so much boast, was published in an awful pompous manner, amidst troops of angels;—and yet, *you have not kept it.*” Christ was, by way of eminence, called the *Just or Righteous One*, as being alone perfectly righteous; ver. 52. See ch. iii. 14. Isai. liii. 11. Zech. ix. 9. It is a fine remark of Grotius, that the Sanhedrim was obliged, by virtue of its very constitution, to guard and defend the lives of the prophets with peculiar care.—How much more to protect from any injurious assault, so divine a messenger as Christ was; instead of which, they had not only basely deserted him, but had themselves become principals in his murder. The word *δυναται*, rendered *disposition*, (ver. 53.) is a military word, and signifies *ranks or troops*; so that the passage should be read, *who have received the law through ranks of angels*, who were marshalled in solemn array on that great occasion. Comp. Deut. xxxiii. 2. and Pl. lxxviii. 17. The sacred writer gives us an august idea of the majesty which attended the giving of the law. It was delivered with the utmost pomp and magnificence, amid the innumerable hosts of the Lord God Almighty. To what we have said on ver. 2. respecting this speech of St. Stephen, we will here subjoin, in brief, the sum of his discourse. “ I acknowledge the glory of God revealed to the fathers, ver. 2.—the calling of Moses, ver. 34., &c.—the dignity of the law, ver. 8. 38. 44.—the holiness of this place, ver. 7. 45. 47.—And indeed the law is more ancient than the temple; the promise more ancient than the law: for God shewed himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their children, freely, ver. 2., &c. 9., &c. 17., &c. 32. 34. 45.—And they shewed faith and obedience to God, ver. 4. 20. 23. particularly by their regard for the law, ver. 8. and the promised land, ver. 16. Mean time, God never confined his presence to this one place, or to the observers of the law; for he has been acceptably wor-

“ shipped before the law was given, or the temple built, and out of this land, ver. 2. 9. 33. 44. And that our fathers, and their posterity, were not tied down to this land, their various sojournings and exiles shew, ver. 4., &c. 14. 29. 43, 44. but you and your fathers have always been evil, ver. 9. have withstood Moses, ver. 25., &c. 39., &c. have despised the land, ver. 29. forsaken God, ver. 40., &c. superstitiously honoured the temple, ver. 48. resisted God and his spirit, ver. 25. killed the prophets, and the Messiah himself, ver. 52. and not kept the law for which ye contend, ver. 53. Therefore, God is not bound to you, much less to you alone.”

Ver. 55. And Jesus standing on the right hand of God. See the next note. It has been well observed, that Christ is generally represented *sitting*, but now as standing at God's right hand; that is, as risen up from the throne of his glory, to afford help to his distressed servant, and ready to receive him. It seems a very just conclusion of Mr. Addison's, that other martyrs, when called to suffer the last extremities, had extraordinary assistances of some similar kind; or frail mortality could not surely have endured the torments under which they rejoiced; and sometimes preached Christ to the conversion of the spectators, and, in some instances, of their guards and tormentors too. See Addison's Evid. of Christianity, ch. iii. sect. 5.

Ver. 56. Behold, I see the heavens opened, The reality of Stephen's seeing this vision, as he described it, appears from the improbability of his being guilty of any design to deceive, as well as from the authenticity and certainty of divine revelation. He was a man of great note and eminence in the church, and held the first place among the seven deacons. He justified the Christian faith against all opposers with singular wisdom. He confounded all those with whom he disputed. When false witnesses were suborned, and he was brought before the Sanhedrim to be tried, his judges saw that he was so far from being daunted, that there was a sparkling majesty in his countenance, like that of an angel. This emboldened him to speak without reserve to the council, and to reprove them for resisting the Holy Ghost; which enraged them to the highest degree. But Stephen, still full of the Holy Ghost, and undaunted at what he foresaw he must suffer from an exasperated mob, cast his eyes toward heaven, *from whence cometh help*, and bade them take notice that he saw the glory of God, and Jesus shining at his right hand, in far greater glory than they had seen in his face. If he had not been sure that he *beheld him whom they crucified*, a person of his wisdom would have been more cautious, than to follow him in that bloody path, to which this assertion of course led him; especially as his silence might have preserved him from danger. But so visible was the majesty of our Saviour, that he could not but proclaim it, though he knew they would call it blasphemy, and punish him for it with death.

right hand of God.

57 ^f Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord.

58 ^g And cast *him* out of the city, and

stoned *him*; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, ^h Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

^f See ver. 54. Prov. 27. 4, 5. Ch. 13. 45. & 14. 5. & 22. 22, 23. Mat. 27. 22—25. ^g Lev. 24. 14, 16. Deut. 13. 9. & 17. 5, 7. 1 Kings, 21. 10, 13. Luke, 4. 29. Ch. 6. 11. & 22. 20. Heb. 13. 12, 13. ^h Pl. 31. 5. Luke, 23. 46.

death. He was willing to suffer for the honour of his Master, who, by this vision, demonstrated to him that he was the *Son of the Highest*, and able to reward all his faithful servants with immortal glory. If it be asked how he could see the glory of God, (ver. 55.) and how he knew the person who appeared at God's right hand to be Jesus? in answer to the first question, we may reply that he saw God's glory in the same sense as others are said to have seen God: he beheld some very bright appearance. Thus Moses was afraid to look upon God, Exod. iii. 6. Such a glory it was that Stephen beheld; a glory more pure and resplendent than the light of the sun; a glory, which was the symbol of the presence of the divine majesty, who used in this manner to make men sensible of his transcendent invisible glory. In this divine presence he saw Jesus in the most high and most exalted place. Stephen indeed saw him standing; which might refer to his priestly office;—standing being the posture of those who ministered in the temple at the altar. This posture, therefore, might imply his officiating in the heavenly places, for the comfort of all Christians, as well as of Stephen himself; or rather as ready to come to take vengeance upon the implacable enemies who had killed him, and now persecuted his servants. As to the second question, how he could know that it was Jesus whom he saw, it is easily replied to;—he appeared in the same form as upon earth; only more shining and resplendent: and therefore, when Stephen says to the Jews, “I see the Son of man standing,” &c. he means that very Person who used to call himself the *Son of man*. And if we follow the scope of his speech, he seems to say no less than this; “That very Person who called himself the *Son of man*, whom you have crucified, I now see so exalted, that I had rather die as he did, than not confess him to be the Son of God.” Stephen saw him risen up from his throne, as if he was coming to be avenged of his enemies, to succour all his servants, and to welcome this martyr to immortal bliss. That Stephen was fully confident of this is evident from his resigning up his soul to Jesus with the same confidence, (ver. 59.) and almost in the same words, with which Jesus gave up his to God the Father. The last words of our Saviour were, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!” Luke, xxiii. 46. Stephen, in the extremity of his sufferings, called upon God, and said, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!* he died with these and the following words in his mouth, crying again with a loud voice,—*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!* In which he expressed as much charity to men, as in the other sentence he did faith in Christ. Now, as in this awful period he displayed such piety and goodness, such candour and humanity, and was so utterly void of all rancour, when he had the highest provocations from his enemies; we

may conclude (besides the certainty of the fact as declared in the canon of Scripture) that it is utterly improbable he could be guilty of a lie to deceive others; and we may be assured that God would not suffer so extraordinary a person to be deceived, to the ruin of himself, and to the sacrificing, if not casting away, so precious a life.

Ver. 57. *Then they cried out, &c.*] “This declaration and reference provoked them to such a degree, that crying out with a loud voice that they might drown that of Stephen, they stopped their own ears, as if they could not bear to hear such blasphemy as they conceived he had spoken, and furiously rushed upon him with one accord.”

Ver. 59. *And they stoned Stephen,] While they stoned Stephen, he prayed, and said, &c.* Literally, *They stoned Stephen, invoking and saying, &c.* There is nothing for the word *God* in the original. A solemn prayer, like this to Christ, in which a departing soul is thus committed into his hands, is such an act of worship as no good man would have paid to a mere creature, Stephen here worshipping Christ in the very same manner in which Christ worshipped the Father on the cross. This stoning seems to have been an act of popular fury, like the stoning of St. Paul at Lystra, ch. xiv. 19. and exceeding the power which the Jews regularly had. The Jews were more than once ready to stone Christ, not only when by their own confession they had not power to put any one to death, but when nothing had passed which had the shadow of a legal trial. How far they might now have formed those express notions of what the rabbies called the *judgment of zeal*, is uncertain; but it is plain they acted on that principle, and as if they had thought every private Israelite had, like Phineas, who is pleaded as an example of it, a right to put another to death on the spot, if he found him in a capital breach of the divine law; a notion directly contrary to Deut. xvii. 6. which requires at least two witnesses in capital cases, where there is a legal process. The manner of their stoning persons was this: a crier went before him who was to die, proclaiming his name, his crime, and those who were witnesses against him. When they were come within two or three yards of the place of execution, they stripped the criminal naked, except a small covering, for decency, about his middle. The place of execution, from which they threw down the malefactor, was above twice the height of a man, upon which he was made to ascend with his hands bound. When he was ascended, the witnesses laid their hands upon him, and then stripped off their upper garments, that they might be fitter for going through the execution. From that high place one of the witnesses threw down the criminal, and dashed his loins against a great stone, which was laid there for that very purpose; if that killed him not, then the other witness threw

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep.

¹ Mat. 5. 44. Luke, 6. 28. & 23. 34. 16. 53. 12, 6. ² Mat. 9. 24. John, 11. 11. ³ Cor. 15. 6, 18, 20. ⁴ 1 Theff. 4. 13, 14. Rev. 14. 13.

threw from the same height a great stone upon his heart, as he lay on his back, and was stunned with the fall. If that dispatched him not, then all the people fell on him with stones till he died.

Ver. 60. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.] The original is emphatical; literally, *Weigh not out to them this sin*, that is, "The punishment due to it;" alluding to passages of Scripture where God is represented as weighing men's characters and actions in the dispensations of his justice and providence. Compare 1 Sam. ii. 3. Job xxxi. 6. Prov. xvi. 2. Isai. xxvi. 7. Dan. v. 27. This prayer of St. Stephen was heard and remarkably answered in the conversion of Saul, of whose history we shall shortly hear more.

Inferences.—Do any call us to account concerning our faith and hope in Christ? Let the law and the testimony be our defence; they all along spake of him, and by them we are assured that he is in himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who appeared to Moses in the flaming bush without consuming it, was with him in all his dangers, and wrought all the wonders of Israel's deliverances by his hands; and who was typified by that celebrated prophet, and by Joshua their leader into the land of Canaan, and by the tabernacle and temple, and is now exalted, in our nature, to the highest dignity of his office in heaven, and is worthy of all faith, religious worship and adoration.—How true and faithful is God to his promises; though we, alas! are dull of understanding, and do not observe his way and time for fulfilling them! But how sure are his performances of all his promises, in due season, to them that trust in him; and how graciously does he accept them and their services, according to his own institution, of what nation, or in what place soever they are! And, O how much better is it to have God dwelling in our hearts by faith, and in our religious assemblies by his Spirit, as his temple upon earth, till we get to the throne of his glory in heaven, than to imagine that his special presence is confined to any material temple! But, ah! how prone are hypocritical professors to be more fond of rites and ceremonies, than of his law and gospel! How sadly have many revolted from him, resisted his Spirit, persecuted his servants, and rejected him and his salvation, to their own dreadful perdition! But the Lord Jesus will stand by the true confessors of his name at the worst of times, will fill them with the Holy Ghost, and give them seasonable manifestations of his glory; and when his enemies cast them out, and cruelly put them to death, he stands ready to support and comfort them, to take them into the arms of his love, and to receive them into heaven, that they may live with him for ever. And O! with what holy liberty, zeal, and courage, will they speak for him, and in his strength suffer even to the worst of martyrdoms for his sake, when he calls them to it! With what humble confidence and assuring satisfaction may they invoke his name, and commit their departing souls to him; and with what peace

and pleasure may they die, with a forgiving spirit towards their enemies, and with a joyful assurance of their own souls' going immediately to Jesus, and of their bodies sleeping in him, till they shall awake to everlasting life, and appear with him in glory!

But, O Saul! couldst thou have believed, if one had told thee, while thou wast urging on the cruel multitude, while thou wast glorying over the venerable corpse of pious Stephen,—couldst thou have believed that the time would come, when *thou thyself* shouldst be *twice stoned* in the same cause for which *he* died?—That *thou* shouldst triumph in having *committed thy soul* likewise to *that Jesus*, whom thou wast now blaspheming! In this instance his *dying prayer* was illustriously answered for thee! In this instance, *the wolf lies down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid*, as Isaiah has foretold. And it is most delightful to think that the *martyr Stephen*, and *Saul the barbarous persecutor*, (afterwards his *brother*—both in *faith* and in *martyrdom*;) are now joined in bonds of everlasting friendship, and dwell together in the happy company of those *who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb*, Rev. vii. 14. May we at length be joined with them, and, in the mean time, let us glorify God in both!

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Stephen, that noble confessor, is before his judges assembled in full council, with the high-priest at their head, all his known, avowed, and inveterate enemies: yet, in answer to the high-priest's demand, *Are these things so?* he boldly undertakes his defence. The scriptures are the armoury whence he draws the weapons of his warfare, and we find him a complete master of his subject. Being a Hellenist Jew, he quotes the septuagint, as the version commonly in use in their synagogues, though containing some variations from the original Hebrew. He begins,

1. With a respectful and affectionate address, entreating their unprejudiced attention; *Men, brethren, and fathers hearken.*

2. He lays before them a concise view of the patriarchal history, in order that they might remember, that God had a visible church and people in the world before the law was given, and still would have one when all the ceremonial institutions were abolished.

[1.] He opens with the call of Abraham, to whom *the God of glory appeared*, in some visible display of his presence, *when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran*, in an idolatrous land, and said unto him, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee*: accordingly he immediately left his country, and removed to Charran, and after his father's death receiving a second call, he came into the land of Canaan, and abode there where they now dwelt.

Hence it appeared, that Abraham was in God's favour before he was circumcised, and that God's Shechinah had visited Ur of the Chaldees, before it appeared in Canaan; and therefore they might see, that neither the dispensation

CHAP. VIII.

By occasion of the persecution in Jerusalem, the church was planted in Samaria by Philip the deacon, who preached, did miracles, and baptized many, and among the rest Simon the sorcerer, a great seducer of the people. Peter and John came to confirm and enlarge the church, where, by prayer and imposition of hands, they gave the Holy Ghost. Simon would have bought the like power of them; but, Peter having re-proved his hypocrisy and covetousness, and exhorted him to repentance, and having preached the word of the Lord, together with John, returned to Jerusalem. But the angel sendeth Philip to teach and baptize the Ethiopian eunuch.

[Anno Domini 34.]

AND ^a Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was

^a Ch. 7. 58. & 22. 20. 1 Tim. 1. 13. ^b Ch. 7. 58. & 26. 10. & 9. 14. ^c i. e. the preachers. Ver. 4. 14. Ch. 11. 19. ^d Ch. 2. 5. 42, 46. Gen. 50. 10. & 23. 8. 2 John, 11. 31. 2 Sam. 3. 31. ^e Ch. 7. 58. & 9. 1, 2, 15, 11, 21. & 22. 3, 4, 19, 20. & 26. 9, 12. Gal. 1. 13, 23. 1 Cor. 15. 9. Phil. 3. 6. 1 Tim. 1. 13. ^f Mat. 10. 23. Ch. 11. 19. & xiii. xiv. xvi—xix. Mat. 5. 15, 16. 1 Cor. 14. 31. Mark, 16. 15. ^g Ch. 6. 5. & 21. 8. with ver. 1, 14, 15. ^h John, iv. Gen. 49. 10. 11. 10. & 42. 1—7. with Mat. 10. 5, 6.

^b a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and ^c they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 And ^d devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3 ^e As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad ^f went every where preaching the word.

5 Then ^g Philip went down to ^h the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them,

of the law, nor the land of Israel, were needful for the acceptable worship of God. *Note*; (1.) Though we may not see clearly whither God is leading us, yet, when we have his call, we may confidently go forward. (2.) They who are travelling to the heavenly Canaan, cheerfully turn their backs on earth with all its allurements.

[2.] Though God had promised Abraham the land of Canaan for a possession, and to his seed after him, *when as yet he had no child*, yet he gave him not a foot of land for a present inheritance: nor for four hundred years afterwards, reckoning from the birth of Isaac, did any of his posterity enjoy the promised inheritance, but lived unsettled, and afflicted, under the tyranny of strangers, till, at the expiration of the time appointed, God *judged* their Egyptian oppressors, and brought them at last to serve him in this place. And this Stephen suggests, in order to lower their pride on their original; and, from the length of time which elapsed between the promise and the fulfilment of it, as well as from the hardships which their fathers endured in the intermediate space, to shew them that the principal object to which the Lord intended to lead them, was the heavenly Canaan, of which this was but the figure; and therefore it could be no blasphemy to say, that Jesus could destroy this country, when he promised to bring his faithful servants to the heavenly Canaan, and the Jerusalem which is above. *Note*; (1.) Though God's promises may be long in their fulfilment, they are sure to the faithful. (2.) The children of God may be, and very frequently are, called to endure the severest afflictions here. (3.) He will finally avenge them on their oppressors.

[3.] Having called Abraham to be his servant, God gave him the covenant of circumcision, as a seal of the righteousness of that faith which he had, being yet uncircumcised; and this rite he transmitted to his posterity, circumcising his son Isaac on the eighth day, according to the divine command. And Isaac begat Jacob and the twelve patriarchs, in whom the family of Abraham began to enlarge; yet even then did the same spirit of envy break forth against Joseph, as they who boasted themselves descendants from these patriarchs afterwards shewed to Jesus,

of whom Joseph was an eminent type, both in his sufferings and exaltation. *The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold him into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions*; and endued him with such wisdom as recommended him to Pharaoh's favour, who constituted him *governor over Egypt and all his house*. And thus had God exalted his Son Jesus, whom they had brought to the lowest state of ignominy and abasement, to a throne of glory. A dearth, which Joseph had foretold, drove the brethren of Joseph shortly after from Canaan to Egypt, where, through his care, provision had been laid up against the years of famine. There at the second interview, to the astonishment of his brethren, Joseph made himself known to them; and Pharaoh being acquainted with his kindred, Joseph, at his desire, invites his father and all his family into Egypt, consisting of seventy-five persons. There Jacob, with the patriarchs, died, and, in the faith of the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, the bones of the patriarchs were carried out of Egypt, and *laid in the sepulchre that Jacob the grandson of Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem*. (See the Annotations.) Thus they might observe, that the land on which they set so high a value, was afflicted with famine; that the patriarchs, of whom they boasted, all died in a strange country, and never got possession of Palestine; and yet the faithful among them were nevertheless accepted of God, and their faith was carried out to the heavenly inheritance, which Jesus has brought to light, and has obtained for all that perseveringly believe in him.

2dly, Stephen proceeds with the history of the Jewish people.

1. *When the time of the promise drew nigh*, they multiplied exceedingly. Then a new king arose, *which knew not Joseph*, nor remembered what a Saviour he had been to the land; but, jealous of the increase of the Israelites, with hellish craft he sought to extirpate them by a bloody edict to kill all the male children which should be born; while by the most servile and incessant toils and labour he sought to harass to death their fathers. And thus were they acting against the disciples of Jesus and his infant church;

6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

church; but their subtilty and malice would be equally abortive; the followers of Jesus but increased and multiplied the more.

2. In this state of distress Moses was born, designed of God for their great deliverer; for when God's people are at the last extremity, he is ready gloriously to appear on their behalf. The child was *exceedingly fair*; something peculiarly beautiful appeared in his infant countenance. After being concealed three months, he was at last exposed; and so Providence ordered it, that Pharaoh's daughter, coming down to the spot to bathe, found the babe, and was so struck with his beauty and tears, that she took and brought him up as her own son, giving him the most accomplished education; so that he was *learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds*; remarkably judicious in his counsels, and eminent for his courage.

Stephen shewed hereby, that, far from dishonouring Moses, he regarded him with the greatest admiration, and spoke of him with the highest encomiums. He was also an eminent figure of Christ, exposed to like danger in his infancy, and raised up of God to be an infinitely greater Saviour to his faithful people.

3. *And when he was full forty years old*, being arrived at the prime of life, and almost at the height of grandeur and affluence, moved by a divine impulse, he resolved to leave the court of Pharaoh, and visit his afflicted brethren. And seeing one of them most unjustly abused and beaten, he interposed in his behalf, and slew the Egyptian, as a specimen of that authority with which he was invested, as their appointed deliverer; supposing by this action they would understand what God intended to do for them by his means; but they understood not. *The next day he shewed himself again unto them as they strove*, and, as a peace-maker, would fain have reconciled the two Hebrews who quarrelled with each other, suggesting their near relation, and how unbecoming it was in them to abuse and fight with one another. But he who was the aggressor, impatient of the rebuke (as those usually are, who are in the wrong), insultingly rejects his interposition, saying, *Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?* as if he assumed an authority to which he had no title; and upbraids him with what he had done the day before; *Wilt thou kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian yesterday?* Perceiving hereby the danger in which he was, and the ingratitude and baseness of his brethren, *Moses fled*, lest, the fact being published, he should be arrested as a murderer; and taking up his abode in the land of Midian, he spent another forty years there, where he begat two sons.

Now Stephen insinuates that it was no new thing with them to reject and ill use their divinely-appointed deliverers. As their fathers perversely shut their eyes against the pretensions of Moses, so had they refused Jesus the Prince of glory, who came to deliver them from a worse than Egyptian bondage, even from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and from the power of death and hell.

3dly, Stephen proceeds in his account of Moses, and, far from speaking ought that could be construed into

blasphemy against him, none could ever make more honourable mention of this great lawgiver.

1. At the expiration of forty years, the great Angel of the covenant, who in the fulness of time was to come into the world as God incarnate, in the person of the man Christ Jesus, appeared to him in a bush, which seemed all on fire, yet remained unconsumed. Struck with astonishment at this strange sight, when Moses approached to take a nearer view, the voice of God was heard from the midst of the bush, saying, *I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*, remembering his covenant, and now about to fulfil his promises to their seed, after so long a time. The doctrine then of a resurrection, at which the Sadducees were so offended, has Moses for its voucher: and God had not limited his presence to the temple, but had here displayed his glory in a wilderness; and that very covenant of promise made unto the fathers, which God spake of to Moses, Stephen preached, shewing its most evident and glorious accomplishment in the spiritual salvation of Jesus; so far was he from contradicting, and much more from blaspheming Moses, as they alleged.

2. Struck with sacred reverence, his eyes fixed on the earth, Moses durst not behold the glory. Then God bids him put off his shoes from his feet, as standing now on holy ground; and gives him his commission: *I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them*. Though God suffer his believing people to be in distress, he hears their cry, and in his good time will help them. *This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer, by the hand of the Angel which appeared to him in the bush; and thus had God the Father exalted his Son Jesus, whom they had in like manner rejected, to be a Prince and Saviour*.

3. Moses faithfully executed his commission, and brought them out from the house of bondage, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red-Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. So highly does he speak of Israel's deliverer; nor was it any derogation from him, that a greater than he should arise, accomplishing a more glorious redemption for them, since of such a one does Moses himself prophesy.

4. *This is that Moses*, the very person for whose honour they were so jealous, *which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; a new lawgiver, who should introduce another dispensation; or as me, as he hath raised up me, so shall there arise another, invested with divine authority and power: him shall ye hear*, submitting to his word, and obedient to his voice in all things. Far therefore from dishonouring Moses, Stephen shews the accomplishment of his prophesy, and that they ought to testify their real veneration for his memory, by obeying his injunctions, and submitting to that new and spiritual dispensation which Jesus the great Prophet came to introduce.

5. Notwithstanding all the services which Moses did them, and all the honour that God had conferred upon him,

7¹ For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

¹ Mat. 10. 1. Luke, 10. 17. Mark, 16. 17. John, 14. 12. Heb. 2. 4. 1 Pet. 1. 12.

their fathers had treated him with the highest contempt and ingratitude. *This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, as their captain and leader, with the angel, that uncreated Angel of the covenant, the great Jehovah Jesus, which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers, face to face, as a man talketh to his friend; who received the lively oracles to give unto us; oracles, as being of infallible certainty; and lively, sharp, and piercing the conscience, or leading those who truly understood them, and perseveringly obeyed them, to eternal life. Yet greatly as Moses was honoured of God herein, our fathers would not obey him, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt; murmuring and mutinying against him, and sinking into the grossest idolatry, at the very time when, as their mediator, he was in the mount with God, —saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.* So disrespectfully did they speak of their great deliverer. *And accordingly they made a calf in those days in imitation of the Egyptian god Apis, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.* Instead therefore of charging Stephen with blasphemy, they would do well to remember what their own ancestors had done.

6. For these abominations God was justly provoked. *Then he turned, withdrew from them his grace and favour, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, leaving them in righteous judgment to their own inventions. In consequence of which they neglected God, and all the newly-instituted ordinances, and relapsed, after they came into Canaan, into the grossest idolatry; for which he quotes a prophet's words, whose authority they would not dispute, (Amos, v. 25—27.) Have ye offered to me slain beasts, and sacrifices, by the space of forty years in the wilderness? No: they neglected his worship, and what they offered was to devils, and not to God, (Deut. xxxii. 17.) so that they themselves difused for forty years those very customs which Moses had delivered to them. And, worse still, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, the image of this idol inclosed in a shrine; and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made, to worship them, in express contradiction to the commands of God: and for this he threatens them with condign punishment; I will carry you away beyond Babylon, (see 2 Kings, xvii. 5—8.)*

Now if God dealt thus severely with them for despising Moses' law, of how much forer punishment, than even their ancestors received, would they be counted worthy, for rejecting the dispensation of grace which Jesus, so far greater than Moses, came from God to reveal to them!

4thly, The accusation lodged against Stephen was for speaking against the temple, as if he was guilty of blasphemy thereby; whereas he shews, that their fathers worshipped God acceptably for ages before any temple was built.

1. It was not till they came into the wilderness, that the tabernacle of witness was reared, according to the model

which God shewed to Moses in the mount: God accepted his faithful worshippers before there was any tabernacle; and they might again serve him as acceptably, if the holy place, the temple, was destroyed: and the very care shewn in the making of this tent according to the divine model, intimated, that it was a shadow of good things to come, being typical of the incarnation of the Son of God, and of his spiritual and gracious presence in his church.

2. This tabernacle Joshua brought into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before him; and if it was set up in that polluted land of Canaan, why might not God now erect his spiritual tabernacle among the nations of the heathen?

3. Till David's time, God was pleased to dwell in this mean and moveable tent, above four hundred years; and when David was desirous to build a temple for the Lord, he forbade him, reserving that honor for Solomon, who built him an house. It therefore appeared evident, that God was not solicitous to have a temple for his abode, as if that was necessary for their acceptable worship; and also, that if Solomon might change the tabernacle for a temple, God might no doubt, if he pleased, destroy that, and make his abode in the spiritual temple, the church of the faithful.

4. Though God ordered the erection of the tabernacle, and the building of the temple, it could not be conceived that his immensity could be circumscribed by these narrow bounds, when as the prophet (Isai. lxvi. 1, 2.) had observed, *Heaven is his throne, and earth his footstool.* No house made with hands can then be comparable to that glorious temple the universe, which himself hath reared: nor can he need a place to repose himself, when all things and creatures whatever are the work of his hands. Therefore it was no disparagement to the temple, to affirm, that Jesus should destroy this temple, and set up another, into which all nations should flow together, and their worship be acceptable to him.

5thly, Perhaps Stephen was proceeding to shew that the temple and its service must come to an end; but perceiving the rage that fired the bosoms of his enemies sparkling in their eyes, and expecting soon to be interrupted, he closes with a word of piercing application.

1. He charges them with their obstinacy and stubbornness like unto their fathers. *Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears; in profession God's servants, but hardened in pride and prejudice against the clearest intimations of his will; ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; rejecting the evidence of his miracles, wilfully blind to the clearest prophecies, and fighting against the convictions of your own consciences. As your fathers did, so do ye; refusing to hearken unto us the inspired servants of Jesus, as they turned a deaf ear to the warnings of the prophets: and just is it in God to devote those to ruin, who will not hearken to his admonitions, but obstinately harden their hearts.*

2. They were persecutors and murderers, like their fathers. *Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?*

more

8 ¹ And there was great joy in that city.

9 ¶ But there was a certain man, called

Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of

¹ If. 24. 14—16. & 48. 10—12. & xxxv. lii. liv. lx. ch. 13. 48. Rom. 15. 9—12. Pl. 19. 8. & cxvii. Exod. 7. 11. x Theff. 2. 9, 10. Rev. 13. 13, 14.

¹ Ver. 11. Ch. 5. 36. & 13. 6, 8.

more or less reviling or opposing them? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One, the divine Messiah, Jesus, the holy one of God; sent to bring in an everlasting righteousness, through his infinite merit and intercession; of whom ye, treading closely in your ancestors' steps, and exceeding them in wickedness, have been now the betrayers and murderers.

3. They had rejected God's word, as their fathers before them, who have received the law, delivered in the most august manner, by the disposition of angels, whose ministry God employed on mount Sinai, when in shining ranks they graced that solemnity, as attendants on the king of glory; and have not kept it; have, like them, broken its most essential precepts, and added to all their guilt the rejection of the gospel also, notwithstanding all the glorious evidences wherewith it has been attended; and how then can you hope to escape the vengeance of an offended God?

6thly, We have the glorious and triumphant death of the first Christian martyr.

1. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, so filled were they with envy, indignation, and malice, as if sawn asunder; and they grasped on him with their teeth, as if they would have devoured him alive. Note; Wicked men carry their hell about with them, in those diabolical tempers and raging passions, which make them their own tormentors.

2. Stephen, unterrified with their malice, and being full of the Holy Ghost, receiving an abundant increase of grace and consolation suited to his present condition, looked up steadfastly into heaven; appealing to God, confidently expecting divine support, and eagerly longing after that crown of glory which now shone bright in his view, and enabled him to look down with contempt upon the malice of his enemies; and, by a miraculous manifestation, saw the glory of God, some visible emblem of the eternal majesty, such as the Shechinah, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, in his human nature as Mediator, exalted to the highest honour and dignity, appearing as the advocate of his suffering faint, to strengthen him boldly to resist unto blood, to crown him with martyrdom, and shortly to avenge him of his bloody persecutors. Transported with this beatific vision, he said, with wonder and delight, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Note; (1.) In times of suffering, our eyes should be lifted up to heaven, for thence cometh our help. (2.) As our tribulations for Christ abound, he is pleased, by the most gracious manifestations of himself, to cause our consolations to abound also. (3.) A sight of Jesus, at the right-hand of God, will carry us triumphantly through death armed with all its terrors, and enable us to defy the stroke.

3. Concluding now that they had full cause for his condemnation, They cried out with a loud voice, to drown his speech, to express their detestation of what they heard, and to sharpen each other's fury; and stopped their ears, as

if shocked at his blasphemy; and ran upon him with one accord; the whole multitude of the people rising in tumultuous rage; and cast him out of the city, as a wretch not fit to live, and who defiled that holy place where he stood, and stoned him, as a blasphemer (Lev. xxiv. 16.) and the witnesses, whose hands were first upon him (Deut. xvii. 6, 7.) laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul, a fiery zealot, who with pleasure saw the bloody execution of this holy martyr. Note; (1.) The cause of Christ is often run down with clamour, and rage supplies the place of reason. (2.) Many of the dearest saints upon earth have been counted as the off-scouring of all things, and thought unworthy of the air they breathed.

4. They stoned Stephen, calling upon God; though cast out from earth, as unworthy to live, he had a sure interest in heaven, saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; and, now ready to expire, he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, expressive of the vehemence of his desire, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, copying closely his divine Master's example; and when he had said this, he fell asleep; as these words dropped from his lips, the mortal blow reached him, and in the arms of everlasting love he sweetly rested from suffering and sorrow for ever. Note; (1.) In a dying hour, we cannot be better employed than in commending our souls into the arms of Jesus. (2.) If our immortal part be safe, it little matters what becomes of the fleshly tabernacle. (3.) Jesus is very God, the object of his people's adoration; and as it is only by faith in him that we can live comfortably, so only by an eye to him, as the resurrection and the life, can we die happily. (4.) Our bitterest persecutors must share our prayers; and the more wicked they are, the more they need them. (5.) When we come to die, it will be essential to our salvation, that we are truly in charity with all men. (6.) Death to the faithful is but a sleep: their bodies reposing awhile in that bed of dust where our Lord has lain, HIS voice shall waken them up in the resurrection morn, and they shall arise to share with him the triumphs of that eternal day, when their sun shall no more go down, nor their moon withdraw itself, but the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and their God their glory.

C H A P. VIII.

Ver. 1. And Saul was consenting unto his death] Dr. Heylin renders this, And Saul was accessory to his death; and he joins it to the last verse of the foregoing chapter. The circumstances relative to St. Paul, recorded by his most intimate and familiar friend, not only shew the fidelity of the historian, but likewise illustrate the miracle of his conversion. It was possibly at this time, when the Christians were so dispersed, that Ananias went to Damascus, ch. ix. 10.; while others, after they had preached the gospel in the neighbouring parts, travelled on to Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. See ch. xi. 19.

Ver. 2. And devout men] Yet devout men. Some learned writers have been of opinion that these were profelytes; of

Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one :

10 ^m To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This Man is the great power of God.

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had ⁿ bewitched them with forceries.

12 ^o But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 Then Simon himself ^p believed also : and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the ^q miracles and signs which were done.

^m Rev. 13. 3, 13, 14. Pf. 81. 11, 12. Rom. 1. 28. Mark, 16. 15, 16. Ver. 36, 37. Ch. 1. 3. & 10. 15. 1 John, 5. 4. Ver. 7. Mark, 16. 17. John, 14. 12. & 2. 23. & 10. 38.

^o Deut. 18. 10—12. If. 8. 19. & 2. 6. & 47. 9, 12. & 44. 25. Ver. 21. Pf. 106. 12, 13. & 78. 35—38. James, 2. 19.

^p Mat. 28. 19. Ch. 2. 22.

of which, however, there does not appear to be any proof. See on ch. ii. 5. Such a token of respect, to one who had been publicly executed as a blasphemer, was an expression of zeal and piety which might justly entitle these men to the honourable character here given. Thus St. Luke calls Joseph of Arimathea, *a good and just man*, when he speaks of the generous and courageous regard that he shewed to the body of Jesus. See Luke, xxiii. 50.

Ver. 3. *He made havock of the church*] He ravaged it, like some furious beast of prey. This is the proper signification of the word ἐλυμώλετο, which is often applied to the savages of the desert.

Ver. 4. *Went every where preaching the word*] As the apostles were natives of Judea, and had no notion of the conversion of the Gentiles, but would have confined their ministry within the narrow bounds of their own country; this dispersion was nicely ordered by Divine Providence, to render the design of Christ's coming among men fully effectual, which was both *to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel*.

Ver. 5. *Then Philip went down*] We are sure that it was not Philip the apostle, both as he continued at Jerusalem, and as this Philip had not the power of communicating the miraculous gifts of the holy Spirit by laying on of hands. Comp. ver. 14, 15, 17. It must therefore have been the *deacon*; no other of that name, beside the apostle, having been mentioned in this history. Instead of *to the city of Samaria*, some would read *to a city of Samaria*, as it is not specified what city it was. The mode of expression, however, seems to point out the capital of Samaria, which was Sechem, or Sebaste, where Christ himself had preached in the beginning of his ministry. See John, iv. 5. 40., &c. It is certain, that the Samaritans were better prepared to receive the gospel than most of the Gentile nations, as they worshipped the true God, and acknowledged the authority of the Pentateuch. Nay, indeed, in some respects they were better prepared than the body of the Jewish nation; as we do not find, that they had either such notions of the Messiah's temporal reign as the Jews, or had received the Sadducean principles, which were both very strong prejudices against the Christian religion.

Ver. 9. *Used forcery, &c.*] *Had practised magical arts, and astonished the people*. Heylin and Doddridge. Some think the word Μαγεύων to be entirely of the same signification with the word Μαγῶν, and intended to inform us, that this Simon was one of the sect of the *Magi*. He might possibly profess himself of this sect; but the word Μαγεύων

imports much more, and amounts to the same with "one who used enchantments," pretending at least, in consequence of them, to exert some supernatural powers: whereas the word Μαγῶν, at least about Christ's time, signified much the same with our English word *sage*, and denoted a proficient in learning, and especially in astronomy and other branches of natural philosophy, to which the Persian magi addicted themselves, and so gave name to many who were far from holding the peculiarities of that sect. Irenæus informs us, that Simon boasted he had appeared to the Samaritans as *the Father*, to the Jews as *the Son*, and to the Gentiles as *the Holy Spirit*; and Justin Martyr informs us, that he asserted, that all the names of God were to be ascribed to him, and that he was God, above all principality, power, and virtue. But if ever he made these pretences, it was probably after this time; for before it he seems to have been entirely a stranger to the first elements of the Christian doctrine, to which these blasphemies refer. Dr. Heylin renders the last clause of this verse, *pretending that he was some extraordinary person*.

Ver. 10. *This Man is the great power of God*] "The long expected Messiah, and, if we may so speak, Omnipotence itself incarnate, or he could never do such wonderful things." Doddridge. If we believe Justin Martyr, almost all the Samaritans, and not a few other nations, adored him; acknowledged him to be as it were the supreme Deity. See the former note.

Ver. 11. *He had bewitched them*] *Had astonished them*. Doddridge.

Ver. 13. *Then Simon himself believed also*] *that this Jesus who enabled Philip to do these things, was some Power superior to any he conversed with*. Perhaps as L'Enfant and Limborch conjecture, he might think Philip an abler magician than himself, and hoped, by pretending to be his disciple, that he might have an opportunity of learning his superior arts; or possibly he was afraid, lest Philip should draw away the people from him, if he stood out and opposed him. It seems, however, unquestionable, that he was from the beginning hypocritical and insincere. But though the apostles and several of the primitive Christians had the gift of discerning the spirits and secret intentions of men in some cases; yet this was not one of the gifts which they could exercise at all times, but only upon certain occasions, according to the pleasure and direction of the Spirit; and the Divine Wisdom saw fit that Simon's insincerity should be concealed till he himself discovered it. It is with particular elegance and propriety, that the same

word

14 ¶ Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John :

15 Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost :

16 For as yet he was fallen upon none of

them : only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

18 ¶ And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that

† 1 Thess. 5. 2. Ch. 13. 2—4. & 11. 22. † Mat. 7. 7, 11. John, 14. 13, 14. & 16. 23, 24. Luke, 11. 13. Ch. 2. 38. † Mat. 28. 19.
Ch. 2. 38. & 19. 2, 5. & 10. 48. † Mat. 19. 15. Ch. 19. 6. & 6. 6. † 2 Tim. 1. 6. Heb. 6. 2. † 1 Sam. 9. 7. 2 Kings, 5. 5, 25, 16. & 8. 9. † Ver. 9—11.

word which had been used to express the manner in which the Samaritans were affected with Simon's enchantments, ver. 9. 11. is here used to describe the impression which Philip's miracles made on him. It seems therefore quite a mistake to translate the former *bewitched*, and the latter *wondered*, or was astonished.

Ver. 14. *They sent unto them Peter and John :*] John was one of the two who were for calling down fire from heaven upon the Samaritans when they refused to entertain Christ. To such a length did his zeal then carry him ; but it was a zeal without knowledge. After the Spirit was poured out upon him, however, his mind was enlarged, and his zeal guided by knowledge and charity ; then he makes no scruple of going to the Samaritans, imparting to them the gift of the Holy Spirit, and acknowledging them for Christian brethren, whom his Jewish zeal would have burnt up and destroyed. As the apostles sent Peter along with John, and he went accordingly at their appointment, it is plain that neither he nor they had any notion of the supremacy of that apostle.

Ver. 15—17. *Who, when they were come down,*] Hence it appears very probable, that the Spirit, in some or other of his miraculous powers, had been conferred upon all the Christian converts hitherto ; and it was highly proper that the Samaritans should have that divine gift, both as a confirmation of the truth of the Christian doctrine in general, and as an evidence to them in particular, that however they had been formerly hated by the Jews, yet, under the gospel, they might be equally acceptable to God with the Jews, and be as openly and fully entitled to all the privileges of the church, and of the people of God. From what follows it is plain, that the Holy Spirit was here conferred in his supernatural and miraculous influences ; for Simon the magician saw some of the wondrous effects of that divine gift immediately, by the new converts speaking languages which they had never learned, or prophesying, or working miracles ; and it was this which made him so earnestly covet that apostolic power. They who fancy that the apostles at this time conferred only those which have been commonly called the *standing*, or the *sanctifying influences* of the Spirit, surely cannot deny, that if their power had been so limited, their bestowing of the gift of the Holy Ghost would have been otherwise expressed ; as the whole work of grace, from the first dawning of the divine light to the perfection of it, originates in the influences of the Holy Spirit. Nor would that magician, very probably, have given any thing, either for the sanctifying influences of the

Spirit, or for the power to confer them upon others, supposing God would have bestowed such an extraordinary favour upon him.

The apostles, who alone had a power of imparting them, appear to have conferred some or other of the miraculous gifts upon all adult Christians wherever they came. Upon the apostles themselves, and the rest of the hundred and twenty, the Spirit was poured down immediately from heaven, and without the laying on of the hands of any man ; but upon the other Jewish converts, the apostles laid their hands, and thereby conferred that divine gift. As the Samaritans were now Jews by religion, and many of them even descended from Jewish parents, and as our Lord himself had during his own personal ministry treated them as Jews, there was no occasion for the pouring down of the Holy Spirit, in any of his miraculous gifts, upon them before baptism, to prepare the way for their being received into the Christian church : as there manifestly was afterwards in the case of the first-fruits from among the Gentiles : and, on the other hand, supposing the Samaritans had not been favoured with any spiritual gifts and miraculous powers ; that is, neither before baptism nor after it ; they would have come behind other churches, and might thereupon have been ready to question, whether they who had been so peculiarly odious to the Jews, were now accepted of God equally, and to like privileges with the Jews, from among whom came the Saviour and salvation to mankind. The two apostles, therefore, went down, and conferred upon them the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost. Thus, according to the wise and beautiful scheme of raising the new creation, the Jewish and Samaritan Christians were both treated alike ; and how great soever their mutual aversion had been, the benign spirit of Christianity laid the foundation for abating their mutual prejudices, for healing their unhappy differences, and for making them look upon one another as brethren in Christ Jesus, and equally acceptable to God ; who is in the gospel most plainly declared to be the God and Father, in a peculiarly eminent sense, of all who believe in and obey Christ, whether Jews, Samaritans, or Gentiles.

Ver. 18, 19. *And when Simon saw, &c.*] “ Now when
“ Simon saw with astonishment, that the Holy Spirit in
“ his extraordinary operations was thus apparently given
“ by the imposition of the apostles' hands,—as he imagined
“ with himself, that if he could perform the like, it might
“ turn considerably to his own honour and advantage,
“ especially

on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20 But Peter said unto him, ² Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for ³ thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if ^b perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive that thou art in the ^c gall

of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity.

24 Then answered Simon, and said, ^d Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25 And they, when they had ^e testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

26 ¶ And ^f the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto ^g Gaza, which is desert.

² Ch. 13. 10. & 20. 33. Mat. 10. 8. 1 Theff. 2. 5, 6. 2 Kings, 5. 16, 26, 27. ^a Pf. 78. 37, 38. Jer. 17. 9. Rom. 8. 7, 8. Mat. 6. 22, 23. 2 Tim. 3. 5. ^b Daniel, 4. 27. Amos, 5. 15. Joel, 2. 14. 2 Tim. 2. 25. If. 55. 7. Jer. 4. 14. ^c Deut. 29. 18. & 32. 32. Heb. 12. 15. Rom. 8. 7, 8. Prov. 5. 25. Titus, 3. 3. If. 28. 22. 2 Tim. 3. 5. ^d Exod. 8. 8. & 10. 17. Num. 21. 7. 1 Kings, 13. 6. ^e John, 15. 27. Ch. 1. 8. & 20. 21. & 28. 23, 31. & 18. 5. & 26. 22, 23. 1 Pet. 5. 12. ^f Heb. 1. 14. Pf. 91. 11. ^g On the south-west of Canaan. Josh. 15. 47. & 13. 3. Judges, 16. 1. Zech. 9. 5.

“ especially if by this means he could form persons to the knowledge of languages which they had never been at the trouble of learning in a natural way,—he went to the apostles, and offered them a considerable sum of money, &c.”

Ver. 20. *Thy money perish with thee, &c.*] The fathers look upon the first clause of this verse as a prophetic prediction rather than an imprecation. And as for the sin of Simon, it not only consisted in his ambition and avarice, that he would be advanced to the highest dignity, and have those gifts, by the exercise of which he hoped to be the greatest gainer; but there was something peculiarly enormous in his crime, as it struck at the very essence of the Christian religion, supposing that the apostles and other Christians performed their miracles in confirmation of it, by some higher art of *magick* than that which he had learned; and so they, by the same art, could teach others to do the same works for any other end.

Ver. 21. *Thou hast neither part nor lot, &c.*] “ Assure yourself, that you have no claim to the least share or inheritance in the privileges and blessings of this dispensation of the Spirit, and in Christ and heavenly glory: for how specious soever your professions of faith may be, it hereby appears, with undeniable evidence, that your heart is hypocritical and perverse.”

Ver. 22. *And pray God, if perhaps, &c.*] The dubious manner in which St. Peter speaks of Simon's being forgiven, intimates, not that his sincere repentance, accompanied with evangelical faith, might possibly fail of acceptance, for that is contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel; but that, after the commission of a sin of so heinous a nature, there was little reason to hope he would ever be brought truly to repent.

Ver. 23. *In the gall of bitterness,*] That is, *the bitterest gall.* The whole sentence expresses, in St. Peter's strong manner of speaking, how odious and wretched a creature Simon now appeared to him. How much more odious in the sight of a holy God must such a sinner be! De Dieu would render it, *I see thee as the very gall of bitterness, and a*

bundle of iniquity. The *gall of bitterness* seems to have been an allusion to Deut. xxix. 18. or xxxii. 32. and the *bond of iniquity* to Isaiah, lviii. 6.

Ver. 24. *Pray ye to the Lord for me,*] It is greatly to be feared, that this pretence of conviction and humiliation was only to prevent Peter and John from disgracing him among the body of Christians; for it is reasonable to suppose this conversation passed in private between them; and perhaps Simon might have some hope that if the secret were kept, he might reduce the people, when the apostles were gone, to their former subjection to him, notwithstanding their conversion to Christianity. The words, *these things which ye have spoken*, being plural, seem naturally to refer to the awful things which Simon had heard in the course of Christian preaching, concerning the terrible effects of the divine displeasure against impenitent sinners in the future world. Perhaps too he might have heard of the dreadful punishment inflicted upon Ananias and Sapphira, ch. v.

Ver. 25. *When they had testified, &c.*] *When they had borne their testimony, &c.* that is, to the truth of the gospel. See on Luke, xxiv. 48.

Ver. 26. *And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip.*] It gives us a very high idea of the gospel, to see the ministers of it receiving immediate direction from celestial spirits, in the particular discharge of their office. The construction of the Greek leaves it dubious whether the clause *which is desert*, refers to *Gaza*, or the *way* that led to it. Those who are of the former opinion observe, that the ancient city of this name was demolished by Alexander the Great, and afterwards rebuilt with great magnificence, though at some distance from the spot on which the old city stood, which was left in ruins, and therefore called *Gaza the deserted, or Desolate.* But they who question the truth of this assertion think, that Philip was directed to take that *road* to Gaza, which lay through the wilderness, and which, though perhaps it might not be the shortest, was chosen by the eunuch as the more retired; and the Greek seems to favour this interpretation. The

Ethiopic

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? and he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, he was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was

taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

^a Pf. 68. 31. & 87. 4. If. 18. 7. & 43. 6. Zech. 3. 10. ^b Pf. 68. 29. ^c 1 Kings, 8. 41. John, 12. 20. If. 56. 6-8. ^d Deut. 6. 6, 7. ^e Col. 3. 16. John, 5. 39. Ch. 17. 11. ^f Ch. 16. 6, 7. Prov. 3. 5, 6. ^g Eccl. 9. 10. Rom. 12. 11. John, 4. 34. Pf. 119. 32. ^h Mat. 15. 15, 17. & 16. 6, 11. & 13. 23. John, 4. 19. ⁱ Pf. 73. 22. ^j 1 rov. 30. 2, 3. Rom. 10. 14. Mal. 2. 7. Prov. 2. 2, 3, 5. ^k If. 53. 7, 8. ^l 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. & 2. 21-24. & 3. 18. Phil. 2. 7, 8. Heb. 2. 9, 10. & 5. 8. Mat. xxvi. xxvii. Mark, xiv. xv. Luke, xxii. xxiii. John, xviii. xix. ^m Deut. 17. 9. Mat. 2. 4. Mark, 4. 10. Mal. 2. 7. ⁿ Luke, 24. 27, 44. Ch. 23. 23. & 26. 23, 23. & 10. 43. 2 Cor. 1. 20. Col. 2. 17. 1 Pet. 1. 2, 13. 1 Cor. 2. 2. ^o Ch. 10. 47. ^p Mat. 28. 19. Mark, 16. 15, 16. Rom. 10. 10. Ch. 2. 38, 19. Ver. 12. ^q 1 Peter, 3. 15. Rom. 10. 10. Mat. 16. 16. John, 6. 69. & 11. 27. & 9. 35-38. Ch. 9. 20. 1 John, 4. 15. & 5. 5. ^r Mat. 3. 16.

Ethiopic version renders it, into the way which leads through the desert from Jerusalem to Gaza.

Ver. 27, 28. A man of Ethiopia, an eunuch, &c.] A certain Ethiopian eunuch, a grandee of Candace, &c. See the note on Gen. xxxvii. 36. It appears that Candace was a name common to several of the queens who reigned in Meroe, a part of Ethiopia to the south of Egypt. Perhaps the eunuch had been lately brought over to the Jewish religion; to which it is plain he was a profelyte, and so was not much acquainted with the national expectation of a Messiah, and much less with their prophecies. See ver. 31. Probably the chariot in which he was sitting was something in the form of our chaises with four wheels; for though the eunuch did not guide it himself, there was room for another person to come and sit with him: the driver therefore seems to have sat on a seat by himself.

Ver. 33. In his humiliation, &c.] This is the translation of the LXX. and, if it be admitted, seems to mean, that Jesus appeared in so humble a form, that though Pilate was convinced of his innocence, he seemed a person of so little importance, that it would not be worth while to hazard any thing to preserve him. To take away a person's judgment, is a known proverb for oppressing him. See Job, xxvii. 2. Dr. Heylin reads it, In his humiliation was his crisis; he was taken away, but who shall declare, &c.? Crisis, says he, is the word in the original, which I understand here, in its English signification, for "a decisive trial, in which he stood the test." The subject brings to mind that apt phrase of the chymists, experimentum crucis, "the

experiment of the cross." Dr. Hammond expressed the clause, Who shall declare his generation? thus: "Who can describe the obstinate infidelity and barbarous injustice of that generation of men, among whom he appeared, and from whom he suffered such things?" But see the notes on Isai. liii. 8.

Ver. 35. And preached unto him Jesus.] Limborch very largely shews, in his commentary on this passage, how shamefully the Jews pervert the whole 53d of Isaiah, in expounding it of the afflictions of Israel, where, as we have shewn in our notes on that chapter, it can refer only to Christ.

Ver. 36. They came unto a certain water:] Τι ύδαρ, a certain water, seems to be of diminutive signification, and to intimate, that it was not water of any depth: and Jerome, Sandys, and other travellers, speak of it as a certain spring or fountain, that rises at the foot of a mountain in the tribe of Judah or Benjamin, whose waters are sucked in by the same ground that produces them; and they report that this was the place where the eunuch was baptized by Philip. See Hieron. de Locis Hebr. page 41. and Sandys' Travels, lib. ii. pag. 142.

Ver. 37. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.] This passage fully proves that Philip had opened to the eunuch the doctrine of Christ's Divinity; and indeed if he had not done it, he must have given him a very imperfect account of the gospel. See ch. xiii. 33.

Ver. 38. And they went down both into the water,] The prepositions εις and εν, here, and in the next verse, rendered

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord ^a caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way ^b rejoicing.

^a 1 Kings, 18. 12. 2 Kings, 2. 16. Ezek. 3. 12, 14. & 8. 3. & 11. 24. & 15. 46, 47. Zechar. 9. 6.

^b Mat. 9. 37. Rom. 15. 19. Ch. 10. 1. & 21. 8. & 23. 23, 33. & 25. 4.

40 But Philip was found at ^a Azotus: and passing through he preached ^b in all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea.

^a Ahdod. Josh. 13. 3.

into and out of the water, frequently signify unto and from, as every one must allow who understands the Greek language; and thus they are often used in the stile of the New Testament, and particularly of St. Luke, as for example; *in* signifies unto in Matth. xv. 24. Luke, iv. 5. and vi. 12. and ix. 28. Acts, xiv. 21. and Coloss. i. 20.; and *ex* signifies from, in Luke, xx. 4. John, xix. 12. Acts, xiv. 8. and xv. 29. and xvii. 3. 31. and xxvii. 34. But supposing, says Mr. Henry, we here understand them to signify into and out of, Philip and the eunuch did not strip off their clothes, and go naked into the water; but going barefoot, according to the custom, they went, perhaps, up to the ankles, or mid-leg, into the water, and Philip sprinkled water upon him, according to the prophesy which this eunuch had probably but just now read; for it was but a few verses before those which Philip found him upon, and was very apposite to his case, *Isai. lii. 15. So shall he sprinkle many nations; kings and great men shall shut their mouths at him, shall submit to him: for that which had not before been told them, shall they see; and that which they had not heard, shall they consider.*

Ver. 39. The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip,] The Alexandrian manuscript, and several other ancient copies, read, *The Holy Spirit fell upon the eunuch; but the angel of the Lord caught away Philip, &c.* See ver. 26. This, I doubt not, was the case; and hence we learn, that as soon as they were come up from the water, the Holy Spirit descended upon the eunuch immediately from heaven, and without the imposition of Philip's hands. Probably the effusion was attended with a visible glory, like cloven tongues, or pointed flames of fire; for that external symbol seems always to have accompanied the pouring down of the Holy Spirit in his miraculous gifts. Though the eunuch thereby received some spiritual gifts, or miraculous powers, or both, yet this effusion of the Spirit was not in order to prepare the way for his reception into the Christian church, which was the case with Cornelius and his company, who were the first-fruits of the Gentiles; for then it ought to have been conferred on him before baptism; whereas the eunuch was a proselyte of righteousness, and therefore Philip made no scruple of baptizing him as soon as ever he professed the Christian faith, as knowing the rule in that case, *Exod. xii. 49. namely, one born shall be unto him that is home-born, that is, a Jew by birth as well as religion, and to the stranger who sojourns among you; for so it plainly appears from the foregoing verse to be the circumcised proselyte, or proselyte of righteousness, and not of the gate.* But as Philip was only an evangelist,—no apostle at hand,—the eunuch going directly into a distant country, and God, unwilling that he should go without the extraordinary attestation which was so commonly afforded to the Christians of that primitive age, and

yet resolved not to break in upon the common method, which was to communicate the Holy Spirit by the hands of no other men than the apostles only:—for these reasons God seems to have poured the Holy Spirit upon him by an immediate effusion; and hereby this illustrious convert had the Spirit conferred in the most honourable manner, and in the way in which the highest and best gifts used to be bestowed. Presently after this signal evidence had been granted to the eunuch, *an angel of the Lord caught away Philip*; perhaps by a rapture through the air, in the sight of the eunuch and his attendants. See 1 Kings, xviii. 12. 2 Kings, ii. 16. Ezek. iii. 14. *And, after he was removed beyond their utmost ken, the eunuch saw him no more*; nor did he search after, or follow the evangelist: he was satisfied that it was the will of God that they should be separated, and therefore he pursued his journey to Ethiopia, greatly rejoicing at what had happened. For he was not only convinced of the truth of Christianity himself, but he had such gifts and powers as enabled him to instruct and convince others also; and accordingly he is said to have planted the gospel in Ethiopia, where there was a flourishing church, as most of the ancient histories of the country assure us: and as the apostles Bartholomew, Matthew, and Matthias preached the gospel there, it is not only an additional proof that he had paved the way for them; but as so many apostles were sent into those parts, it is a strong presumption in favour of the success of his ministry. See Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. ii. chap. i.

Ver. 40. But Philip was found at Azotus:] Or, *Ahdod*, a city that was more than thirty miles from Gaza, in the southern part of the country which had been formerly one of the five governments belonging to the Philistines, 1 Sam. vi. 17. Thence Philip passed through the towns high or upon the sea-coast, as Joppa, Lydda, Saron, &c. and planted the gospel all along, till he came to *Cæsarea*, which was different from the *Cæsarea Philippi*, mentioned Matth. xvi. 13. This *Cæsarea* was not far distant from *Cæsarea Philippi*, which was situated to the north, in the tribe of Naphtali, and near the sources of the Jordan. It was rebuilt by Herod the first, who greatly enlarged and beautified it with many fine edifices of polished marble; but the greatest and most beneficial of all his works here was the harbour, which he made equal in largeness to the *Piræus* at Athens. The beauty of this *Cæsarea*, which was anciently called *Stratonice*, or *Stratton's Tower*; and the conveniencies of its situation, were so extraordinary, that when the Romans reduced Judea into the form of a province, they made it the seat of their government, in preference even to Jerusalem itself. See Joseph. Antiq. b. xiii. c. 11. and the note on Matth. xvi. 13. Philip settled at *Cæsarea* for some time, probably for life; for we find long after this, that St. Paul and his company lodged

CHAP. IX.

Saul going towards Damascus, is struck down to the earth, is called to the apostleship, and is baptized by Ananias: he preacheth Christ boldly: the Jews lie in wait to kill him; so do the Grecians: but he escapeth both. The church having rest, Peter healeth Eneas of the palsy, and restreth Tabitha to life.

[Anno Domini 35.]

AND ^a Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him ^b letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of ^c this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3 ^d And as he journeyed he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ^e me?

^a Ch. 8. 3. Ver. 13, 21. Ch. 25. 4, 5, 19, 20. & 25. 9—11. Gal. 1. 13. Phil. 3. 6. 1 Tim. 1. 13. 1 Cor. 15. 9. Pf. 27. 12. ^b Eph. 3. 12. Ch. 20. 12. & 22. 5. Ver. 14. ^c Ch. 19. 9, 23. & 28. 22. ^d Ezek. 16. 6. Ch. 22. 6—16. & 26. 13—20. Ver. 17. 1 Cor. 15. 8. 2 Cor. 12. 2. ^e 11. 65. 9. Mat. 25. 45. 1 Cor. 12. 12. Eph. 5. 30.

lodged at his house at Caesarea, and that then *he had four daughters, virgins, who were prophetesses.* See ch. xxi. 8, 9. But though he settled at Caesarea, we may reasonably presume that Philip would continue to preach the Christian doctrine to the Jews, and make as many converts among them, through divine grace, as he could.

Inferences.—The last token of respect paid by those devout men (mentioned in the beginning of this chapter) to the remains of St. Stephen, reflects the highest honour on their memories; since by carrying *him* to his funeral with solemn pomp and lamentation, who had died like an infamous criminal, they themselves also bore a noble testimony to the Christian cause. *The wrath of man shall praise thee, O Lord;* and very singularly was it made to praise thee in this instance, by the consequent sending out of the gospel missionaries who, during the short repose of the church, had been qualified for their work, and by dispersing them through all the neighbouring countries.

Had the calm continued longer while the disciples were so happy in the love and friendship of each other, they might have been too much inclinable to build their tabernacles at Jerusalem, and to say, *it is good for us to be here.* Such delightful and mutual converse might have engaged them to prolong their abode there to future *months,* and perhaps *years.* In mercy to the churches therefore, and even to themselves, whose truest happiness was connected with their usefulness, were they, like so many *clouds big with the rain of heaven,* driven different ways by the wind of persecution, that so they might empty themselves in fruitful showers on the several tracts of land through which they went preaching the gospel.

And thus did the continued outrages and cruelties of Saul serve more and more to illustrate the wonders of divine grace, in that conversion which we are hereafter soon to survey and admire; and to give the view of a very delightful contrast between the warmth of those efforts which he made first to *destroy,* and then with proportionable zeal to *save.*

It is pleasing to observe how the *gospel* conquered the mutual and rooted prejudices between the Jews and the Samaritans, teaching the Jews to communicate, and the Samaritans to receive its blessed message with pleasure. It was a wonderful Providence which had permitted the en-

chantments of Simon to be so successful before; but at length *Simon* himself assents to the great truths of the gospel, and is baptized. In this, as in a thousand nearer instances, we see that there may be *speculative faith* in the gospel, where there is no true piety. And if such persons, on the profession of that faith, where nothing appears contrary to it, be admitted to those ordinances by which Christians are distinguished from the rest of mankind, it is an evil, in the present state of things, unavoidable; and the conduct of Christian ministers and societies in admitting such, will be less displeasing to God than a rigorous severity. May God give us wisdom to guide our way, and determine our resolutions, that so we may obtain the happy medium, between prostituting divine ordinances by a sordid credulity, and defrauding the *children of their bread,* because they have not reached such a stature, or do not seek it in those forms and gestures which our mistaken caution may sometimes be ready to demand.

With what peculiar honour were the *apostles* distinguished, that the *Holy Spirit* should be given by the imposition of their hands! Thus did Christ bear his testimony to them as the authorized teachers of His church: and hence it evidently appears, that we may with great safety and pleasure submit ourselves to their intruction; for these extraordinary gifts were intended in some measure for our benefit, that by an entire resignation to their authority, thus attested, we might be partakers of those graces, in comparison of which, the *tongues of men* and of *angels* would be but as *sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*

Who can read without horror the infamous proposal of *Simon,* to *purchase the gift of God with money?* With somewhat of the same horror must we look on all those, by whom *things sacred* are either *bought or sold.* It is an infamous traffic, about which an upright man cannot deliberate a moment, but will reject it at once with an honest scorn and indignation, like that of St. Peter in the present instance. God grant that none of the *ordinances of Christ* may ever be *prostituted* to secular ends, which seems a crime almost equally enormous! In vain it is for men to “*profess and call themselves Christians;*” in vain to submit, like *Simon,* to baptism, or to adhere constantly to the ministers of the gospel, if their hearts be not right before God. A hypocritical conduct, like this, will proclaim it aloud, that they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the

5 And he said, ' Who art thou, Lord ? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest : ^e it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

^f 1 Sam. 3. 10. 1 Tim. 1. 13.

^e Job, 9. 4. & 40. 2. If. 45. 9. 1 Cor. 10. 22. Luke, 20. 8. Ch. 5. 39.

bond of iniquity.—Wash us, O holy God, from this odious and polluting gall, which naturally overspreads us ! and do thou loosen these *bonds of sin* with which Satan sometimes binds even those who have a name and a place in thy church, and in which he conveys them to final and everlasting destruction.

Let us not, however, despair even of the worst of men, but direct them rather from their errors to that great universal remedy,—a deep and serious *repentance of their sins*, and an earnest address to God in prayer;—to him who alone can wash us from *crimes or stains*, and break in pieces *fetters of iron*. It is some token for good, when sinners seem to fall under reproof, and to *desire the prayers* of those who are more upright than themselves. But if men are not animated in such requests and submissions, by a more noble and generous principle than *fear of destruction from God*, there is great reason to suspect the sincerity of that *repentance* which they profess; and to apprehend that, like *Simon*, they will unsay all their fair confession, and perhaps like him, (if we may credit the most authentic uninspired histories of the church,) become open enemies to that *gospel*, which they pretended for a while to reverence and believe. See Euseb. Eccl. Hist. l. ii. cap. 14. Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. l. i. c. 1. and the note on ver. 9.

We have great reason to adore the gracious counsels of God, with respect to the Ethiopian eunuch before us. He was desirous to improve that weak light which he had; and God, we see, took effectual methods to impart to him more. Thus, as the prophet Hosea expresses^e it, *shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord*, ch. vi. 3. An angel of the Lord shall be sent to give directions to an *evangelist* to meet him in the *desart*, and to instruct him there in what he had been unable to learn in his attendance at Jerusalem: Philip, in prompt obedience to the divine command, immediately retires from the more public service that he had been engaged in at Samaria, to execute whatever the Lord should please to call him to, though he should order him to go into a wilderness; for even there he could open a *door of opportunity* to make him useful: and while, like Philip, the ministers and disciples of Christ govern themselves by the intimations of supreme wisdom, they shall not *run in vain, nor labour in vain*. Phil. ii. 16.

It was a prudent and exemplary care, especially in a person engaged in such a variety of public business as the eunuch was, to improve that vacant leisure which a journey allowed him, in reading what might edify and instruct him even as he *sat in his chariot*. This is truly to *redeem the time*. He chose the sacred oracles, *which are able to make men wise unto salvation*; and while perusing them, we see he was in an extraordinary manner *taught of God* their author. The question which Philip put to him, we should often put to ourselves; *Understandest thou what thou readest?* Let us choose those *writings* which may be worth our study, and then labour to digest them into *knowledge*: it is unworthy the character of *rational* creatures to rest in the *empty amusements*, which a few wandering, unconnected,

undistinguished ideas may give us, while they pass through the mind, like images over a mirror, and leave no trace or impression at all behind them.

The scriptures especially will be worthy our study, that we may *understand them*; and we should earnestly pray that this study may be successful. For this purpose let us be willing, like the Ethiopian convert, to make use of proper *guides*; though it must be confessed, none that we are likely to meet with at present, can have a claim to that authority with which Philip taught. It is pleasant, nevertheless, with a becoming humility to offer what assistance we can to our fellow-travellers, on such an occasion as this: and indeed the practice is generally attended with a blessing, both to teacher and learner. God Almighty grant that we who attempt it, especially in that way which is most extensive and lasting, may neither be deceived in Scripture ourselves, nor deceive others by misrepresenting its sense!

If we enter into the true sense of the *ancient prophecies*, we must undoubtedly *see Christ* in them, and particularly in that excellent *chapter of Isaiah*, which the pious eunuch was now reading. Indeed we may safely rest the proof from prophecy, in support of Christianity, upon this single oracle. If it relates to the Messiah, and was accomplished in every part by Jesus, and by no other, as we know it was, he must be the Christ. He appealed to it himself, (Luke, xxii. 37.) The apostles often refer us to it; and Philip, under the conduct of the divine Spirit, converted the eunuch by it.

A more extraordinary instance of the power and efficacy of this oracle, in converting believers, cannot be given, than in the case of that prodigy of wit, frolic, and immorality, John Wilmot, earl of Rochester. They who are only unhappily acquainted with his detestable *poems* and dissolute life, will scarcely imagine, that he died a *sincere penitent* and a Christian; and that before he expired, he made no bad comment upon some parts of this prophecy. The following account, therefore, is given in bishop Burnet's own words, who attended him during his last illness, and published his case after his death. "He said (to the bishop) that Mr. Parsons, in order to his conviction, read to him, Isai. liii. and compared that prophecy with the history of our Saviour's passion, that he might there see a prophecy concerning it, written many years before it was done; which the Jews that blasphemed Jesus Christ still kept in their hands, as a book divinely inspired. He said to me, that as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him, which did so enlighten his mind, and convince him, that he could resist it no longer; for the words had an authority, which did shoot like rays or beams into his mind; so that he was not only convinced by the *reasonings* he had about it, which satisfied his *understanding*; but by a *power* which did so effectually constrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour, as if he had seen him in the clouds. He had made it be read so often to him, that he had got it by heart; and went through a great part of it in discourse."

6 And he trembling and astonished said, the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

^a Ch. 2. 37. & 16. 14, 30. Luke, 3. 10. Rom. 7. 9. Pf. 94. 12.

"course with me, with a sort of heavenly pleasure, giving me his reflections upon it. Some few I remember: *Who hath believed our report?* Here, he said, was foretold the opposition the gospel was to meet with from such wretches as he was.—*He hath no form or comeliness: and when we shall see him, there is no beauty, that we should desire him.* On this he said, the meanness of his appearance and person has made vain and foolish people disparage him, because he came not in such a fool's coat as they delight in, &c. &c." It were to be wished, that this "short account" of that nobleman, by this learned prelate, was in the hands of all who have any doubts about religion, natural or revealed! and God grant that the prophecy in question may have the same effect upon the minds of all, to convert them to, or confirm them in the belief, that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God!*

Let us often view our divine Master in that amiable and affecting light in which he is here represented. Let us view him, though *the Son of God*, by a generation which none can fully declare, yet *brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers*: nor let us refuse patiently to suffer with him, if called to it, in humble hope of reigning with him too, even though, like his, our judgment also should be *taken away*, and we be *cut off from the land of the living*.

When once men are come to a point, thus solemnly to give themselves up to the Lord, and have done it in his appointed method, let them, as they have reason, *go on their way rejoicing*, though Providence should *separate from them those spiritual guides*, who have been the happy instruments of their conversion and edification.

To conclude: The servants of Christ are called to glorify him in every different scene and station of life: happy, if in at least one state and country or another, they may spread the favour of his name, and gather in converts to him, whether from among the Sons of Israel, or of *Ethiopia!*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We are told,

1. The pleasure and satisfaction which Saul took in seeing the first martyr bleed. He not only consented to the deed, but, as the word signifies, feasted his eyes with the shocking spectacle, in hopes that such sharp methods would soon put a stop to the progress of that gospel which he abhorred.

2. The chief priests and rulers determined to pursue their blow, and, while the fury of the people lasted, severely persecuted the church at Jerusalem; so that the preachers, who were the great objects of enmity, were forced to withdraw, and disperse themselves through Judea and Samaria, except the apostles, who still continued at Jerusalem, and were preserved safe from the rage of their blood-thirsty enemies.

3. Stephen's friends, *devout men*, eminent for their piety, dared, notwithstanding the danger to which they were exposed, to gather up his broken remains, and *carried him to his burial*; and though they could not but rejoice in his triumphant death, they bewailed their own and the church's

loss, deprived of so able an advocate for the cause of Christ. *Note*: (1.) The departure of the eminent servants of Jesus demands a tear; though it be their gain, it is our loss, and we should weep for ourselves. (2.) The corpse is honourable in which a heavenly spirit has dwelt, and should be decently laid in the dust, in sure and certain confidence of a glorious resurrection, when it shall awake in brighter array.

4. *Saul*, the envenomed foe to the Christian name, a fiery zealot, the fittest tool the priests could have chosen for their service, *made havock of the church*, persecuting them even unto death, as he owns, (Acts, xxii. 4.) *entering into every house; and, sparing neither age nor sex, baling men and women, committed them to prison.* To such low and dirty work does enmity against the gospel lead a man of note, a gentleman, a scholar; as if every mark of contempt and cruelty to a Christian was meritorious and commendable.

2dly, The attempt to extinguish and suppress the rising flame of Christianity, served but the more to spread the sacred fire. *They that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word*; not hiding themselves in corners, or seeking concealment by their silence; but publishing throughout the country the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ. Philip, the second of the deacons, and now the first, since Stephen had finished his glorious course, was among the chief of these dispersed evangelists.

1. He went *down to the city of Samaria*, to the metropolis of the country, where Jesus had been formerly, (John, iv. 5.) *and preached Christ unto them.* As a herald, he publicly proclaimed his Saviour, as exalted to the throne of glory; and invited all to come and share the blessings of his happy government: and this must be our constant theme, Christ crucified, glorified.

2. Great was the success that attended his labours. *The people with one accord*, in general, *gave heed unto those things which Philip spake*; shewing the most serious attention to his discourses, *hearing and seeing the miracles which he did*, in proof of his divine mission, and of the gospel of Jesus which he declared unto them—miracles of the most stupendous nature, such as dispossessing unclean spirits, who with the utmost rage exclaimed at the power they could not withstand; curing the paralytic, and restoring the use of their limbs to the lame, when all human help was despaired of. *And there was great joy in that city*; the people transported, beheld those amazing works of divine power and grace, and rejoiced in the glad news of pardon and salvation preached to them through the Redeemer. *Note*: (1.) So far as the gospel effectually reaches the heart, Satan's power is broken, and his kingdom of uncleanness within is destroyed. (2.) The grace of God cures the moral impotence of our fallen nature, and enables the lame man to leap like a hart, and the paralytic soul to arise and run the way of God's commandments. (3.) The great things which make for our everlasting peace deserve our most serious attention; and the more we attend unto them,

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, ¹ hearing a voice, but seeing no man. 8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when

¹ Dan. 10. 7. Ch. 22. 9. & 26. 13, 14.

them, the more shall we consult our own happiness. (4.) True religion will make none melancholy; but wherever the gospel is known and believed, there the soul will taste the sweetest and most substantial joy.

3. What made the success of the gospel in this place still more extraordinary, was the delusion under which the people had lain, through the feats of a certain forcerer named Simon, who had bewitched the people of Samaria, astonishing them with his magic arts and diabolical illusions; giving out that himself was some great one, the great God himself, or, as others suppose, the expected Messiah: and such was the influence which his pretended miracles had on the minds of the people, that they all gave heed unto him, from the least to the greatest, high and low, young and old, saying, This man is the great power of God; as if he was endued with Almighty power, equal to the great God himself; so strangely had he for a considerable time bewitched them with his sorceries.

4. The kingdom of Satan fell before the gospel word. When they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, the blessings and privileges, the doctrines and ordinances of it, and the name of Jesus Christ, as the great Saviour of lost sinners, the head of his church, the author of all mercies here, and of all glorious hopes for hereafter, they gladly embraced his salvation, abandoned the impostor Simon, and by baptism made open profession of their faith in Jesus, both men and women. Note; (1.) They who are most bewitched by Satan's sorceries, and the power of sin, are not beyond the recovering influence of the Redeemer's grace. (2.) When we truly believe in Jesus, we shall openly and boldly profess him before men.

5. Even Simon the magician himself was so astonished at the real miracles and signs which Philip wrought, that he believed also; so far, at least, as to make outward profession of Christ as the true Messiah, and to desire and be admitted to baptism in his name. Note; (1.) They who have been most atrociously wicked, when they make profession of repentance and conversion to God with apparent sincerity, are to be received cordially into the church, notwithstanding all that is past. (2.) Though many hypocrites may and do join themselves with God's people, yet we must leave men's hearts to the searcher of hearts, and judge of others with all candour and charity, till they give evident proofs of their unfaithfulness.

3dly, The glad tidings soon reached Jerusalem, of the happy progress of the gospel in Samaria; and the apostles, for the furtherance of the blessed work, dispatched two of their body, St. Peter and St. John, immediately, to confirm the disciples, and communicate unto them the extraordinary gifts of the spirit. We have,

1. The success of their journey. They prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, in his miraculous gifts, and be set on a level with the Jewish converts; for as yet he was fallen upon none of them, though they had experienced in a measure his illuminating influences upon their souls, in consequence of which they had been baptized in the name

of the Lord Jesus; but they had not yet, by any visible appearance of the Holy Ghost, received the gift of tongues, or of prophecy, or the power to work miracles. But when the apostles had prayed, and were assured of an answer to their requests, then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost in some visible manner. Note; Though we may not expect miraculous powers, yet the same Holy Ghost, in all his gracious influences, is still given in answer to the prayer of faith.

2. Simon's hypocrisy on this occasion appeared. When he saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he was vastly ambitious of possessing the same apostolic power, and thought he could well reimburse himself any expence, could he but obtain it; therefore, supposing their views as mercenary as his own, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost; thus discovering both his ambition and avarice, and shewing the rottenness of his heart, notwithstanding his pretended conversion.

3. St. Peter, with abhorrence, rejects the proposal, and denounces his doom. Thy money perish with thee; thou and it must perish together, if in this temper of mind thou abide: as for us, we detest thy mercenary offer, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money: an imagination as absurdly foolish, as impiously wicked. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, art neither a partaker of the gifts nor graces of the Spirit, and as yet an alien from the kingdom of grace, and destitute of the hope of glory: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God; but under the specious profession of Christianity, lurks the foulest hypocrisy. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, so great and aggravated, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee, and there be a possibility of pardon. For I perceive by this proposal, that thou art in the gall of bitterness; in a state of unregeneracy, under the dominion of the most abhorred corruptions, and in the bond of iniquity; enslaved by Satan and sin; and, as a criminal going to execution, exposed to the severest vengeance of an offended God. Note; (1.) The fatal bait of money—how many souls has it plunged into perdition and destruction? (2.) Where the heart is not right with God, though a form of godliness may conceal the hypocrisy from men, there is one that seeth and judgeth. (3.) They who are now held in bonds of iniquity, may assuredly expect to be bound over to everlasting shame and punishment. (4.) The vilest of sinners must not be abandoned, but still invited to repentance and prayer; while there is life, there is hope.

4. Simon, terrified at this dire commination and reproof, entreats their prayers for him; not so much that his heart might be renewed, as that the threatened vengeance might be averted: and this is a sure sign of an unhumiliated spirit; when it is more affected with the dread of suffering, than with the evil of sin.

5. The apostles, when they had testified and preached the

word

his eyes were opened, he saw no man: * but into Damascus.
 they led him by the hand, and brought him . 9 And he was three days' without sight,

* 2 Kings, 6. 19. Ch. 23. 11. † 2 Cor. 3. 18, 19. Ver. 8, 11, 12. Gal. 1. 12, 15, 16. 2 Cor. 12. 2.

word of the Lord, confirming and establishing the faith of the disciples in Samaria, returned to Jerusalem, to give an account to their brethren of their proceedings and success; and, in their way, they preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans, improving every stage of their journey, and taking every opportunity of publishing the great salvation in their master Jesus. Let all the ministers of the gospel, in their spheres of action, imitate such worthy examples, preaching the word in season, and as some may think out of season.

4thly, We have the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, by whom it is generally supposed Christianity was first planted in Ethiopia, and the scripture in part fulfilled, Psal. lxxviii. 31.

1. Philip, who continued still at Samaria, is directed by an angel to depart thence, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And immediately, obedient to the heavenly call, he arose and went. Note; Though we see not at first the reasons on which God's providential disposition of us is founded, yet, when we bow to his command, we shall have cause to acknowledge his wisdom and goodness.

2. He there met a person of singular distinction, a man of Ethiopia, an inhabitant of Africa, an eunuch; either really such, they being formerly often preferred to the first offices of state; or this may signify his station at the court, as the word is used of Potiphar, (Gen. xxxix. 1. in the original,) being a man of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, a post of distinguished eminence, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, being a proselyte to their religion.

3. Philip receives an intimation from the Holy Spirit to go near and join himself to his chariot, where he found him reading aloud the prophet Esaias, perhaps the portions which he had heard expounded at Jerusalem; where, though he must have heard of Christ and his apostles, yet he seems to have paid no regard to them, and was returning attached as much as ever to the Jewish religion. Note; (1.) The Lord, by strange providences, often brings about great events; even when we travel on the road, we know not what good may be done, though among strangers, if we have but the heart to speak a word for Christ. (2.) The scriptures should be much in our hands; they are the best companions on our journies, and will supply matter for the choicest meditations. (3.) It is no evil for men of station and affluence to ride in their chariots, if that, as well as every other gift, be sanctified by the word of God, and by prayer.

4. Philip, hearing him read the prophet Esaias, puts a question to him of great moment, and which we should often put to ourselves, when perusing the sacred oracles, Understandest thou what thou readeest? His reply was singularly humble: far from taking the question ill, though from a stranger on foot, and meanly dressed, he answers with the most modest acknowledgment of his own poor attainments, How can I, except some man should guide me? and,

willing to be instructed, and glad to embrace every opportunity of increasing his knowledge of these blessed prophecies, he desired Philip, who appeared to be intelligent in these matters, to come up into the chariot, and sit with him, well judging, that the honour he did the evangelist would be abundantly repaid by the instructions he should receive. Note; To shew a teachable spirit, is the surest way to become wise unto salvation.

5. This illustrious Ethiopian, having seated him in the chariot, inquires of Philip the meaning of the passage he had been reading, Is. liii. 7, 8. where, according to the Septuagint version, it was written, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away, and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth; the Ethiopian therefore begs Philip to inform him, of whom the prophet in this passage speaks, of himself or of some other man? Hereupon, Philip opened his mouth, and, glad of so fair an opportunity, began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus, the great subject of the prophecy. He was the sheep led to the slaughter, willingly offering himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world; silent before his shearers as a lamb, neither upbraiding nor threatening, but meek and patient under all the indignities shewn him; he humbled himself to the lowest state, to the life of a servant, and the death of a slave: his judgment was taken away; he was treated in the most unjust and cruel manner, hurried from one judgment-seat to another; and, though confessedly innocent, executed as the vilest of malefactors: and who shall declare his generation? (See the Annotations on Isai. liii. 8.) for his life is taken from the earth, by wicked hands he was crucified and slain, cut off as a criminal unworthy to live. Yet God raised him from the dead, exalted him to his right hand, in token of his fullest approbation; and, having accepted his sacrifice, has given power to his ministers to preach remission of sins to all nations, and to administer baptism as the initiatory ordinance into his church.

6. Convinced of the truth by Philip's discourse, he embraced the gospel of Jesus, which the evangelist preached; and as they went on their way, Philip opening the truth at large, and the eunuch attentively listening, they came unto a certain water; when, desirous to make open profession of his faith by baptism, he humbly proposes that he might be baptized, if Philip had no objection. Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart the great truths on which I have been discoursing, trusting on Jesus alone for pardon, righteousness, and salvation, and willing to yield thyself to his government and service, thou mayest. He answered, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the divine, all-sufficient, and promised Saviour, the true Messiah, God incarnate. Satisfied with this confession of his faith, Philip consents to his proposal; and, the eunuch ordering his chariot to stop, they went down both into or unto the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. Note; (1.) Faith is not a mere speculative assent to gospel truths, but the

and neither did eat nor drink.

10 ¶ And there was a certain disciple at

Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Be-

Ch. 22. 12. Numb. 12. 6. 1 Sam. 3. 9, 10.

the embracing with the heart a salvation suited to the case of a lost sinner. (2.) No man can truly and experimentally say that Jesus is the Christ, but by the Spirit of God.

7. Philip and the eunuch are parted as miraculously as they were brought together. *When they were come up out of or from the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and this miracle served to bear testimony to Philip's doctrine; and he went on his way rejoicing in Christ Jesus, with whose salvation he was now become acquainted, and happy in the hope of carrying the glad tidings to his countrymen. But Philip was found at Azotus, or Ashdod, upwards of thirty miles from Gaza; and passing through he preached, as he travelled, in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea, where afterwards, it seems, he chiefly took up his abode.*

CHAP. IX.

Ver. 1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings, &c.] This is a very emphatical expression, and shews the implacable hatred which Saul bore to the Christian profession; and it must have increased his rage to hear, that those whom he had been instrumental in driving from Jerusalem, were so successful in spreading that religion which he was so eager to root out. The person now in the office of high priest, seems to have been Caiaphas, the inveterate enemy of Christ: he would therefore gladly employ so active and bigotted a zealot as Saul; and it is well known, that the Sanhedrim, however its capital power might have been abridged by the Romans, was the supreme Jewish Court, and had great influence and authority among their synagogues abroad. There are several disputes concerning the time of this transaction. Spanheim advances several arguments to prove, that it happened six or seven years after Christ's death, about the fourth year of Caligula, in the year 40. Benson and others, agreeably to Pearson's Chronology, think it was sooner; but the exact time cannot be fixed by any circumstances transmitted to us.

Ver. 2. And desired of him letters.] These letters contained a mandate from the high-priest, empowering him to act, as appears from chap. xxvi. 12. where they are explained by the words *authority* and *commission*; and Saul seems to have been a very proper person for executing those orders at that time, being a young man, warm in his temper, and possessed with a most intemperate zeal for Judaism. Damascus was the principal city of Syria, situated on the east side of the mountain Antilibanus, about one hundred and twenty miles north-east from Jerusalem. How much it abounded with Jews, may partly appear from Josephus, who in one place takes notice of the inhabitants shutting up and destroying in the Gymnasium 10,000 Jews in one hour. In another place he represents the Damascenes, as having murdered 18,000 Jews, with their wives and children. A place which so much abounded with Jews, was very likely to have some Christians; and Saul most probably had heard that there were several converts at this

place. But it may be inquired, by what authority Saul could execute at Damascus the commission given him by the high-priest? The letters were directed to the Synagogues at Damascus, and the Jews were generally indulged, in foreign states where they settled, with their synagogue worship, and the exercise of their church discipline. But can it be supposed that they were empowered to send persons, even those of their own nation, out of other countries, in order to their being punished at Jerusalem? This seems inconsistent with the laws of nations, and derogatory to the honour of states in general: but Herod, who beheaded John the Baptist, was at that time in possession of Damascus, and greater liberty was then granted the Jews than afterwards; for the year following, a war broke out between Herod and his father-in-law Aretas king of Arabia, in which Herod being defeated, Damascus came into the hands of Aretas, who placed a governor in it; and therefore not long after, when Saul returned thither, and preached Christ in the Synagogues, though the Jews designed to kill him, yet they did not attempt it without the governor's notice, who favoured them so far, as to place a garrison at the gates in order to apprehend him, 2 Cor. xi. 32. and this perhaps he might do, both to prevent disturbances, and the better to reconcile them to the government of their new prince. See the note on Isai. xvii. 1.

Ver. 3—6. Suddenly there shined round about him a light, &c.] It was about noon that Saul with his company came nigh the city of Damascus; when suddenly there appeared the *Shechinah*, or the glory of the Lord, far more bright and dazzling than the sun in its meridian splendor: and this great light from heaven shone peculiarly round about them; upon which they all fell flat upon their faces, as the prophet Daniel had done upon like occasions. Dan. viii. 17. x. 9. See also Acts, xxvi. 14. Saul, who had his head full of Jewish learning, was well acquainted with the notion of the *Shechinah*, and therefore he soon apprehended this to be the excellent glory. But, upon hearing a voice from it, which charged him with persecution, he was greatly surprised, and inquired, "Who art thou, Lord, that I should be charged with persecuting thee?" The voice out of the midst of the glory replied, "I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom thou persecutest; for the persecution of my disciples and members is the persecution of me: it is hard for thee to kick against the goads,—*νίτρα*,"—a proverbial expression of impotent rage, which hurts oneself and not those against whom it is levelled. See chap. xxii. 8.

Ver. 7. Stood speechless, hearing a voice.] Stood perfectly astonished;—stood fixed and confounded. The original implies the attitude of a person who is so astonished as not to be able to stir. In chap. xxii. 9. it is said, that they did not hear the voice of him that spake: but this is easily reconciled with the present passage, by the double sense of the Greek word *φωνή*, which signifies either a human voice, or indistinct sound of words, in general; or a distinct voice or speech. In the passage before us, it is to be understood

hold, *I am here*, Lord.

11 And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12 ^p And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13 Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have

heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy faints at Jerusalem:

14 And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

^a Ch. 21. 9. & 22. 3. & 11. 25. ^o If. 55. 6. Luke, 18. 13. Pf. 50. 15. & 91. 15. & 32. 6. Dan. 9. 20. ^p Numb. 12. 6. Dan. 9. 21.
^c Ch. 8. 3. ^{Ver.} 1. 2. ^{Ch.} 22. 3—5. & 26. 9—12. ¹ Cor. 15. 9. Gal. 1. 13. Phil. 3. 6. ¹ Tim. 1. 13, 15. ^r Ver. 21. ^{Ch.} 22. 16. ² Tim. 2. 12. Rom. 10. 14. ¹ Cor. 1. 2. ¹ Ch. 13. 2. Rom. 1. 1, 9, 5. Gal. 1. 13. ¹ Tim. 2. 7. ² Tim. 1. 11. & 2. 20. ^{Ch.} 22. 21. & 26. 17—
 20. Rom. 11. 13. & 15. 15, 19. Eph. 3. 8. Ch. xii. xxvi. & 21. 11.

in the general sense, and in the other as denoting a distinct and articulate sound of words, intelligible to the hearers: so that the companions of Saul *heard a voice*, but not in so clear a manner as to understand what was said. And this seems to be further confirmed from hence, that we do not find that any of them embraced the Christian truths or dispensation, which probably would have been the case, had it been designed for the conviction of any but Saul himself. So John, xii. 29. those present when the voice from heaven came to Christ, heard the sound, so as to take it for *thunder*, without distinctly understanding what was said. From St. Paul's taking such particular notice that the *voice spake unto him in the Hebrew tongue*, chap. xxvi. 14. Dr. Benson thinks we may gather, that possibly his companions might be Hellenistic Jews, who, though they heard the sound of the words, yet did not understand their meaning, —for *not hearing* is frequently put in scripture for *not understanding*; see particularly 1 Cor. xiv. 2. in the original. And it does not appear, that Saul informed them who it was that made this glorious appearance unto him, or what the voice had said: very likely he kept it secret from every one, at least till he had received further directions in Damascus. It is said also, that *they saw no man*; and the case was the same with the men who were with Daniel when he saw the vision, Dan. x. 7.

Ver. 8. And when his eyes were opened, he saw no man:] And though his eyes were open, he was incapable of discerning objects, and saw no one man of those who stood near him; for his nerves were so affected with the glory of that light, which had shone from the body of Jesus, that he had lost the power of sight. The divine Glory had struck his bodily eyes quite blind; as the eyes of his understanding had hitherto been in the midst of the marvellous light of the gospel: see ch. xxii. 11. But the judicious reader, desirous of entering fully into this wonderful transaction, will not refer to single verses only, but will diligently compare the whole account, as given by St. Paul himself.

Ver. 9. And he was three days without sight,] Scales grew over his eyes, not only to intimate to him the blindness of the state that he had been in, but to impress him also with the deeper sense of the almighty power of Christ, and to turn his thoughts inwards, while he was rendered less capable of conversing with external objects. This would also be a manifest token to others, of what had happened to him in his journey, and ought to have been very convincing and

humbling to those bigoted Jews, to whom, as the most probable associates in the cruel work that he intended, the sanhedrim had directed those *letters*, which Saul would no doubt destroy as soon as possible. It is very doubtful, and cannot at present be determined, whether the fast of three days, here mentioned, was a voluntary one, undertaken by Saul, in consequence of his deep humiliation on account of his former persecutions, or whether it was the result of that bodily disorder, into which he was thrown by the vision, and of the attachment of his mind to those new and astonishing divine revelations, with which during this time he seems to have been favoured. See 2 Cor. xii. 1. Gal. i. 11. If we compare the prophet Daniel's being affected by some of his visions, with this case of Saul, we shall find that they bear a great resemblance; only Daniel had not been guilty of such great crimes, and consequently did not pass through such bitter repentance, as Saul had. See the *Reflections* on this chapter.

Ver. 10. Ananias;] As we read of Ananias only in this history, it is difficult to determine who he was. Some suppose him to have been a native of Jerusalem, and to have first planted the gospel at Damascus. Some of the ancients say, that he was one of the seventy disciples; others, from his being called a *devout man according to the law*, ch. xxii. 12. have thought that he was a *profelyte of righteousness*. Perhaps he was a native of Damascus, converted at the first Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended, and afterwards honoured him with this embassy to Saul, as a Christian of the oldest standing in that place, and so very probably an officer of the church there; which the commission to *baptize him* may further intimate. We may remark that God himself appoints a man to teach Saul, as an angel did in the case of Cornelius, ch. x. 5. in admirable condescension dealing with us by men like ourselves.

Ver. 15. He is a chosen vessel, &c.] Beza observes, that an instrument of building, agriculture, &c. is often expressed in Greek by the word *σκευος*; and the word may very probably have that signification here. For he is my chosen instrument to bear my name, &c. Polybius uses this same word personally, in order to denote one extremely proper for a particular design. Ananias could not infer from these words of our Lord, that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles while they continued uncircumcised,—a mystery which St. Peter did not yet know; for Christ might have used these expressions, had St. Paul been brought

16 ' For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17 " And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou

camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and * be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18 ' And immediately there fell from his eyes as ~~it~~ had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

¹ Ch. 20. 22, 23. & 23. 11. & 21. 11. 2 Cor. 11. 23. & 15. & 2. 4, 33. & 4. 31. & 6. 3, 5, 8, 10. & 1. 4, 5, 8.

⁴ Ch. 22. 12—16. Ver. 3. 10. Ch. 8. 17. Mat. 19. 15. 1 Cor. 15. 8.

⁷ Ver. 8.

Gal. 1. 15, 16. 2 Cor. 3. 14. & 4. 6.

² Ch.

before Heathen kings for preaching him as a Messiah to the Jews and profelytes.

Ver. 16. I will shew him how great things he must suffer] If this intimates, as some very learned commentators seem to think, that Saul should presently have a revelation, and perhaps a visionary representation of all his sufferings, it must appear a most heroic instance of courage and zeal, under the power of grace, that with such a view he should offer himself to baptism, and go on so steadily in his ministerial work. Never surely was there, on that supposition, a more lively image of that adorable Lord, who so resolutely persevered in his work, though he knew all things that were to come upon him.

Ver. 17. Ananias went his way, &c.] Had St. Paul been an impostor, he could not have acted his part but in confederacy. He was to be instructed by one at Damascus; ver. 6. that instructor therefore must have been his accomplice, though they appeared to be absolute strangers to each other, and though he was a man of an excellent character, and so was very unlikely to have engaged in such a business. Notwithstanding these improbabilities, this man must have been his confident and accomplice in carrying on this fraud, and the whole matter must have been previously agreed on between them. But here this objection occurs:—How could this man venture to act so dangerous a part, without the consent of the other disciples, especially of the apostles? Or by what means could he obtain their consent? And how absurdly did they contrive their business, to make the conversion of Saul the effect of a miracle, which all those who were with him must certify did never happen?—How much easier would it have been to have made him be present at some pretended miracle wrought by the disciples, or by Ananias himself, when none were able to discover the fraud, and then have imputed his conversion to that, or to the arguments used by some of his prisoners, whom he might have discoursed with and questioned about their faith, and the grounds of it, in order to colour his intended conversion? Besides, is it not strange, if the account had been an imposture, and Ananias had been joined with Saul in carrying it on, that, after their meeting at Damascus, we should never hear of their consorting together, or acting in concert, or that the former drew any benefit from the friendship of the latter, when he became so considerable among the Christians?—Did Ananias engage and continue in such a dangerous fraud without any hope or desire of private advantage? Or was it safe for Saul to shake him off, and risk his resentment?—We will suppose then, in order to account for this vision without a miracle, that, as Saul and his company were journeying to Damascus, an extraordinary meteor did really appear, which cast a great light,

at which they being affrighted, fell to the ground; see ch. xxvi. 14. This might be possible, and fear, grounded on ignorance of such a phenomenon, might make them imagine it to be a vision from God; nay, even the *voice* or *sound* which they heard in the air, might be an explosion attending this meteor;—or, at least, there are those who would rather recur to such a supposition as this, however incredible, than acknowledge the miracle; but how will this account for the distinct words heard by Saul, to which he made answer?—How will it account for what followed when he came to Damascus agreeably to the sense of those words which he heard? How came Ananias to go to him there, and say “He was *chosen by God to know his will, &c.*” ch. xxii. 14. xxvi. 16.? Or why did he propose to him to be baptized? what connection was there between the meteor which Saul had seen, and those words of Ananias? Will it be said, that Ananias was skilful enough to take advantage of the fright that he was in at the appearance, in order to make him a Christian? But could Ananias inspire him with the *vision*, in which he saw him before he came, ver. 12.? If that vision was the effect of imagination, how came it to be verified so exactly in fact?—But allowing that he dreamed by chance of Ananias's coming, and that came by chance too; or, if you please, that, having heard of his dream, he came to take advantage of that, as well as of the meteor which Saul had seen; will this get over the difficulty? Certainly, not: for there was more to be done. Saul was struck blind, and had been so for three days. Now, had this blindness been natural, from the effects of the meteor or lightning upon him, it would not have been possible for Ananias to heal it, as we find that he did, merely by putting his hands upon him, and speaking a few words.—This undoubtedly surpassed the power of nature; and if it was a *miracle*, it proves the other to have been a miracle too, and a miracle done by the same Jesus Christ.

Ver. 18. There fell from his eyes as it had been scales:] Perhaps the outward coats of his eyes might have been scorched by the heat of that splendid light which he had seen; and what fell from them, might have had some resemblance to the small scales of fishes. His being thus restored to sight was, however, a most lively emblem of the veil's being done away from his heart. Immediately *Saul rose up and was baptized*, and, as appears by the event, was then also filled with the Holy Spirit; that is, as that phrase commonly signifies, the Holy Spirit was poured down upon him immediately from heaven, and not conveyed by the laying on of the hands of any man; and very probably that effusion upon Saul was accompanied with a glory, cloven tongues, or pointed flames, like as of fire, which was always the

19^z And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20^a And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21 But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; ^b Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, ^c proving that this is very Christ.

23 ¶ And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews ^d took counsel to kill him:

24 ^e But their laying in wait was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.

^a Mark, 5. 43. 1 Kings, 19. 7. Ps. 104. 15. ^b Gal. 1. 15, 16, 23. Ch. 26. 19—23. & 8. 37. Ph. 3. 7—9. 1 Cor. 2. 2. & 15. 10. ^c Mat. 13. 54, 55. 1 Sam. 10. 11. Gal. 1. 13, 23, 24. Ch. 8. 1. Ver. 13, 14. ^d Luke, 24. 25—27, 44. Ch. 18. 28. Heb. 1—x. ^e Mat. 10. 16—23. 1 Theff. 2. 15, 16. John, 16. 3. & 11. 47—57. 2 Cor. 11. 32, 33. John. 2. 15, 16. 1 Sam. 19. 12.

external symbol when the Spirit was given in the most honourable manner, as well as in the highest measure; and if that symbol attended his receiving the Holy Spirit, it was proper that his eyes should be first opened, that he himself might see the glory, and so be convinced, both by external signs and internal gifts, that he who had formerly been a persecutor, was now graciously accepted as a *Christian*, a prophet, and an apostle.

Ver. 20. *He preached Christ, &c.*] He preached in the synagogues, maintaining that Jesus is the Son of God. So the Vulgate, and several manuscripts. The Jews knew that Christ, or the Messiah, is the Son of God.

Ver. 21. *And came hither for that intent,*] And came hither on purpose to carry them prisoners to the chief priests. See 1 Sam. x. 11, 12. Heylin.

Ver. 22. *Proving that this is very Christ.*] Evinced that he [Jesus] is the Christ. As Saul had blasphemed Christ and persecuted the Christians through ignorance, and while he really disbelieved the gospel, he obtained mercy at the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ through faith in him. But, though our Lord forgave him, he could hardly forgive himself, and thought he could not sufficiently testify his love and affection, without the greatest study and diligence to convert others; and indeed, by shewing mercy to him, who had been, as he calls himself, a blasphemer and a persecutor, our Lord gave a most remarkable instance of his long-suffering and abundant mercy. For what could be a greater encouragement to others to hope for mercy, upon their repentance and sincerely believing the gospel? to the Jews,—for instance, who had procured the murder of the Messiah, the Lord of life and glory: to the Samaritans,—who had formerly been so odious to the Jews, and corrupters of the Old Testament: to the devout Gentiles,—with whom the Jews would not eat, nor freely converse, as long as they remained uncircumcised: and, above all, to the idolatrous Gentiles, who had a long time lived without the true God in the world, and as aliens to his church and covenant; and to whom more particularly this Saul, this singular monument of mercy, was to be an apostle.

Ver. 23. *And after—many days*] After an interval of about three years; during which period Saul went into Arabia, and preached the gospel there. See Gal. i. 17, 18. Though St. Luke has not given us a particular account of this part of St. Paul's travels, yet it appears sufficiently

from the expression before us that he was not ignorant of it. St. Paul himself has led us to conclude, that the Jews at Damascus did not plot his death till after he returned thither from Arabia, just before he went up to Jerusalem. As St. Paul's abode at Damascus, both upon his conversion and at his return from Arabia, appears to have been very short, he must, according to his own account, have spent almost three years in Arabia. His going so soon from Damascus, and preaching the gospel so long in a remote country, where there were no Christians before his coming, is a proof, as he himself very justly alleges, that he received not the knowledge of the gospel doctrine from any other of the apostles or Christians, but immediately from our Lord Jesus Christ, or by the illumination of the Spirit. Returning from Arabia, he came again to Damascus, and going into one of the synagogues there, he preached the Christian doctrine to the Jews, as he had done before. But they, not content with barely rejecting his doctrine, consulted how they might take away his life; for they looked upon him as a grand apostate, whose conversion greatly strengthened the interests of Christianity. But a stronger proof can scarce be produced of the malignity of these people: that when so great a persecutor was in so wonderful a manner converted to Christianity, they should be so far from following his example, as to attempt his life.

Ver. 24, 25. *And they watched the gates, &c.*] This shews that there were great numbers engaged in this bloody design; for Damascus was a large city, and had many gates. Damascus now belonged to Aretas, king of Arabia, (see on ver. 2.) who governed it by an ethnarch, or deputy governor; compare 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33. After Aretas had broken with his son-in-law Herod, very probably the Jews in general would have less interest in his dominions, and rather be watched and suspected by him. This might be the reason, perhaps, why they could not apprehend St. Paul in the synagogue, as he himself thought to have apprehended the Christians three years before; see ver. 2. However, though the Jews could not by their own power compass their design, nor would Aretas himself, perhaps, have granted them such a favour, yet they made interest with his governor, that the garrison might have orders to apprehend St. Paul, and deliver him into their hands. Possibly the Jews might incense the governor against

26 ¶ And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But ^e Barnabas took him, and brought him to the ^h apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached ⁱ boldly at Damascus in the name of

Jesus.

28 And he was with them ^k coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he ^l spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the ^m Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

30 Which when the brethren knew, ⁿ they brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

^f Ch. 22. 17. Gal. 1. 18. Mat. 10. 17. ^g Ch. 4. 36. & 11. 22, 25. & xiii. xiv. xv. Gal. 2. 9, 13. ^h Gal. 1. 18, 19. ⁱ Ch. 4. 13. Eph. 6. 19, 20. Ver. 20, 22. ^k Numb. 27. 17, 21. Pl. 121. 8. Ch. 1. 21. ^l Ch. 6. 10. & 4. 13. & 18. 22. Epn. 6. 19, 20. Ver. 20, 22. ^m Jews who used the Greek tongue. Ch. 6. 1. & 11. 20. And perhaps John, 12. 20. ⁿ Mat. 10. 23. Ch. 13. 50, 51. & 14. 6. & 17. 16.

against him, by pretending that though they were loyal subjects, Saul was a spy for Herod, or for the Romans, and an enemy to the Arabians, and so might draw him into their quarrel: for what will not persecuting and malicious men say or do, in the current of their blind zeal, and when hotly engaged to oppose truth and goodness? However, their zeal and rage were ineffectual; for St. Paul, having knowledge of their designs, was let down by the Christians as soon as they could do it with safety, by *night*, in a large basket suspended to a rope through the window of a house which joined to the walls of the city.

Ver. 26, 27. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem] Upon his escaping from Damascus, St. Paul went up to Jerusalem, where he had never been since his conversion to Christianity; and thither he went chiefly to visit the great apostle of the circumcision, Gal. i. 18. who, as some of the Christians had informed him, then resided at that city. He had very probably heard much of St. Peter, which made him long for the sight and acquaintance of one so eminent in the Christian church.

Great souls by instinct to each other turn,
Demand alliance, and in friendship burn.

And indeed there was something similar in their cases; for the one had been recovered to the dignity of one of the first ministers of the circumcision, after a threefold denial of his Lord and Master; the other, from a persecutor of the Christians, was already converted, and made an eminent prophet, and was commissioned to be the apostle of the Gentile world. But, though St. Paul went as a friend, to visit St. Peter and the Christian church, yet, as he had been so zealous and distinguished a persecutor, and had been since his conversion chiefly in Arabia Deserta, a country with which Jerusalem had but little correspondence, the Christians were still afraid of him. They knew how he had heretofore persecuted their brethren in Jerusalem, and gone to Damascus in pursuit of them; but they very probably had received no certain intelligence of his conversion. Though it may seem strange, that so remarkable an event should have been so long hid from them, yet some very probable reasons have been urged why they had not a full and satisfactory account of the affair; such as, 1. The war between Herod and Aretas, which might greatly interrupt the communication between Jerusalem and Damascus. 2. As the Christians in

Judea were under a violent persecution, those of Damascus might be afraid of going to Jerusalem, and the Christians of Jerusalem might not be able to carry on their correspondence so regularly with the Christians at a distance; besides, it should be remembered, that there were not then such conveniences of correspondence as now. 3. Perhaps, the persecuting Jews, to prevent the argument which might be drawn from St. Paul's conversion, might affect to give themselves mysterious airs, as if he was only acting a concerted part; sure to find their account in such a pretence, by mortifying the disciples, and bringing St. Paul under suspicion.—But whatever was the cause, the Christians at Jerusalem still doubted his integrity, till Barnabas convinced them to the contrary. Some affirm, that Barnabas had been his old acquaintance, and had sat with him *at the feet of Gamaliel*; and therefore might know him to be a man of too much veracity to act an insincere part; but this account is to be questioned. Barnabas, however, was some way or other fully satisfied of the truth and reality of St. Paul's conversion; he therefore, with great propriety, introduced him to the apostles, namely, to St. Peter, who went with St. John to Samaria, and was now returned; and to St. James, the kinsman of our Lord, Gal. i. 18, 19. For these were the only apostles whom St. Paul now saw at Jerusalem: the rest had dispersed themselves to plant or water the Christian religion in different places, and especially to confirm and establish such converts as the Christians had made in their several dispersions, by the laying on of their hands, and imparting unto them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Ver. 29. Against the Grecians:] The Hellenists; or those foreign Jews who used the Greek language, and came out of other parts to worship at Jerusalem, St. Paul being earnestly desirous that they might carry along with them the knowledge of Christ into their own lands. See the note on ch. vi. 1.

Ver. 30. To Cesarea,] This must have been Cæsarea Philippi, near the borders of Syria; as it may be collected from St. Paul's own words, that he went by land through the regions of Syria and Cilicia; see Gal. i. 21. otherwise he might easily have gone from the celebrated Cæsarea on the Mediterranean sea, by ship, to Tarsus, his own native city; whither the brethren sent him, no doubt, that he might find protection among his friends and relations, and plant the gospel among them. They possibly might not

have

31 ° Then had the churches 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.

32 ¶ And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

33 And there he found a certain man named

Eneas, which had kept his bed ° eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 † And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36 ¶ Now there was at † Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation

° Ch. 2. 41-47. & 4. 4. 31-34. & 6. 7. & 12. 24. Rom. 14. 17. Prov. 16. 7. Pf. 119. 165. Gal. 2. 7-9. Ch. 3. 2. & 4. 22.
John, 5. 5. & 9. 2, 21. Luke, 13. 16. Mark, 9. 17, 21. & 5. 25. Ch. 3. 6, 12, 16. & 4. 10. John, 5. 8. Mat. 9. 6. See ch. 3. 7. Mark,
1. 32, 32. Ver. 40. Ch. 14. 8-10. John, 14. 12. Luke, 7. 16. Ch. 4. 4. & 5. 12-14. Joh. 19. 46. 2 Chr. 2. 16. Ezra, 3. 7. Jon.
1. 3. Ch. 10. 5.

have heard of his former bigotry against the Christians; or, as the spiritual harvest of the Jews was not yet gathered in at Tarsus, as it had been some time ago at Jerusalem, there were hopes of better treatment and more success there. See on chap. viii. 40.

Ver. 31. Then had the churches rest] This *rest* is by no means to be ascribed merely or chiefly to St. Paul's conversion; who, though a great zealot, was but a young man, of no immediate or supreme authority, and whose personal danger proves the persecution in some measure to have been continued at least three years after it. The period here spoken of, appears to be that which commenced at or quickly after St. Paul's setting out for Cilicia; and the best commentators seem agreed, that this repose of the Christians was occasioned by the general alarm which was given to the Jews, then the sole persecutors of the Christians, about the year 40; when Petronius, by the order of Caligula, incensed by some affront said to have been offered him by the Alexandrian Jews, attempted to bring the statue of that emperor among them, and to set it up in the holy of holies—a horrid profanation, which the whole people deprecated with the greatest concern in the most solicitous and affectionate manner, and by which they were so much taken up, that they had not leisure to look after or persecute the Christians. How long this rest continued, we do not certainly know; probably till Herod interrupted it, chap. xii. ver. 1. Dr. Doddridge, following Beza's construction of this intricate verse, renders it as follows: *Then the churches through all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, being edified, had rest; and walking in the fear of the Lord and the consolation of the Holy Spirit were multiplied.* Dr. Heylin reads it, *At that time the churches, &c. had peace; being edified, and advancing in the fear of the Lord; and they became more numerous by the assistance of the Holy Ghost.* The word *οικοδομησαι*, edified, is figurative, and properly a term of architecture, signifying the erecting or constructing the whole superstructure upon a foundation. In this place, it must signify by analogy, that the churches were properly instructed in all the fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

Ver. 32. And it came to pass, &c.] And as Peter was making a general visitation; Heylin. Now it came to pass that Peter making a progress, &c. As St. Peter had gone formerly through the metropolis and other towns of Samaria to plant or water Christianity, so during this peace-

ful interval he revisited the several churches in Judæa and Galilee, to rectify their disorders, to instruct them further, and to impart the Holy Spirit to the new converts. Among other places he went down to *Lod* or *Lydda*, a town of Phœnicia, situated in the tribe of Ephraim, lying between Azotus and Cæsarea. It was afterwards called *Dispolis*, and was about one day's journey distant from Jerusalem. There were several celebrated Jewish schools there, and the great Sanhedrim sometimes met near it. Saron or Sharon, which is connected with it, ver. 35. was not a town, but a large, fruitful, and well inhabited valley, which lay near Lydda, and is said to have extended from mount Tabor to the lake of Tiberius, and from Cæsarea to Joppa. Compare 1 Chron. xxvii. 29. Isai. xxxiii. 9. xxxv. 2. lxx. 10.

Ver. 34. Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole] It is worth our while to observe the great difference there is between the manner in which this miracle is wrought by Peter, and that in which Christ performed his works of divine power and goodness. The different characters of the *servant* and the *son*, the *creature* and the *God*, are every where apparent. In working this miracle, however, St. Peter seems to have imitated our Lord, partly as to the manner of expression, but principally as to the sign and evidence of the perfection of the miracle; (Mark, ii. 9. John, v. 8.) only with this remarkable difference and decorum; namely, that the two men whom our Lord cured, were not at their own home, and therefore they were ordered to *take up their bed*, or the couch on which they had lain, and walk away. But Eneas, whom St. Peter cured, was at home, and kept his bed there, and therefore he was ordered to *arise, and make his bed*; *σηκων σκατον*, *shake up and smooth your own bed*, as an evidence of the certainty and perfection of your cure. We may observe, that no *faith* on the part of the person to be healed was here required; and the like is observable in many other cases, where persons, perhaps ignorant of Christ, were surprised with an unexpected cure. But where persons petitioned themselves for a cure, a declaration of their faith was often required, that none might be encouraged to try experiments out of curiosity, in a manner which would have been very indecent, and have tended to many bad consequences.

Ver. 36. At Joppa] Another city of Phœnicia, lying upon the Mediterranean, and the nearest maritime town to Jerusalem, more than a day's journey distant from it,—
about

is called * Dorcas: this woman was * full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an ^y upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to ^z Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there; they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not † delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them.

* *Dee*, or *Roe*. * Ch. 10. 4. Prov. 31. 31. Jam. 1. 27. Tit. 2. 8. 1 Tim. 5. 10. ^y Ch. 7. 13. & 20. 8. Mark, 14. 15. ^z Joh. 19. 46. 2 Chr. 2. 16. See ver. 43, 35. † Or *be grieved*. * Ch. 8. 2. 1 Thess. 4. 13. Gen. 50. 10. & 23. 2. 1 John, 11. 31. 2 Sam. 3. 31. ^b Ver. 36. Prov. 10. 7. & 31. 31. ^c 1 Kin. 17. 19—23. 2 Kin. 4. 32—36. Mark, 5. 40—43. Mat. 9. 25. Ch. 7. 60.

about 40 miles; though some have said that Jerusalem might be seen from thence. We find it mentioned in the Old Testament by the name of *Japho*, as belonging to the tribe of Dan, Joh. xix. 46. It was the place to which the materials for building Solomon's temple were brought in floats by sea, and carried thence by land to Jerusalem; 2 Chron. ii. 16. Jonah took ship from hence to Tarshish; Jon. i. 3. and as it lay between Azotus and Cæsarea, it was probably one of the cities where Philip preached the gospel in his progress, chap. viii. 40. Simon, son of Matthias, and brother to Judas Maccabeus, repaired and fortified Joppa, and made it a seaport to Jerusalem and all Judea, it being the fittest place on all that coast for the carrying on their trade to the isles and countries in the Mediterranean; for which purpose it served them many ages after the Maccabees, as it still serves the inhabitants of that country to this very day, being called by the same name, though vulgar pronunciation has changed it to Jassa. It was at Jabneb or Jannia, nigh this place, that the great Sanhedrim sometimes sat; and yet for all their consultations, authority, and learning, Christianity there took root and flourished. Among the Christians at Joppa, there was a woman, whose Hebrew name was *Tabitha*, which in Greek is *Dorcas*, that is, a *roe* or *wild-goat*; for it was common among the Heathens to call men or women by the names of some inferior animals. Thus *Rachel* signifies a *sheep*, and *Eglah* a *calf*. Dr. Shaw in the supplement to his Travels, p. 74. takes the word *Δορκας* to be the *Gazel* or *Antelope*, which Aristotle describes to be the smallest of the horned animals, being even smaller than the *roe*. The (*Δορκας*) *Dorcas* is described to have fine eyes; and in the Eastern countries, those of the *Gazel* are so to a proverb. Thus the damsel whose name was *Tabitha*, which is by interpretation *Dorcas*, might be so called from this peculiar feature and circumstance. See Deut. xii. 15. 22. 2 Sam. ii. 18. Cantic. ii. 9. iv. 5. &c.

Ver. 37. *Whom when they had washed,*] This custom prevailed both among the Hebrews, Greeks, and Latins, and is still in use among us. See Mark, xiv. 8. John, xii. 7. xix. 38—40.

Ver. 38. *Desiring him that he would not delay,* &c.] We

When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him ^a weeping, and shewing ^b the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

40 ^c But Peter put them all forth, and knelt down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, *Tabitha*, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

can hardly imagine that they urged his coming merely to comfort them under this loss: but if they had any view to what followed, it was a remarkable instance of faith, as it does not appear that the apostles before this had raised any one from the dead. Were we to have been judges, perhaps we should have thought it better that *Stephen* should have been raised than *Dorcas*; but it is our happiness and duty to submit our reasonings on what we think fittest and best, to the infinitely wiser determinations of God.

Ver. 39. *Shewing the coats and garments, &c.*] “Shewing some of the under and upper garments, which she, with her own hands, had made, to clothe the naked and relieve the poor.” The Vulgate reads, which she had made for them.

Ver. 40. *But Peter put them all forth,*] Herein the servant followed not only the *path*, but the very *steps* of his Lord, in dismissing all witnesses, that nothing might look like vain-glory, that nothing might interrupt the fervour of that address which he was to pour out before God. First, he bends his knees in prayer to the Lord of life; and knowing certainly by a divine impulse that his prayer was heard, he directs his voice with a divine efficacy to the dead: but who can fully conceive the surprize of *Dorcas* when thus called back again to life, or of her pious friends when they saw her alive! for their own sake, and the sake of the indigent and distressed, there was cause of rejoicing, and much more in the view of such a confirmation given to the gospel, and such a token of Christ's presence with his servants. Yet to herself it must have been matter of resignation and submission, rather than exultation, that she was called back to these scenes of vanity, which surely would have been scarce tolerable, had not a veil of oblivion been drawn over those glories which her separate spirit had enjoyed. But we please ourselves with the charitable and reasonable hope, that the remainder of her days were yet more zealously and vigorously spent in the service of her Saviour and her God; yielding herself to him as in a double sense alive from the dead. Thus would a richer treasure be laid up for her in heaven, and she would afterwards return to a far more exceeding weight of glory, than

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

^c See ver. 35. John, 2. 11. & 14. 12. 10. 5, 6, 32.

^e A noted sea-port on the west of Canaan. Josh. 19. 46. 2 Chron. 2. 16. Ezra, 3. 7. Jonah, 1. 3. Ch.

than that from which so astonishing a Providence had for a short interval recalled her.

Ver. 42, 43. *And it was known throughout all Joppa;*] The report of this miracle swiftly spread throughout all Joppa: upon which *Simon*, the son of *Jonas*, became more famous there than *Jonas* himself had been; for the ancient prophet *Jonas*, after he had taken ship at Joppa, was raised only from the belly of the fish; but *Simon*, the son of *Jonas*, raised the pious and charitable *Tabitha* from the dead, and thereby promoted a religion of greater and more extensive usefulness, than even the beneficent work of reducing Nineveh to repentance. After this, St. Peter tarried several days at Joppa, *lodging in the house of one Simon a tanner, or currier*, as some render the word *βυρσαῖ*. His business perhaps is mentioned, that it might appear the apostle was not elevated by the dignity of the late miracle above low persons and things.

Thus ends the first grand period of the history of the first planting of the Christian religion, in which the gospel was preached to the Jews only. This period began at the day of Pentecost, ch. ii. and is computed to have lasted till the year of Christ 41. that is, about the space of eight years. Till such of the Jews as would embrace Christianity were brought in, especially the Jews in Palestine, God, in his great wisdom and goodness, would not suffer the gospel to be offered to one Gentile. But when such great numbers were gathered in, and the apostles had gone a second time to visit and settle the churches; when Christianity had taken root among them, and they were sufficiently instructed and established; and when, at the same time, the providence of God had so ordered things, that the persecution was ceased, then, but not till then, the same divine Wisdom and Goodness prepared the way for the spreading of the gospel among the Gentiles; the more particular account whereof will be read in the following chapters.

Inferences.—The conversion and apostleship of St. Paul are in themselves a full and undeniable proof of the truth of the Christian religion; and of consequence our faith in it and its divine Author is well and wisely founded on this, as well as on a thousand other arguments drawn from reason and experience.

If the facts laid before us in the present chapter, and the various other circumstances related of St. Paul, and by him in other parts of the sacred writings, are true, the religion of Christ must also be true, whose divine Author so wonderfully converted him, and afterwards enabled him to work so many miracles, and to plant his divine religion in so many places: and that these facts are true, according to the relation made of them by St. Luke in the Acts, and by St. Paul in his own Epistles, will clearly follow from hence; namely, that either they are true, or that St. Luke and St. Paul related them with an intent to deceive, or that they were themselves deceived, which is equally incredible. The facts recorded of St. Paul are true, or else he was

either an impostor, or an enthusiast. Now it shall be the business of the following reflections to shew, that St. Paul cannot be supposed either to have said what he did with an intent to deceive others, or that it was possible for him to have been deceived himself; and consequently that what is related of and by him is true.

1. St. Paul could not have been an impostor, or have said what he did with an intent to deceive others; for, if he had done so, he must have had some reason for such conduct. But it is impossible to shew any rational motives which he could have, to undertake such an imposture; and it is as easy to shew, that he could never have carried it on with any success by the means which we know he used.

Now, for the first: the only inducement to such an imposture must have been one of these two; either the hope of advancing himself by it in his temporal interest, or the gratification of some of his passions under the authority of it, and by the means that it afforded. But a review of his life abundantly shews us, that so far from taking a method to advance his temporal interest, he took the only method to destroy it; leaving the party with whom were wealth, power, and credit, and joining himself to those who had neither worldly power nor esteem, and whose principles led them to give up all earthly blessings. His singular humility, purity, and labour, as undeniably shew, that the gratification of no other passion under the authority of the gospel could be the motive of his actions; and the treatment that he met with, and the sufferings he endured, for a long course of years, and in propagating a faith, the rewards of which were confined to another world, demonstrate beyond all controversy that he could be actuated by no spirit of imposture, but by that divine hope only, which led him to look beyond the grave for the fruition of his toils.

But as no rational motive can be assigned for St. Paul's conduct, supposing him an impostor; so was there no possibility, that he could ever have met with any success, had he really been such; for he had no sword, or temporal power (like Mahomet), no interest, or friends, or money to assist him in the undertaking. The weapons of his warfare were not carnal; only the *fervidness of preaching*; and yet with this, by the power of God, he made his way against all the opposition of his own country, as well as of all the Gentile world.

Again, had he been an impostor, all the apostles must have been the same, and he must have conferred with them to have been duly instructed in his story; the great difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of which will appear to every one who considers the situation that he was in before his conversion, and the part he acted through life after it.

And as thus, if he had been an impostor, it was impossible he could have carried on his fraud in *Judea*; so was it much more impossible he could have had any success in the Gentile world. At Rome, Corinth, Athens, Ephesus, in all which places he preached, he had obstacles to re-

move.

CHAP. X.

Cornelius, a devout man, being commanded by an angel, sendeth for Peter: who, by a vision, is taught not to despise the Gentiles. As he preacheth Christ to Cornelius and his company, the Holy Ghost falleth on them, and they are baptized.

[Anno Domini 41.]

THERE ^a was a certain man in Cesarea called Cornelius, a ^b centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,

2 ^c A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3 ^d He saw in a vision evidently, about the ^e ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, ^f he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he

^a Gen. 49. 10. If. 11. 10. & 42. 1, 6, 7. Mat. 2. 1, 11. & 8. 5—11. & 15. 22—28. John. iv. & 12. 20. & 10. 16. ^b Captain of an hundred soldiers. Mat. 8. 5. & 27. 54. Ch. 23. 17, 23. & 27. 1. ^c Ch. 2. 5. & 22. 12. Gen. 18. 19. Josh. 24. 15. 1 Theff. 5. 17. Ver. 4, 22, 30, 35. ^d Dan. 9. 21. Ver. 30. Heb. 1. 14. Pl. 91. 11. & 34. 7. ^e Three o'clock afternoon. ^f Mat. 28. 4, 5. Rev. 1. 17. Ch. 7. 32.

move, the most insurmountable by human power; and which, without the divine assistance, we may as well suppose he could have removed, as that he could have made a world. He had the policy and power of the civil magistrates to combat; for it is well known, that in all Heathen countries the established religion was interwoven with the civil constitution. He had the interest, credit, and craft of the priests, the prejudices and passions of the people, and (which perhaps was a greater obstacle than all,) the wisdom and the pride of the philosophers, to obviate and subdue: and yet, spite of all these, he established churches in every place; and, by the power of God, he spread the gospel of Christ, and him crucified, in every realm through which he travelled. The event therefore sufficiently proves that God was with him, and that his mission was divine.

2. As a proof that St. Paul *was not himself deceived*, either by his own warmth of fancy, or by the cunning of others, we need only consider briefly the circumstances of his conversion, and the consequences attending it.

It is well known, that the mere power of imagination always acts in conformity to the opinions imprinted on it at the time of its working. Now nothing can be more certain, than that when St. Paul set out for Damascus, (ver. 3.) his mind was strongly possessed against Christ and his followers. If, in such a disposition of mind, an enthusiastic man had imagined he saw a vision from heaven denouncing the anger of God *against the Christians*, and commanding him to *persecute them* without mercy, it might be accounted for by the natural power of enthusiasm. But that in the very instant of his being engaged in the fiercest and hottest persecution against them,—no circumstance having happened to change his opinions, or alter the bent of his disposition, but rather to foment and inflame it,—that he should at once imagine himself to be called by a heavenly vision to be an apostle of that Jesus whom he persecuted, is in itself wholly incredible; is so far from being a natural or probable effect of *enthusiasm*, that just the contrary effect must have been produced by such a cause.

3. This is so clear a proposition, that the whole argument might be safely rested upon it. But still further to shew that this vision could not be a phantom of St. Paul's own creating, we must remember, that he was *not alone* when he saw it. There were others in company, whose minds were no better disposed than his to the Christian

faith. Could it then be possible that the imaginations of all those men should at the same time be so strongly infatuated, as to make them believe, that they saw a great light shining about them, above the brightness of the sun at noon-day, and heard the sound of a voice from heaven, though not the words which it spake,—when in reality they neither heard nor saw any such thing? Could they be so infatuated with this conceit of their fancy, as to fall down to the earth together with St. Paul, and be speechless through astonishment and fear, when nothing extraordinary had happened either to them or to him? especially considering that this vision did not happen in the night, when the senses are more easily imposed upon; but at *midday*? If a sudden frenzy had seized upon St. Paul from any distemper of body or mind, can we suppose his whole company, men of different constitutions and understanding, to have been at once affected in the same manner, so that not the distemper alone, but the effects of it should exactly agree? And if all had gone mad together, would not the frenzy of some have taken a different turn, and presented to them different objects? This supposition is so contrary to natural reason and all possibility, that unbelief must find out some other solution, or give up the point.

But if to this consideration we add the consequences of this marvellous appearance, it will no longer admit of dispute. Could Paul have been so deceived, as to imagine himself three days blind,—as to have *scales fall from his eyes*, just before he was baptized by Ananias? Could he be so deceived as to abandon his own profession, and to embrace Christianity, with the loss of all that he had and hoped in this world? Could he be deceived in the full knowledge he had gained of that religion from Christ himself?—For as he had never conversed with the apostles, how should he have been so perfectly instructed in the deepest mysteries of the Christian faith, unless he had received them by the immediate revelation of Christ?—And, to say no more, could he have been deceived in the miraculous gifts that he possessed, and the miracles he wrought;—or, if he could, was it possible that others also should be as mad as himself, and imagine that they saw him struck blind, or another restore him to sight, when no such events happened?

These are things so impossible to be reconciled with any self-delusion, that they abundantly prove the truth of St. Paul's conversion and mission; to which if we add the purity of his doctrines, as well as his imparting spiritual gifts

said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5^s And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter :

^f Ps. 141. 2. Heb. 13. 16. Rev. 8. 3. Ver. 31. Phil. 4. 13. ^g Ver. 32. Rom. 10. 14—17.

gifts to the churches which he planted, we shall have the fullest testimony of the fact; the highest proof that he spoke the words of truth and soberness, and that God was with him.

4. And as it was impossible that St. Paul should have deceived himself, so was it much more incredible that he should have been deceived by others. We need say little to shew the absurdity of this supposition. It was morally impossible for the disciples of Christ, considered as impostors, to conceive such a thought as that of turning his persecutor into his apostle, and of doing this by a fraud, in the very instant of his greatest fury against them and their Lord. But could they have been so extravagant as to conceive such a thought, it was naturally impossible for them to execute it in the manner that we find his conversion to have been effected. Could they produce a light in the air, which at mid-day was brighter than the sun? Could they make Saul hear words from out of that light, which were not heard by the rest of the company? Could they make him blind for three days after that vision, and then make scales fall from his eyes, and restore him to his sight by a word? Beyond dispute no fraud could effect these things; but much less could the fraud of others produce those miracles subsequent to his conversion, in which he was not passive, but active; which he did himself, and which he appeals to in his epistles, as proofs of his divine mission. So that it clearly follows, that he was not, could not be deceived by the fraud of others: that what is said of him, and what he has said of himself, cannot be imputed to the power of that deceit, no more than to wilful imposture, or to enthusiasm. From all which the plain conclusion is, that what is here and elsewhere related to have been the cause of St. Paul's conversion, and to have happened in consequence of it, did all really happen; is all certainly and infallibly true, as we have it related; and therefore, that the Christian religion is true; is a divine revelation from God; and blessed are all they who so believe and embrace it.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Saul, the bloody persecutor of the church, again appears, but henceforward to support a very different character. His Hebrew name *Saul*, signifies *defenced*; his Roman name, *Paul*, *little*. He was by birth a Cilician, of the city of Tarsus; sprung from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; deeply skilled in Grecian literature, as well as Jewish theology; brought up under the greatest masters of the time; a fiery zealot for the law; a man of rank, though a tent-maker (it being a custom with the Jews to instruct all those, who were bred scholars, in some handicraft trade); and a Roman, born a freeman of Tarsus, and consequently of Rome. We are in this chapter told, in conformity with the former account given of him:

1. With what rage he persecuted the disciples of Jesus. He yet breathed out threatenings and slaughter; not fatiated with the blood of the martyrs which he had shed, his fury grasped at the utter extirpation of the Christian name;

determined either to intimidate them from their profession, and drive them to blasphemy; or to murder the obstinately faithful. For this end, not content with the mischief he had done at Jerusalem, he pursued them to other cities; and desired, and obtained, letters from the high-priest, and the whole estate of the elders, Acts, xxii. 5. empowering him to act in their name at Damascus; and if in the synagogues there, he found any of this way, favourers of this new religion, Christianity, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem, to be tried and punished by their spiritual court, the sanhedrim. Thus was Saul employed, when the Lord stopped him in his mad career. Let us admire the wonders of grace, and never despair of the chief of sinners.

2. God marvellously arrests him in the midst of his mad career. He was now arrived near the place of his destination, and already, in imagination, triumphed in the havoc he should make: but how far are God's ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts! When sinners are driving to the height of wickedness, he is sometimes pleased to magnify his power and grace, in bending their iron necks to his yoke, and affording them an astonishing offer of grace. As he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven, brighter than the meridian sun, the dazzling lustre of which quite overpowered him; and the presence of Jesus in his glory filled him with such amazement and confusion, that he fell to the earth, unable to stand on his feet; or, being more probably on horseback, he fell down, astonished and overcome by the splendor of the light. Note; Those whom God designs for eminent usefulness, he sometimes exercises with the deepest terrors and distress, and lays them in the lowest pit of humiliation.

3. Christ, having seized him as his prisoner, addresses him out of the glorious light which shone around him. He heard a voice, saying unto him, *Saul, Saul*; Christ speaks with vehemence, as to one who stood on the precipice of ruin, insensible of his danger; and with fervent compassion, as desirous to snatch him from instant ruin; why persecutest thou me?—with daring impiety lifting thy rebel arm against the Almighty; with black ingratitude thus returning the love of him who died to redeem thee; with cruel enmity persecuting those who never injured thee; and in them, my believing people, striking at me, their Lord and Master? Note; (1.) When Christ comes with his Spirit, convincing the soul of sin, he brings the matter home to the conscience, and the sinner hears him say, Thou art the man. (2.) The Lord resents the insults shewn to his people, as injuries done to himself.

4. The affrighted criminal, now cited to answer at the bar of this justly-offended Redeemer, with terror replies, *Who art thou, Lord?* desirous to be acquainted with him, whose heavenly voice he heard: And the Lord said, *I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest*; he against whom thou hast so often blasphemed, and against whom thou art now acting with such envenomed malice and enmity; *it is hard*

6. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout

Ch. 9. 43. & 11. 13, 14. Ver. 22, 31.

for thee to kick against the pricks; as absurd and self-destructive must these attempts against my church and people prove, as with the naked foot to kick against a sharp iron goad. Trembling and astonished, Saul inquires, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* A flood of light now broke in upon his soul; his sins, in all their aggravations, rose up to his view; the dreadful consequences that he had justly to apprehend from the wrath of an offended Saviour stared him in the face, and made him willing now to do and suffer any thing, if he may escape the vengeance which he has provoked: he earnestly begs information, if yet there may be hope of mercy, pardon, and salvation. *And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do;* he leaves him for a while to ruminate in darkness on the past, yet with some gracious hope of hearing farther from him; for he might well conclude, that had Christ intended to destroy him, he would not thus have spared and spoken to him. *Note;* (1.) They who rebel against the convictions of their conscience, the warnings of God's word, and the calls of God's ministers, will pierce themselves through with many, and, if they repent not, with eternal sorrows. (2.) When God's Spirit sets a man's sins in array before him, and opens his eyes to see the flaming gulph on the brink of which he stands, no wonder if horror and a terrible dread seize upon him; and, like Belsazzar, his knees smite against each other. (3.) Our terrors of conscience must not drive us from Christ, but to him, inquiring into his will, and what hope of salvation remains for us. Let not the greatest sinner add despair to all his crimes. (4.) Though the Lord may not give present ease or relief to the troubled conscience, yet we must wait his leisure, and be found at his feet, where never miserable soul yet perished.

5. Saul's fellow-travellers or guards, sent to assist him in executing the high-priest's and sanhedrim's commission, stood speechless, when risen from the ground to which they had been struck down; *hearing a voice, some tremendous sound, like thunder; or words, the meaning of which they did not understand; but, though they heard Paul speak, seeing no man, to whom he addressed himself.*

6. Saul himself arose from the earth at Christ's bidding; and now opening his eyelids, his sightless eye balls no longer met the light of day; he is taken off from the view of outward objects, that he may turn his thoughts more intensely to what appears within. Thus blind, his companions led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus, a spectacle of wretchedness; where he purposed, a few moments before, to make his entry in pomp: so soon can God change the sinner's mirth into mourning, and humble his pride in the dust. *Three days and nights he continued dark in his body, and probably under deeper distress and darkness in his soul; and he neither did eat nor drink:* his troubled mind destroyed all relish for food, and, in fasting and prayer, he spent these three melancholy days, the most fearful hours that he ever knew.

2dly, The Lord now returns to visit the distressed, afflicted Saul.

1. The Lord in a vision speaks to a disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, who, with attention and obedience, attends his orders. He bids him, *Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, a person of distinguished name: for behold, an astonishing change is passed upon him; humbled in the dust he prayeth, and hath, in answer to his prayer, seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight:* he being therefore the person pointed out for this service, must go without delay. *Note;* (1.) God sees the distresses of the afflicted; he also will hear their cry, and will help them. (2.) The moment a soul in true penitence turns to God, this evidence of spiritual life will immediately appear, *behold, he prayeth.* Those who are prayerless, are evidently yet dead in trespasses and sins. (3.) When Christ calls us to his service, we should with delight and readiness answer, *Here am I.*

2. Ananias at first objects to go, but is quickly satisfied. The well-known character of Saul made him apprehensive of danger, should he put himself within the reach of such a bigoted persecutor, who had not only done so much evil at Jerusalem, but had come to Damascus, armed with the chief priest's commission, to bind all that called on the name of Jesus, and carry them as criminals to Jerusalem. But Christ silences his objections; *the Lord said unto him, Go thy way, there is no danger; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, appointed to distinguished honour and eminent usefulness; to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, preaching that faith which he once destroyed: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake, and will enable him to endure the most severe persecutions; and at last, in testimony of the truth of his mission, to seal it with his blood.* *Note;* They who embark in Christ's cause, especially as ministers of his gospel, must prepare for the cross, and learn to endure hardness as good soldiers.

3. Ananias hereupon immediately obeys; and entering the house where Saul lodged, and putting his hands on him, said, *Brother Saul, now adopted into the family of Christ, and a child of God, with us, and henceforward associated with us in the ministry of the gospel, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, and struck thee with blindness, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy bodily sight, the emblem of the happier illumination of thy soul with the light of truth; and that thou mightest be filled with the Holy Ghost, with his miraculous gifts, as well as with the most abundant measure of his grace, in order to qualify thee for the great and glorious service to which thou art appointed.* *Note;* When God is pleased to work a change on the vilest, we must, with open arms, receive them as our brethren.

4. No sooner had Ananias spoken, than the cure was wrought.

soldier of them that waited on him continually;

8 And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

† Eccl. 9. 10. Pf 119. 59, 60. Ver. 31. Ch. 11. 12.

wrought. The scales fell from his eyes, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized; openly making profession of that faith which he now most heartily embraced,—no longer the blind Pharisee, but the enlightened Christian; delivered from the horrible darkness of terrifying guilt; and rejoicing in the Sun of righteousness arisen upon him with healing in his wings.

5. Behold the fierce persecutor instantly commencing a zealous preacher. Having refreshed himself with proper food after so long fasting, he was strengthened in body, as well as soul; then he joined the faithful disciples of Jesus at Damascus; and instead of the threatenings he lately breathed against them, he was united with them in the closest bonds of Christian communion; appeared openly among them, and straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God, the true Messiah, to the astonishment of all who heard him; for knowing his past conduct, and the intention of his journey thither, they could not but stand amazed at this wondrous change. But far from being ashamed of the apostacy with which some reproached him, or dubious about the merits of that cause which his former Jewish friends so decried, and still with bitterness opposed, *Saul increased the more in strength*, supernaturally taught and strengthened, and daily growing more bold and zealous in defence of that faith which he had embraced, pleading the cause of Jesus against every gain-sayer; and he confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ, by such irrefragable arguments as left them nothing to reply. *Note*; (1.) Christ is the glorious subject, on which his faithful ministers delight to dwell. (2.) It justly excites astonishment, and serves for a fresh confirmation of the truth of the gospel, when bitter opposers, by the power of divine grace, appear advocates for the cause which they once decried.

3dly, The transactions which are recorded in this chapter immediately after the account of St. Paul's conversion, happened three years afterwards; during which interval the apostle went into Arabia, preaching to the Jews who were settled in that country; and then returned again to Damascus, Gal. i. 15—18. where we find,

1. The narrow escape that he had out of the jaws of his envenomed persecutors. Enraged at his apostacy from them, as they regarded it, and unable to bear the powerful energy of his discourses, inculcating the glorious truths of the gospel, they resolved to murder him; and, having gained the governor to their side, they watched the gates day and night in order to destroy him: but impotent is the malice of the wicked against those whom the Lord protects; their scheme was discovered, either by some friend, or by revelation; and the brethren, in order to elude the vigilance of these bloody-minded persecutors, let the apostle down by the wall in a basket by night, and so he escaped. *Note*; If we are for the Lord's sake brought into the greatest straits and temptations, he is still able and willing to make a way for us to escape.

2. He proceeded to Jerusalem, and there he met new difficulties. See Gal. i. 18, 19.

[1] From the brethren themselves. He immediately assayed to join himself to the disciples; his former noble friends he had now forsaken, and wished to be admitted among the poor and persecuted disciples of Jesus: but they were at first afraid of him, not having heard ought about him probably during the three years he was in Arabia, or even perhaps of his wonderful conversion at Damascus, and believed not that he was a disciple: knowing his past enmity, they suspected that his present conversion might be feigned. Caution is needful; we should be well acquainted with those whom we admit into our communion, lest they be wolves in sheep's clothing: believe not every spirit. But Barnabas, who had received full information concerning Paul's case, soon satisfied the minds of the disciples; and bringing Paul to the apostles James and Peter, who alone were then at Jerusalem, he told them all the circumstances of his extraordinary conversion, and his approved fidelity and zealous labours ever since, particularly at Damascus. Hereupon they gladly gave him the right-hand of fellowship, and he appeared publicly among the disciples, going in and out with them, joining in their worshipping assemblies, and spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus. They who have to good a cause, may well courageously appear in defence of it; Christ's service will bear us out.

[2.] From the Jews. The Hellenists, who were most bigoted to Judaism, encountered him; and he disputed with them with such evidence, power, and demonstration, that, unable to stand before the force of his arguments, they determined to silence him by the sword. Therefore, after a short abode of fifteen days at Jerusalem, having received a revelation from God, directing him in his labours, Acts, xxii. 17, 18. and the brethren being solicitous for his safety, he was brought by them as far as Cæsarea, and thence was sent to Tarsus his native city, where he continued preaching the gospel, till Barnabas joined him, chap. xi. 25. *Note*; (1.) It is a sure sign of a bad cause, when recourse is had to violence instead of argument. (2.) Whatever plots the wicked contrive against the faithful ministers of truth, the Lord will take care of them, till they have finished their testimony.

[3.] Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria. The flames of persecution abated; and a little respite was a great mercy to them, after they had been so harassed by their foes; nor did they fail to improve it; they were edified in knowledge and faith, enjoying more quietly the means of grace, and assembling more undisturbed; and walking in the fear of the Lord, a filial, reverential fear, which made them circumspect and holy in all manner of conversation, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost; enjoying much of his light, love, and consolations, they were multiplied; increasing in numbers and growing in grace. *Note*; They who walk most nearly and humbly with God, will enjoy most of the comforts of his Spirit.

9 ¶ On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, ^k Peter went up upon the house-top to pray about the sixth hour :

^k Ch. 11. 5—19. Mat. 6. 6. 1 Tim. 2. 8. Pf. 55. 17. Eph. 6. 19.

Mid-day. Mat. 20. 5. & 47. 45. Pf. 55. 17.

4thly, The historian for a while leaves St. Paul to his labours, and returns to relate the ministry of St. Peter.

1. He travelled about to visit the churches which had been planted, to confirm the disciples, and ordain ministers among them: and among other places, *he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.* Note: They who are called to be Christians, are by their very profession saints, separated from the world, and devoted to God.

2. St. Peter there performed a notable miracle. A man, whose name was Eneas, had lain bed-ridden eight years, through the palsy; and all possibility of a cure by human means was despaired of; but when the apostle saw him, he said, *Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed:* instantly the cure was wrought, and the man arose restored to perfect health and strength. Note: (1.) By mere nature we are impotent to all good, and no man can of himself afford us the least relief. (2.) Christ is the great physician; he can cure those whose state is the most deplorable and desperate. (3.) When he speaks to the penitent soul, power accompanies his word, and the believer is enabled to rise from the bed of spiritual weakness and impotence by the mighty power of his grace.

3. Great was the effect produced by this miracle. The people of Lydda and Saron in general, convinced of the divine power evident in the cure, *turned to the Lord*, and made profession of Christianity; and then was the scripture eminently fulfilled, which said, *They should see the glory of the Lord, and become a fold of flocks,* Isa. xxxv. 2. xv. 10.

5thly, Another, and a still greater miracle is wrought, in confirmation of the divine authority, under which St. Peter acted. We have,

1. The sickness and death of an excellent woman, whose name was *Tabitha*; in Greek, *Dorcas*, or a doe; she was an inhabitant of Joppa, and adorned the profession of Christianity which she made; being *full of good works*, the genuine proofs of the truth of the faith that she possessed, and of *almsdeeds which she did*; not only bestowing her substance liberally to the necessitous, but labouring with her hands, that she might be more extensive in her beneficence; for real Christians will shew the fruits of grace; their works will speak their praise. In the midst of her useful life, it pleased God to cut her off; she fell sick and died. From the ravages of mortality the best have no exemption; and, according to their custom, they had now washed the body, and laid it out for interment.

2. The disciples at Joppa, who heard of St. Peter's being so near as Lydda, and of the miracle that he had there wrought, sent two of their number to him, informing him of the present afflictive providence, and entreating him to come to them, to comfort them under their grief; and probably with some expectations, that he might yet restore to life their departed sister.

3. St. Peter, without delay, complied with their request; and, when he came, found the body laid out in the upper

chamber, and the widows lamenting their loss of such a bountiful friend; shewing the coats and garments which perhaps they then wore, the tokens of her charity, diligence, and pity to the poor, while she was with them. Note: (1.) The fatherless and widows are peculiar objects of compassion; to them the hand of charity should be liberally stretched forth. (2.) Though they who are truly charitable, will ever be silent, and desire no commendation or return; yet those who reap the blessings of their bounty, ought not to be so: gratitude, at least, is the tribute which they owe.

4. St. Peter, who, following his Master's example, Mat. ix. 25. declined all appearance of vain-glory, put forth the company; and, after kneeling down and praying, he turned to the body, and said, *Tabitha, arise*, in the full confidence of the power which accompanied his word; and immediately opening her eyes, which had been closed in death, when *she saw Peter, she sat up*; and Peter giving her his hand, assisted her to rise from the bier, or place where she lay; and, calling the saints and widows, *presented her alive*, to their great astonishment and joy.

5. The fame of the miracle quickly spread through Joppa, and was in every body's mouth; and many, struck with the evidence of God's approbation of the doctrine which St. Peter preached, *believed in the Lord*, and made public profession of his gospel. Encouraged by such a prospect of success, the apostle made some considerable abode in that place, lodging in the house of *one Simon a tanner*; satisfied with any accommodations, and only intent upon preaching the gospel of his adored Lord and Master.

CHAP. X.

Ver. 1. Cornelius, a centurion, &c.] A Roman cohort or band was a company of soldiers commanded by a tribune, consisting generally of about a thousand. It is probable that this was called *the Italian cohort*, because most of the soldiers belonging to it were Italians. It might perhaps be the life-guard of the Roman governor, who generally resided in this most splendid and celebrated city of Cæsarea. Cornelius was a *centurion*, or captain of one hundred soldiers in this cohort. See John, xviii. 3.

Ver. 2. A devout man, &c.] Cornelius had distinguished himself by his great virtue, piety, and charity, and was well prepared for the reception of the gospel, as the proselytes of the gate were in general above all sorts of people. The ceremonial law most grievously entangled the minds of the Jews; and, by means of their strong prejudices, their attachment to it degenerated into the greatest superstition. The idolatrous Gentiles, by their ignorance and wickedness, which were exceedingly supported by their idolatry, were with much difficulty brought to embrace Christianity; whereas the devout Gentiles had cast off idolatry, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, had not submitted to the ceremonial part of the Jewish law.

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into ^a a trance,

11 And saw ^b heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been ^c a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12 Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14 But Peter said, ^d Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or

^a Numb. 24. 4. Rev. 1. 10. 2 Cor. 12. 1, 2, 4. ^b Ch. 7. 56. Ezek. 1. 1. Rev. 4. 2, 3, &c. & 19. 11. Mat. 3. 16. ^c Mat. 8. 11. If. 43. 6. & 49. 12. & 45. 22. & 11. 6-10. & 55. 1-7. & liv. 12. Rom. 15. 8-19. 1 Cor. 6. 9-11. Mat. 13. 47. Rev. 22. 17. John, 6. 37. Rom. 1. 16. & 3. 22, 29, 30. ^d Rom. 10. 2. with Lev. 11. 4-31. & 20. 25. Deut. xiv. Ezek. 4. 14. & 44. 31.

law. Thus were they prepared in general; but the uncommon virtues and great piety of Cornelius rendered him a proper person to begin with, among that well-disposed set of people. He excelled in piety towards God, and benevolence towards mankind, even to men of different sects, without confining his charity to persons of his own sentiment and party; for he is said to have given much alms to the people, especially, no doubt, to the Jews, to whom he was in some measure attached; as well as to have prayed to God always, and especially at those hours of the day at which the Jews used to offer up their prayers. The great God, the wise and benevolent governor of the world, in pitching upon a person who was through grace so pious in himself, and so charitable to the Jews, made the gradation as gentle as possible; and began with one of the fittest persons in the world, when he was about to unite Jew and Gentile into one church and body, through Jesus Christ, the prince of peace: it was indeed with great difficulty that the Jewish converts were brought to bear with the admission of one uncircumcised Gentile; but if they could bear with any, they must own, that one of Cornelius's virtue and charity was the most proper person among all the Gentiles: and when they came to reflect upon it, surely they could not help admiring the divine condescension, in stooping to their prejudices, and so graciously bearing with their infirmities.

Ver. 3. *About the ninth hour of the day*] That is, about three o'clock in the afternoon, at the time of the evening sacrifice. See Dan. ix. 21, &c. Perhaps Cornelius might be praying for the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah, when the Gentiles were to be accepted as the people of God; for there was then a general expectation that this kingdom would appear. In ver. 31. his particular prayer, which he was offering up at that time, is said to have been heard.

Ver. 4. *What is it, Lord*] That is, "Protect me from all danger, and let me know the meaning of this vision." The expression *thy prayers, &c. are come up for a memorial*, has reference to the incense offered under the law, which ascended in fumes, when burned; and implies that the prayers and alms of Cornelius were more grateful than the stream of burnt incense, or of the most costly sacrifice which he could have offered.

Ver. 8. *He sent them to Joppa*] "From Joppa the prophet Jonah was sent to preach to the Gentiles at Nineveh; and thence the apostle Peter was sent to preach the gospel to the Gentiles of Caesarea."

Ver. 9. *On the morrow, &c.*] As the messengers of Cornelius were upon the road, and just entering the town, St. Peter went up to the top of the house, to spend some time in retirement and devotion; for the Jews had stated hours of prayer in the day, namely, the times of the morning and evening sacrifices. See on Ch. iii. 1. The more devout among them added a third, which was about noon, and which they called "the time of the great meat-offering." See Pl. lv. 17. Dan. vi. 10. Whether St. Peter was induced by this or by some other reason to retire for prayer at this time, it seems at least to have been customary, in the first ages of the Christian church, to offer up their daily prayers at the third, the sixth, and the ninth hours. We have before observed, that in the Eastern countries, the roofs of the houses were commonly flat; and the flat roofs, or some of the upper parts of the houses, were the usual places for devout retirement, where the Jews were accustomed to pray with their faces towards the temple of Jerusalem. See 1 Kings, viii. 29, 30, &c. Pl. cxxxviii. 2. Jonah, ii. 4. and the note on Mark, ii. 4.

Ver. 10. *Would have eaten*] "Would have taken a little refreshment" seems the proper import of the word *ye'acashau*. The word *trance*, properly signifies such a rapture of mind, as gives the person who falls into it a look of astonishment, and renders him insensible to external objects; while, in the mean time, his whole soul is agitated in an extraordinary manner, with some striking scenes which pass before it and take up all the attention.

Ver. 11. *And a certain vessel, &c.*] *And something descending in the form of a great sheet*. As we do not in English call sheets *vessels*, the general word here used, more properly answers to the word *Σκῦτον*, concerning which, see on chap. ix. 15. We have no word in our language exactly answering to it. The other word *ἰβὼν* signifies any large piece of linen, in which things are wrapped; and seems to have been used as an emblem of the gospel, which extends to all nations of men.

Ver. 13. *Rise, Peter; kill, and eat*] This appears a general intimation that the Jewish Christians were by the gospel absolved from the ceremonial law, in which the distinction between clean and unclean meats made so considerable a part. L'Enfant, and some other critics, have observed, that the Jews looked on unclean animals as images of the Gentiles; which, if it were the case, renders this emblematical interpretation peculiarly suitable. See particularly the note on Levit. xi. 2.

Ver.

unclean.

15 And the voice *spoke* unto him again the second time, ' What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

16 This was done ' thrice : ' and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17 ¶ Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men ' which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on " the vision " the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 ¶ Arise therefore, and get thee down,

and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what *is* the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, ' Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. ' And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Cesarea. And Cornelius waited for them,

^a Mat. 15. 11. Ver. 28. 34. Ch. 11. 9. & 15. 9. Rom. 14. 14, 17, 20. 1 Tim. 4. 4. Tit. 1. 15. 1 Cor. 10. 25. Luke, 11. 41. ^r John, 13. 28. & 21. 17. ^s Mat. 8. 11. Eph. 3. 6-8. & 2. 4-22. Rev. 5. 9. & 7. 9. ^t Ver. 9-16. ^u Ver. 10-16. ^v Ch. 11. 12. & 16. 6, 7. & 21. 4. John, 16. 13. ^y Ch. 15. 7. Mark, 16. 15. Mat. 28. 19. Eph. 3. 8. ^z Ver. 2-5. ^{aa} Ch. 9. 42. & 11. 12.

Ver. 15. What God hath cleansed, &c.] The single proposition is, "That which God hath cleansed, is not common or impure." But no one who reads this history, can doubt of its having this double sense; first, that the distinction between clean and unclean meats was to be abolished: secondly, that the Gentiles were to be called into the church of Christ. Here then the true sense of this passage is not *one*, but *two*; and yet the intention or meaning is not on this account the least obscured, or lost, or rendered unintelligible.

Ver. 16. This was done thrice] In order to confirm the matter: see Gen. xli. 32.—Before we proceed in the history, it may not be amiss to reflect upon the propriety and decorum with which things were managed in erecting Christ's spiritual kingdom. The Lord Jesus Christ himself appeared to Saul, and granted the knowledge of the gospel to him by immediate revelation, because he was to be an apostle; but Cornelius was admonished by an angel to send for St. Peter, and hear him preach the Christian doctrine, because he was to *open the door of faith to the Gentiles*; and Cornelius was not designed for so high an office in the Christian church as Saul. Again, the angel who appeared to Cornelius, was not sent to preach the gospel to him, but only to order him to send for an apostle, who was one of the witnesses chosen of God to attest the truth of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and miracles, and upon those facts to found the Christian doctrine. And further, St. Peter did not go of himself, and attempt the conversion of the uncircumcised Gentiles, even though the body of the Jews in Palestine who would embrace the gospel, were in general gathered in. If he had done so, he would have met with a more severe rebuke from the zealous Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, and could not have offered half so much for his own vindication: but as he did not go till he

was sent for, and that in so extraordinary a manner, he maintained the apostolic dignity, and could allege the determination of heaven in his favour. And, finally, we may observe, that an *angel* was sent to Cornelius; but the Spirit of God himself spoke to St. Peter; not only as he bore a higher character in the church than Cornelius was to bear, but as he was to execute a new and most extraordinary commission; for such that of beginning to call in the uncircumcised Gentiles certainly was.

Ver. 20. Doubting nothing] "Without any hesitation or scruple on account of the messengers being Gentiles, and coming from one of the same denomination; for I have shewn you, that the great ceremonial distinction between Jew and Gentile, clean and unclean, is now to be abolished." See Matth. xxi. 21. Mark, xi. 23. Rom. iv. 20. James, i. 6.

Ver. 22. To hear words of thee] *To hear thee discourse.* Heylin. "To receive orders and instructions from thee." Benson.

Ver. 23. And lodged them] Or *hospitably entertained them* that night, *ἐκείναι*. The next day St. Peter went along with them, and six Jewish Christians from Joppa accompanied him. It is probable that the apostle himself desired them to go along with him, that they might be witnesses of what happened, as this was an affair in which some difficulties might arise, and some censure be incurred from the Jewish converts, and such as were not apprised of his divine direction. How pleasing a mixture of prudence and humility!—sufficient to teach us, on all proper occasions, to express at once a becoming deference to our brethren, and a prudent caution in our own best intended actions; that *even our good may not be evil spoken of*, when it lies in our power to prevent it. See Rom. xiv. 16.

Ver. 24-26. And the morrow after] When St. Peter came

and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 ¶ And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*.

26 ^a But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found ^c many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know ^f how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is

a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me ^e that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I *unto you* without gain-saying, ^b as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

30 And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was ⁱ fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in ^k bright clothing,

31 ^l And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is

^b John, 4. 28, 29. Joth. 24. 15. Mat. 9. 10. Mark, 5. 19, 20. 22. 9. Mat. 4. 10. Act., 14. 13—15. ^c Ver. 24. ^d Ch. 11. 3. 15. 7, 9. Eph. 3. 6. ^e Pf. 119. 60. Gal. 3. 16. Eccl. 9. 10. 10. 5. Luke, 24. 4. Ch. 1. 10. Ver. 3. ^f Ver. 4—6.

^g Rev. 19. 10. & 22. 8. ^h Ch. 14. 14, 15. Rev. 14. 10. & 19. 10. & Gal. 3. 12, 15. John, 4. 9, 27. & 18. 28. ⁱ Ver. 15. Ch. 11. 9. & Ezra, 9. 4, 5. Dan. 9. 20. Ver. 3. Ch. 3. 1. ^k Mat. 28. 3. Mark,

came nigh Cæsarea, one of the servants ran before, and signified to Cornelius that he was approaching. (See the reading in the Cambridge manuscript, Greek and Latin.) Cornelius was almost impatient for his coming, and big with expectation of some signal event: and, therefore, he had called together his relations and intimate friends, who were *devout Gentiles* as well as himself. As soon as he heard that the apostle was just at hand, he went out of his house to meet him; and approaching him with profound reverence, he fell down at his feet to worship him; for he had a most exalted idea of the apostle, looking upon him as the ambassador of the Most High God; or, as if he had been something more than a man. The apostle himself, who knew that his message was divine, and that he was only the *medium* of conveyance, with great humility raised him up, saying, “Do not prostrate yourself to me; I am only a mere man, as you are, and deserve no such homage.” In the Eastern world their salutations differ considerably, according to the different rank of the persons they salute. The *common salutation*, as Sandys informs us, consists in laying the right hand on the bosom, and declining the body a little: but when they salute a person of *great rank*, they bow almost to the ground, and kiss the hem of his garment. Dr. Shaw’s account of the common Arab compliment, “Peace be unto you,” agrees with the above; but he further tells us, that inferiors out of deference *kiss the feet, the knees, or the garments* of their superiors. He might have added, or their *bands*: for D’Arvieux assures us, that though the Arab Emir whom he visited, withdrew his hand when he offered to kiss it, yet he frequently offered it to the *people* to kiss, when he had a mind to require that homage. Dr. Shaw further observes, that in these respects the *Arabs* were just the same 2 or 3000 years ago as they are now; and ceremonies of the like kind, we may presume, were anciently used among the *neighbouring people* too, as they are at this time. There is something very graceful in the forms of Eastern salutation: some of them, however, are too low and mean, and expressive of too much disproportion; on which account the natives of the *West*, even when they have been in those Eastern countries, have not been ready to adopt these pro-

found expressions of respect: nay, many of them have justly thought these obediences *too great for mortals*. Curtius tells us, (lib. vi. c. 6.) that Alexander thought the habits and manners of the Macedonian kings *unequal to his greatness* after the conquest of Asia, and was for being treated according to the modes of Persia; where *kings* were revered after the manner of the immortal Gods. This infatuated monarch, therefore, suffered the people, in token of their respect, to *lie upon the ground* before him, &c. Well then might St. Peter say to Cornelius, *a Roman, who received him with a reverence, esteemed the lowest and most submissive even in the ceremonious East*, and which the *Romans* were wont to speak of as too solemn to be paid to mere men,—*Stand up; I myself also am a man*: though Cornelius intended nothing idolatrous, nor did St. Peter suppose it to be his intention. In truth, there was something extraordinary in this prostration of Cornelius, but without any thing of idolatry. He was a person of rank: St. Peter made no figure in civil life; and yet Cornelius received him not only with respect, as his superior; but with the greatest degree of reverence, according to the usages of his own nation: nay, not only so, but with an expression of veneration, which, though common in the country where Cornelius then resided, his countrymen were ready to say ought to be appropriated only to those who were more than men. But it seems he felt the greatest degree of reverence and awe at the sight of the apostle; and those emotions threw him into the attitude that he had frequently seen the inhabitants of Syria put themselves in, when they would express the greatest respect and deference.

[Ver. 29. *I ask therefore, &c.*] St. Peter knew this by revelation, and by the messengers who were sent from Cornelius; but he puts him on giving the account, that the company might be more fully informed, and Cornelius himself awakened and impressed by the narration; the repetition of which, even as we here read it, gives great dignity and spirit to St. Peter’s succeeding discourse.

[Ver. 31. *Thy prayer is heard, &c.*] The case of Cornelius before St. Peter was sent to him, was, I have no doubt, the case of many, who were far from being in any degree *Jewish*

heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, ^m to hear all things that are commanded

thee of God.

34 ¶ Then Peter ^r opened *his* mouth, and said, ^o Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 ^p But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

36 ^q The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he ^r is Lord of all:)

37 That word, *I say*, ye know, ^r which was

^m Ch. 22. 22. If. 42. 23. & 49. 1. & 55. 3. Rom. 10. 14—17. Rev. 2. 7, 11. Pf. 81. 8. Heb. 3. 7, 8. ⁿ Mat. 5. 2. Eph. 6. 19, 20. Job. 3. 1, 2. ^o Deut. 10. 17. Job, 34. 19. Gal. 2. 6. Eph. 6. 9. Rom. 2. 11. Col. 3. 25. 1 Pet. 1. 17. 2 Chr. 19. 7. Col. 3. 11. ^p Ch. 15. 8, 9. Rom. 2. 25, 29. & 3. 22, 23, 29. & 10. 42. 1 Cor. 12. 13. Gal. 3. 28. Eph. 1. 10. & 2. 11. & 3. 5, 6. Phil. 3. 3. Col. 1. 6, 23—27. & 3. 24. Gen. 4. 7. 1 John, 2. 29. ^q Mat. 10. 6. & 28. 19. Ch. 11. 19. & 13. 46, 47. Eph. 1. 10. & 2. 14—17. If. 57. 19. Luke, 2. 14, 10, 11. Col. 1. 28, 29. ^r Pf. 45. 11. & 22. 27—30. & 47. 5, 6. & lxxii. & 89. 19—29 & xc—c. If. 9. 6, 7. & 52. 13. & 53. 12. Dan. 7. 13, 14. Hof. 1. 7, 10. Mat. 28. 18. Rom. 10. 12. Phil. 2. 9—11. Eph. 1. 20—23. Col. 1. 15—18. 1 Pet. 3. 22. Rev. 17. 14. & 19. 16. ^s Luke, 4. 14. Ch. 1. 22.

Jewish proselytes, and had never heard of the Jews and their religion; as it was most certainly the case of many before the peculiarities of Judaism existed, and even before the institution of the *Abrahamic* covenant; though Cornelius was one of the most eminent for piety of these persons. This history evidently proves, that God would sooner send an angel to direct pious and upright persons to the knowledge of the gospel, than suffer them to perish by ignorance of it. But I refer my readers to my annotations on the epistle to the Romans for the full explanation of my sentiments, on the salvation of the pious heathen *by the righteousness which is of God by faith*. God forbid, however, that I should intimate, that any persons like Cornelius, may be found among those who *reject Christianity*, when offered to them in its full evidence. But see the next note.

Ver. 34, 35. Of a truth I perceive, &c.] See on Deut. x. 17. The phrase *no respecter of persons*, has principally, if not always, a judicial meaning. It is used in this sense, Levit. xix. 15. Deut. i. 17. and, in the 16th verse of that chapter, this is expressly said to be a charge given to the *judges of the land*. In Deut. xvi. 19. *Respect of persons*, (still confined to a judicial sense,) stands to denote corruption and taking of bribes, which, as it is there said with great eloquence, *blind the eyes of the wise*, &c. and this likewise is the constant notion, when it is applied to God; that there is no *iniquity with the Lord*, &c. See 2 Chron. xix. 7. The meaning of St. Peter's words is, "Of a truth I perceive that God accepts no man merely because he is of such a nation, or descended from such ancestors; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him." As respect of persons in matters judicial, is shewed, when men judge others, not according to the equity of the cause, but according to outward respects which relate nothing to it, as the greatness, riches, meanness, or poverty of the person, relation, friendship, or affection; so in spirituals, to respect or accept persons is to respect them and their services, not on the account of any thing which makes them better, or more fit to be regarded than others, but on the account of

the nation to which they belong, or the ancestors from which they were descended. Thus, because God had chosen the Jews to be his people, by reason of the piety of their forefathers, and to perform his promise made to them, the Jews imagined that God would accept them and their services on that account, because they were of the Jewish nation, and of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh; and that he would not accept the persons, or regard the services of the Gentiles, for want of these things: but these false conceptions St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, and St. Peter here, refute; shewing, that men not only of the Jewish, but of any other nation, may be acceptable to God, there being one God who is rich, in goodness, to all that call upon him, whether Jew or Gentile, Rom. x. 12. he being the God, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, and so as ready to justify them through faith, as to justify the Jews through faith, Rom. iii. 29, 30. But I again refer my readers to my annotations on the epistle to the Romans.

Ver. 36, 37. The word which God sent, &c.] The critics have exceedingly puzzled themselves about this passage, the simple meaning of which, according to my apprehension, is as follows: "Even that gospel, which God has sent by the ministrations of his servants, in the first place, and hitherto only, to the Jews, preaching the glad tidings of the noblest peace, inclusive of reconciliation with himself, and of all spiritual harmony and happiness, through the merit and mediation of the anointed Saviour. (He, as a divine person, is the author, proprietor, and governor of the whole creation, all things being made by him and for him, Col. i. 16. and he, as vested with office-authority in human nature, has power over all flesh; and, being exalted far above all principality and power, is head over all things to the church, Eph. i. 22, 23. has all persons and things on earth, and all the devils in hell, under his command and controul: is Lord of Jews and Gentiles; and will be universal Judge at the last day.) Ye who live in Palestine, which has been for years the grand stage of action relating to the Messiah, must needs know something

of

published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached ;

38 How ¹ God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power : who ² went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for ³ God was with him.

39 And ⁴ we are witnesses of all things

which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem ; whom ² they slew and hanged on a tree :

40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly ;

41 ¹ Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even to us*, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

¹ If. 11. 2-4. & 42. 1. & 61. 7-3. Mat. 3. 16, 17. Luke, 4. 18. John, 3. 2, 34. & 11. 41. & 10. 36, 38. Col. 1. 19. & 2. 9. Ch. 2. 22. & 4. 27. ² Mat. 18. 11. & 20. 28. & 19. 28. & 19. 28. & 19. 28. Mark, 1-xiii. 1 John, 3. 8. If. 49. 21-26. & 61. 1-4. ³ John, 32. 10, 38. & 8. 29. & 15. 32. Col. 2. 9. Mat. 3. 17. ⁴ Ch. 1. 8, 22. & 2. 23, 32. & 3. 15. & 5. 30, 32. & 7. 52. & 13. 31. Ver. 41. ⁵ Mat. xxvi-xxviii. Luke, xxii-xxiv. John, xviii-xx. Acts, 1. 2-9. 1 Cor. 15. 3-8. Rom. 4. 24, 25. & 6. 4-6. & 8. 11. 1 Cor. 6. 14. 2 Cor. 4. 11, 14. Gal. 1. 1, 4. Eph. 1. 20. Col. 2. 12. 1 Thess. 1. 10. Heb. 13. 20. ⁶ Luke, 24. 30, 41, 48. John, 14. 17, 22. & 21. 13. Ch. 1. 2-9, 22. & 13. 31.

of this word of peace, which was spread abroad, and early talked of, in all the cities, towns, and villages of Judea, pursuant to its having been first published in Galilee : and this was soon after John the Baptist had prepared the way for it, by his baptizing with water, and preaching the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, through the approaching Messiah, Mark, i. 4. whom he at length openly shewed, and recommended once and again to the people, that they might believe in him. John, i. 29-36." It is not to be wondered that St. Peter should say to Cornelius and his kinsmen, who were already *profelytes of the gate*, and lived at Cæsarea, the seat of the governor of Judea, where the Jews dwelt, whither they continually resorted from other parts, and where Philip had already preached the gospel, Acts, viii. 40. *ye know this word* ; he meaning, not that they were persuaded of the truth of it, but only that they had heard the same, and were acquainted with the report of it.

Ver. 38. *How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth*] It was a proverb among the Jews, *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth ?* John, i. 46. And yet the apostles very frequently call our Lord by the name of *Jesus of Nazareth*. They seemed to have mentioned this as one circumstance of his humiliation ; and yet they shewed that this very Jesus of Nazareth, of whom the Jews had so contemptible an opinion, and whom they had treated so cruelly and ignominiously, was nevertheless the Son of God, and attested to be such in a most remarkable manner ; that to him angels bow, and all nature is in subjection : and indeed if we set the predictions of the prophets, the great expectations which were raised of him before his coming, the miracles which he wrought, his wondrous exaltation after leaving our world, and the supernatural gifts and powers which he conferred on his apostles and the primitive Christians ;—if we set all these against his poverty, contempt, and sufferings, the offence of the cross will cease, and the ignominy of his low estate of humiliation will vanish away.

Ver. 41. *Not to all the people, &c.*] It has frequently been asked, *Why Christ did not shew himself to all the people, but to his disciples only ?* Now it may be sufficient to reply, that where there are witnesses enough, no judge or jury complains for want of more ; and therefore, if the

witnesses that we have for the resurrection are sufficient, it is no objection that we have not others, or more. If three credible men attest a will, which are as many as the law requires, would any body ask why all the town were not called to sign their names to it ? But it may be objected, why were these witnesses called and chosen out ? Why, for this reason, that they might be good ones. Does not every wise man choose proper witnesses to his deed ? And does not a good choice of witnesses give strength to every deed ? How comes it to pass then, that the very thing which shuts out all suspicion in other cases, should in this be of all others the most suspicious thing itself ? What reason there is for the Jews to make any complaints, may be judged from the evidence already offered concerning the resurrection : Christ suffered openly in their sight, and they were so well apprized of his prediction, that they set a guard on his sepulchre ; every soldier was to them a witness of his resurrection, of their own choosing. After this, they had not one apostle only, but all the apostles, and many other witnesses with them : the apostles testified the resurrection not only to the people, but to the elders assembled in senate : to support their evidence, they worked miracles openly in the name of Christ : these people therefore have the least reason to complain, and have had of all others the fullest evidence, and in some respects such as none but themselves could have ; for they only were the keepers of the sepulchre. But the argument goes further. It is said, that Jesus was sent with a special commission to the Jews, that he was their Messiah : and as his resurrection was his main credential, he ought to have appeared publicly to the rulers of the Jews after his resurrection ; that in doing otherwise, he acted like an ambassador pretending authority from his prince, but refusing to shew his letters of credence. In reply to this objection, it should be observed, that, by the accounts we have of the Lord Jesus, it appears he had two distinct offices respecting the present point ; one, as the Messiah particularly promised to the Jews ; another, as he was to be the great high priest of the world. With respect to the first office, the apostle speaks, Heb. iii. 1. and he speaks of himself, Matth. xv. 24. *I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Christ continued in the discharge of this office during the time of his natural human life, till he was finally rejected by the Jews :

42. ^b And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he ^c which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead.

^b Mat. 28. 19. Mark, 16. 15. Luke, 24. 47. Ch. 1. 8. John, 20. 21, 22. ^c Ch. 17. 31. John, 5. 22—29. Rom. 14. 9, 10. 2 Cor. 5. 10. 2 Tim. 4. 1, 8. 1 Peter, 4. 5. Mat. 25. 31—46. Rev. 1. 7. & 20. 11—15. & 22. 12.

and it is observable, that the last time he spoke to the Jews, according to St. Matthew's account, he solemnly took leave of them, and closed his commission in respect to his presence with them in the flesh. He had been long among them publishing glad things; but when all his preaching, all his miracles, had proved in vain, the last thing he did was to denounce the woes which they had brought upon themselves. Matth. xxiii. recites these woes, and at the end of them Christ takes this passionate leave of Jerusalem, "Ye shall not see me from henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'" It is remarkable, that this passage, which is recorded by Matthew and Luke twice over, is determined by the circumstances to refer to the near approach of his own death, and the extreme hatred of the Jews to him; and therefore those words, *Ye shall not see me henceforth*, are to be dated from the time of his death, and manifestly point out the end of his mission to them. From making this declaration, as it stands in St. Matthew, his discourses are to his disciples, as they chiefly relate to the miserable condition of the Jews, which was now decreed, and soon to be accomplished. Let us now ask, whether in this state of things any farther credentials of Christ's commission to the Jews, could be demanded or expected? He was rejected, his commission was determined, and with it the fate of the nation was determined also; what use then of more credentials? As to appearing to them after his resurrection, he could not do it consistently with his own prediction, *Ye shall see me no more*, &c. The Jews, as a nation, were not in the disposition to receive him after the resurrection, nor are they in it yet. The resurrection was the foundation of Christ's new commission, as it respected the gospel, which extended to all the world. This prerogative the Jews had under this commission, that the gospel was every where first offered to them. Since then, this commission, of which the resurrection was the foundation, extended to all the world alike. What ground then is there to demand special and particular evidence to the Jews? The emperor and senate of Rome were a much more considerable part of the world than the chief priests and the synagogue; why is it not then objected, that Christ did not shew himself to Tiberius and his senate? And since all men have an equal right in this case, why may not the same demand be made for every country? nay, for every age? and then we may bring the question nearer home, and ask why Christ did not appear in king George's reign? The observation already made upon the resurrection, naturally leads to another, which will help to account for the nature of the evidence that we have on this great point. As the resurrection was the opening of a new commission, in which all the world had an interest; so the grand concern was to have a proper evidence to establish this truth, and which should be of equal weight to all. This did not depend upon the satisfaction given to private persons, whether they were magistrates or not magistrates, but upon the

conviction of those whose office it was to bear testimony to this truth. In this sense, the apostles were chosen to be witnesses of the resurrection, because they were chosen to bear testimony to it in the world, and not only because they were admitted to see Christ after his resurrection; for the fact is otherwise. The gospel, indeed, concerned to shew the evidence on which the faith of the world was to rest, is very particular in setting forth the ocular demonstration which the apostles had of the resurrection, and mentions others who saw Christ after his resurrection only in course, and as the thread of the history led to it: but yet it is certain, that there were many others who had this satisfaction as well as the apostles; so that it is a mistake to infer from the passage before us, that a few only were chosen to see Christ after he came from the grave. The truth of the case is this, that out of those who saw him, some were chosen to bear testimony to the world, and for that reason had the fullest demonstration of the truth, that they might be the better able to give satisfaction to others: and what was there in this conduct to complain of? What to raise any jealousy or suspicion? To allege the *meanness* of the witnesses as an objection, is very weak; for men may be good witnesses without having great estates, and be able to report what they see with their eyes without being philosophers. As far then as the truth of the resurrection depended on the evidence of sense, the apostles were duly qualified. Did their *meanness* stand in the way of evidence, which arose from the great powers with which they were endued from above? Consider their natural and supernatural qualifications, they were in every respect proper witnesses; take these qualifications together, and they were witnesses without exception. It is indeed said, that they were interested in the affair. Would we then have evidence from unbelievers? A witness, who does not believe the truth of what he affirms, is a cheat. Nobody therefore could be an evidence of the resurrection but a believer, and such a one is said to be interested. But this is an absurd objection, because it is an objection to every honest witness that ever lived; for every honest witness believes the truth of what he says. If the objection is intended to charge the apostles with views or hopes of temporal advantage, it is built upon an utter ignorance of the history of the church. It may be demonstrated, that if Jesus had shewed himself to his enemies, and to all the people, these appearances, instead of putting his resurrection beyond doubt, would rather have weakened the evidence of it in after ages, and so would have been of infinite detriment to mankind: for upon the supposition that our Lord had shewed himself openly, either his enemies, yielding to the evidences of their senses, would have believed his resurrection, or, resisting that evidence, they would have rejected it altogether. To begin with the latter supposition: such of our Lord's enemies as then resisted the evidence of their senses, must have justified their unbelief by affirming, that the man who appeared to them

43 ^d To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44 ¶ ^e While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard

the word.

45 And they of the circumcision ^f which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

^d See John, 1. 45. Luke, 24. 27, 44, 47. Ch. 4. 12. & 13. 38, 39. & 26. 22. & 15. 9. If. 53. 4, 5, 11. Jer. 31. 35, 34. Dan. 9. 24. Mic. 7. 18. Zech. 13. 1. Mal. 4. 2. Mat. 26. 28. ^e Ch. 2. 2, 4, 37. & 4. 31. & 8. 15, 16. Ver. 45, 46. ^f Ch. 9. 42. & 11. 3, 18.

was not Jesus, but an impostor who personated him. The evidence of the fact would therefore have gained nothing by such public appearance, because the generality of the Jews were not capable of passing a judgment upon the falsehood which Christ's enemies must have made use of to support the denial of his resurrection. Being unacquainted with Jesus, they could not certainly tell whether he was really the person whom the Romans had crucified. His apostles, who knew his stature, shape, air, voice, and manner, were the only proper persons by whose determination the point in dispute could be decided. Wherefore, notwithstanding our Lord had appeared to all the people, the whole stress of the evidence, in case of any doubt or objection, must have rested on the testimony of the very persons who bear witness to it now, and on whose testimony the world has believed it. So that instead of gaining any additional evidence by Jesus's shewing himself publicly to all the people, we should have had nothing to trust to but the testimony of his disciples, and that clogged with this incumbrance, that his resurrection was denied by many to whom he appeared. But, in the second place, it may be fancied, that, on supposition that our Lord rose from the dead, the whole people of the Jews must have believed, if he had shewed himself publicly. To this supposition it may be replied, that the greatest part of our Lord's enemies cannot be supposed to have been so well acquainted with his person, as to have been able to know him again with certainty; for which reason, though he had shewed himself to them, even their belief of his resurrection must have depended on the testimony of his disciples and friends. If so, it is not very probable that his appearing publicly would have had any great influence on the Jews. But supposing the Jewish nation in general should have been converted by his appearance, and have become his disciples, what advantage would the cause of Christianity have reaped from this effect? Would the evidence of the resurrection have become thereby unquestionable? Or would modern infidels have been better disposed to believe it? By no means. The truth is, the objections against his resurrection would have been tenfold more numerous and forcible than they are at present: for would not the whole have been called a state trick, a Jewish fable, a mere political contrivance, to patch up their broken credit after so much talk of a Messiah who was to come at that time? Besides, should we not have been told, that the government being engaged in a plot, a fraud of this kind might easily have been carried on, because it suited with the prejudices of the people; and because the few, who had the sagacity to detect the fraud, had no opportunity to examine into it? Or if they did examine and detect the fraud, they durst not make a discovery? And to conclude,

would not the very proofs which now are sufficient to attest this fact, have been buried in oblivion, and been entirely lost, for want of that opposition which the Jews themselves made to it, and which was the occasion of their being recorded in the Scripture?

Ver. 42. *It is he which was ordained of God*] Pointed out, and determined:—*ὁρισμὸς*. This was declaring, in the strongest terms, how entirely their happiness depended on a timely and humble subjection to him who was to be their final judge.

Ver. 43. *To him give all the prophets witness,*] It is observable, that in this discourse to an audience of Gentiles, the apostle first mentions Christ's person, miracles, and resurrection, and then contents himself with telling them in the general, that there were many prophets in former ages who bore witness to him, without entering into a particular enumeration of their predictions. Further, we do not read of St. Peter's working any miracle on this great occasion. The preceding testimony of the angel, and the descent of the Holy Spirit in his miraculous gifts, while he was speaking to them, were sufficient proofs, both of the gospel, and of St. Peter's being an authorized interpreter of it. See the note on Luke, xxiv. 27.

Ver. 44. *The Holy Ghost fell on all them, &c.*] Probably this effusion of the Holy Spirit was attended with a glory, as when it fell upon the apostles and their company on the famous day of Pentecost: and it is most likely, that a glory always attended the immediate effusion of the Spirit, from the day of Pentecost to the calling of the idolatrous Gentiles. Thus was the Spirit poured down upon Cornelius and his friends, as upon the apostles, and the hundred and twenty; and was not communicated by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, as it had been to the Jewish and Samaritan converts: and the reason why God communicated the Holy Spirit in this most honourable manner to the first fruits of the devout Gentiles, was to remove the prejudices of the Jewish Christians, and to make way for their cheerfully receiving the devout Gentiles into the Christian church, and to all its privileges. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that one important effect of this descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, was, that hereby they were enabled to understand the Hebrew language; and so had an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the prophecies of the Old Testament. See ver. 46.

Ver. 45, 46. *They of the circumcision—were astonished, &c.*] The Jews had a proverb among them, that the Holy Spirit would not dwell upon any heathen, nor even upon any Jew in a prophetic or miraculous manner in a heathen country. The Jewish Christians, therefore, who came with St. Peter from Joppa, to be eye-witnesses of this great event, were quite surprised to see that the divine gift

46 For they heard them ^e speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 ^h Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received

the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them ⁱ to be baptized in the name of the Lord. ^k Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

^e Ch. 2. 17. & 19. 6. & 2. 4. Pf. 100. 1.
6. 3—6. Gal. 3. 27. Mat. 28. 19.

^h Ch. 8. 16. with 2. 4. & 15. 8.

^k Ch. 16. 15. John, 4. 40.

ⁱ Ch. 2. 38. & 11. 26, 27. & 8. 26. 1 Cor. 1. 16, 17. Rom.

of the Holy Spirit was poured down upon the Gentiles; for they presently found that this effusion produced like effects upon them, as it had done upon the Jewish converts; Cornelius and his company immediately exercising the *gift of tongues*, most probably in repeating and explaining some part of the Old Testament in the original language, and *magnifying God*, by singing psalms or hymns and spiritual songs, by immediate inspiration.

Ver. 47. Can any man forbid water, &c.] That is, according to Whitby and Doddridge, “Who can forbid that water should be brought?” In which view of the clause one would obviously conclude, that they were baptized by *pouring* water upon them, rather than by *plunging* them in it. “Can any man, how strongly soever he might formerly be prejudiced against such a thing, any longer hesitate, or offer one just reason, why these uncircumcised Gentiles should not be baptized with water, seeing they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, in the same honourable manner that we, Christ’s apostles and first converts, have received it: *καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς*, even as we?” It deserves to be remarked, that of all the institutions of our holy religion, that of *water baptism* was least proper to be called in question; being most invincibly established by the practice both of St. Peter and St. Paul. The former finding that the household of Cornelius had received the Holy Ghost, regards it as a certain direction for him to admit them into the church of Christ; which he does by the initiatory rite of *water baptism*. St. Paul, in his travels through the Lesser Asia, finding some of the Jewish converts who had never heard of the Holy Ghost, and on inquiry understanding that they had only been baptized by water unto John’s baptism, thought fit to baptize them with water in the name of the Lord Jesus; that is to say, to admit them into the church: and then laying hands on them, the *Holy Ghost came upon them*, &c. See ch. xix. 4—6. Yet notwithstanding these two memorable transactions, there is a people who reject water baptism, pretending that *water baptism* is John’s baptism, and only a type of *baptism by the Holy Ghost*, or *by fire*: so that when this last came in use, the former ceased, and was abolished. In the two histories, given above, however, these fancies are fully reprov’d, and in such a manner, as if the histories had been recorded for no other purpose; for in the adventure of St. Paul, the *water baptism* of Jesus is expressly distinguished from the *water baptism* of John; and in that of St. Peter it appears, that water baptism was used for an admittance into the church of Christ, even after the administration of baptism by fire, or the communicated power of the Holy Ghost. St. Peter does not say, “They have the baptism of the Spirit, therefore they do not need baptism with water;” but just the contrary,

“They have received the Spirit, therefore baptize them with water.” Indeed this question were easily decided, if we would take the plain word of God for our rule. Either men have received the Holy Ghost or not; if they have not, *Repent, faith God, and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost*: if they are already baptized with the Holy Ghost, then, *Who can forbid water?* We may just observe further, that these two heads of the missions to the two great divisions of mankind, the Jews and Gentiles, here acted in each other’s provinces—Peter, the apostle of the Jews, administering baptism to the Gentile household of Cornelius; and Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, administering the same rite to the Jewish converts: and why was this crossing of hands, but to obviate that simple evasion, that water baptism was only partial and temporary.

Ver. 48. Baptized in the name of the Lord.] That is, the Lord Jesus. As these devout Gentiles had before believed in God the Father, and could not now but believe in the Holy Ghost under whose powerful influence they were at this very time, there was the less need of taking notice that they were baptized into the belief and profession of the sacred three, though doubtless the ordinance was administered in that very form which Christ himself had prescribed. St. Peter possibly might choose to make use of the ministry of his brethren in performing this rite, rather than do it with his own hands, that by this means the expression of their consent might be the more explicit. After all these things had happened, the new converts desired St. Peter to tarry with them some days longer; and, as willing further to assist, instruct, and comfort them, he readily consented; and most probably the gospel in consequence gained much ground in Cæsarea. It is observable, that the gospel made its way first through the metropolitan cities: it first prevailed in Jerusalem and Cæsarea; afterwards, in Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome itself. Mr. Moyle supposes, that there were several idolatrous rites required at that time of the Roman soldiers, entirely inconsistent with the profession of Christianity; and that therefore Cornelius must have quitted the army upon his becoming a Christian. But he was no idolater when St. Peter went to preach to him; and the scripture is entirely silent about his continuing in the army, or leaving it, on his taking up the profession of Christianity.

Inferences.—We have now entered on a series of the history in which we ourselves are intimately concerned: we now are viewing *the first fruits of the Gentiles* gathered into the church; and let us behold the scene with gratitude and delight. Most amiable and exemplary is the character of Cornelius, who, though exposed to all the temptations of

CHAP. XI.

Peter being accused for going in to the Gentiles, maketh his defence, which is accepted. The gospel being spread into Phœnicie, and Cyprus, and Antioch, Barnabas is sent to confirm the believers. The disciples at Antioch are first called Christians: they send relief to the brethren in Judea in time of distress.

[Anno Domini 41.]

AND the apostles and * brethren that were in Judea heard that † the Gentiles had

also received the word of God.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, † they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

3 Saying, † Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

4 But † Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying,

* Jewish Christians. † Ch. 10. 34—48. Gen. 49. 10. Ps. 22. 27. 1f. 42. 1, 6. & 11. 10. † Ch. 15. 1, 5. Josh. 22. 12, 22. with Ch. 10. 25. † Ch. 10. 23—18, 48. Gal. 2. 12. Luke, 15. 2. † Joshus, 22. 12. 1 Peter. 3. 15. Prov. 15. 1. Luke, 2. 3.

of a military life, maintained not only his virtue but his piety too. He feared God, and he wrought righteousness; and daily presented before God prayers and alms, which added a beauty and acceptance to each other: and he was also an example of domestic, as well as of personal religion; as if he had been trained up under the discipline of that heroic general and prince, who so publicly and so resolutely declared before an assembled nation, even on the supposition of their general apostacy, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Josh. xxiv. 15.

To him God was pleased to send the gospel; and the manner in which he sent it, is highly worthy of our remark. An angel appeared, not himself to preach it, but to introduce the *apostle* to whom that work was assigned.—With what holy complacency of soul did Cornelius hear, by a messenger from heaven, that his prayers and alms were come up for an acceptable memorial before God! They, whose prayers and alms are proportionably affectionate and sincere, may consider it as a testimony borne to the gracious manner in which an impartial and immutable God regards and accepts them through the infinite and alone merit of his own eternal Son.

St. Peter retires for secret prayer *in the middle of the day*, choosing a convenient place; and in that retirement the vision of the Lord meets him—a vision mysterious indeed in its first appearances, but gradually opened by divine Providence; the process of which renders many things plain, which at first seemed dark and unaccountable.

This vision declared to him in effect the abolition of the Mosaic ceremonial law: and we see here with pleasure, that strict as his observation of it had been from his very infancy, he was not now disobedient to the heavenly vision, but freely received *the uncircumcised*, and freely went to be a guest to one who was so. Thus let us always preserve an openness and impartiality of mind; and in proportion to the degree in which we are willing to know the truth, we shall find that the truth will make us free. John, viii. 32.

Nevertheless, as it was an affair about which some difficulties might arise, and some censures may even in the way of duty be incurred, he takes some of the brethren with him, that their concurrence in what he did, might be a farther justification of his conduct to those who were not perhaps sufficiently aware of the divine direction under which he was. How agreeable a mixture of prudence and humility! Let it teach us on all proper occasions to ex-

press at once a becoming deference to our brethren, and a prudent caution in our own best intended actions, that even our good may not be evil spoken of, when it lies in our power to prevent it. Rom. xiv. 16.

Nor is there any room to wonder, that a man of Cornelius's benevolent character should be solicitous to bring his kindred and friends into the way of that divine instruction, which he hoped himself to receive from the revelation now opening upon him. What nobler or more rational office can friendship perform! and how deficient is every thing that would assume such a name, which does not extend itself to a care for men's highest and everlasting interests.

It must, no doubt, be some prejudice in favour of St. Peter on the minds of these strangers, to see that he declined that profound homage which good Cornelius, in a rapture of humble devotion, was perhaps something too ready to pay him. The ministers of Christ never appear more truly great, than when they arrogate least to themselves, and, without challenging undue respect, with all simplicity of soul, as fellow-creatures and as fellow-sinners, are ready to impart the gospel of Jesus, in such a manner as to shew that they honour him above all, and have learned of him to honour all men.

That humble subjection of soul to the divine authority which Cornelius, in the name of the assembly, expressed, is such as we should always bring along with us to the house of the Lord: and happy is that minister, who, when he enters the sanctuary, finds his people all present before God, to hear the things which God shall give him in charge to speak to them, and heartily disposed to acquiesce in whatever he shall say, so far as it shall be supported by those sacred oracles by which doctrines and men are to be tried.

Well might St. Peter apprehend so evident a truth as that which he here professes, that God is no respecter of persons, but every where accepteth those that fear him, and express that reverence by working righteousness: Let us rejoice in this thought; and while we take care to shew that this is our own character, let us pay an impartial regard to it wherever we see it in others, still cultivating that wisdom from above which is without partiality, as well as without hypocrisy. Jam. iii. 17.

We also know that important word which God sent to Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, the Lord of all. May we know it to saving purposes, and believing in him receive

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and from heaven by four corners; and it came
 6 in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel even to me:
 7 descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down Upon the which when I had fastened

^e Ch. 10. 9—48.

^f Numb. 24. 4. ^g Rev. 1. 10. ^h 2 Cor. 12. 1, 2. ⁱ Ch. 22. 17.

^k Mat. 8. 11. ^l If. 43. 6. & 49. 12. & 45. 22. & 55. 1—7.

receive the remission of our sins in his name! May we shew ourselves the genuine disciples of this divine Master, by learning of him, according to our ability, to go about doing good, sowing, as universally as may be, the seeds of holiness and happiness wherever we come! And then, should the treatment which we meet with be such as our Lord found, should we be despised and reproached, should we be persecuted and at length slain, he who raised up Christ from the dead, will in due time also raise up us; having suffered, we shall reign with him, (2 Tim. ii. 12,) and share that triumph in which he shall appear as the appointed Judge both of the quick and dead.

Let us not esteem it any objection against his divine mission, that he did not humour the wantonness of men so far, as to appear in person to all the people after his resurrection; it is abundantly enough that he appeared to such a number of chosen witnesses, who were thus enabled to evidence the truth of their testimony by the demonstration of the Spirit and power. 1 Cor. ii. 4. Of this what passed with regard to these converts, when the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they spake with tongues, is an instance worthy of being had in everlasting remembrance: Let us rejoice in this anointing of the first fruits of the Gentiles, by which their adoption into the Christian family of God was so illustriously declared; and let us be ready, after the example of St. Peter, whatever preconceived prejudices it may oppose, to receive all whom the Lord hath received, from whatever state his grace has called them, and cordially to own them as brethren whom our heavenly Father himself does not disdain to number among his children.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The gospel had for about seven years been preached to Jews only, and the apostles as yet seem not to be fully apprized of the extent of their commission. But now a door of faith is opened to the Gentiles, and St. Peter is first sent expressly to preach the gospel to them. We have an account,

1. Of Cornelius, the first-fruits of the Gentiles to the gospel of Christ. He was a centurion, captain over a hundred soldiers, belonging to the regiment, or band called *the Italian*, in garrison at Cæsarea; and though arms were his profession, he was singularly *devout*, having abandoned the idolatry in which he was bred, and become a profelyte of righteousness, worshipping and fearing God with all his house, who were influenced by his pious example; a man of distinguished liberality, who gave much alms to the people, Jews or Gentiles, that appeared truly necessitous; and prayed to God alway, and particularly observing the Jewish stated hours of prayer, and much engaged in private with his Maker. *Note*; (1.) It is no disparagement to a soldier to be found upon his knees: the soldier who truly fears God, will be most ready to fight and die for his country. (2.) Where the master of a family fears God, we may be assured his house will be a house of prayer. (3.) Charity is the inseparable attendant on a gracious character; whilst

† 7

a niggard's hand and heart prove the total absence of vital godliness.

2. An angel appears to Cornelius as he is at prayer. Affrighted with this celestial visitant, the centurion with deepest reverence desires to know the purport of his coming, fearing lest he brought some message of evil. But the angel soon quieted his fears, and said unto him, *Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God; are graciously accepted as the genuine fruits of thy faith and love, according to the measure of light which thou hast received. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.* Cornelius seems already to have been a profelyte, and to have been living in the faith of the promised Messiah according to the prophecies, but as yet he had not heard him preached as actually become incarnate. However, to put an honour on the gospel ministry, the angel gives him no farther information, but refers him to the divinely-appointed ministers of the word.

3. No sooner was the angel departed, than immediately Cornelius called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually, who being truly religious, like his master, was always kept near his person. To these he related his extraordinary vision, and ordered them to proceed early in the morning to Joppa, and, telling Peter the occasion, to desire he would return with them to Cæsarea. *Note*; They who are truly godly themselves, delight to have those near them as servants, who are partakers of the same grace.

2dly, The servants of Cornelius departing early in quest of St. Peter, the Lord prepares him to give them a welcome reception. He, like his countrymen, was still prejudiced against the Gentiles, and thought that all familiar communication with them was unlawful: the Lord therefore is pleased, in a marvellous way, to overrule these prepossessions.

1. A vision appeared to him when he went up to the top of the house to pray, where he might be most retired, just before the servants of Cornelius arrived. It was noon, and while he was thus devoutly engaged, he became very hungry, and would have eaten; but while they made ready some refreshment for him, he fell into a trance; a supernatural extacy came upon him; and, to shew him the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles into the Christian church, a people whom he had been used to regard as unclean, he saw heaven opened, in token of some farther revelation of God's will now about to be made to him; and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth, wherein, suitably to his present hungry situation, there were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air; and there came a voice to him, saying, *Rise, Peter; kill and eat, without distinction of clean or unclean.* Peter, though hungry, objected to the

mine eyes, I considered, and saw ^b four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, ^c Arise, Peter; flay and eat.

8 But I said, ^k Not so, Lord: for nothing

^b If. 11. 6.—10. & 43. 20, 21. Gal. 3. 28. Col. 3. 11. ^c If. 40. 21. Mark, 16. 15. Mat. 23. 19. Rom. 1. 16. & 3. 22, 29, 30. ^k Rom. 10. 2. with Lev. xi. Deut. xiv. Lev. 20. 25. Ezek. 4. 14. & 44. 31.

the proposal, *Not so, Lord*: he could not think of transgressing the ceremonial law; for, says he, *I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean*. The voice a second time addressed him, saying, *What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*. He who first commanded a distinction of meats, had a right to abrogate it again if he pleased; and as he had taken the Jews for his peculiar people, he might also bring the Gentiles to share the blessings of the same gracious covenant: and as this was now his purpose, Peter might safely eat whatever was set before him, and go and converse with, and preach to the Gentiles without fear of pollution. *This was done thrice*, to shew the certainty of the vision, and engage his attention to it; *and the vessel was received up again into heaven*.

2. The vision soon receives an explication. St. Peter was now seriously considering, but at a loss to know what this vision meant; and just then the men whom Cornelius had sent, were at the door inquiring for him. The Spirit therefore gives him an intimation what messengers waited for him below; and, though they were Gentiles, bid him go with them, *doubting nothing* of the unlawfulness of being in their company, for they were divinely sent by his orders. *Note*: While we are in simplicity desiring in our difficulties to know God's will, he will by some gracious intimations direct us aright.

3dly, St. Peter, having received full satisfaction, went down without delay to the messengers.

1. Having told them that he was the person whom they sought, he desired to be informed of the cause of their coming: and they said, *Cornelius the centurion, a just man, eminent for his probity and integrity among men, and one that feareth God, though a Gentile, a worshipper of the God of Israel, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, who respect his amiable and exemplary character, was warned from God by an holy angel, to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee concerning the things that make for his everlasting peace*.

2. St. Peter hereupon courteously received and lodged the messengers that night, and on the morrow went away with them for Caesarea, accompanied by certain brethren from Joppa, who might desire to be present at this interview, or more probably went at Peter's request, that they might be witnesses for him, if at any time he should be blamed by his Jewish brethren for visiting a Gentile family. *Note*: (1.) It becomes ministers and all Christians to be hospitable. (2.) When there is danger that our conduct may be censured, or our conversation misrepresented, it is prudent to have witnesses for what passes, to whom we can appeal.

3. The second day, in the afternoon, St. Peter and the messengers entered Caesarea, where Cornelius with eager expectation waited his arrival, having called his kinsmen and near friends to share with him the blessing of Peter's discourse. *Note*: The greatest kindness we can shew our

friends, is to invite them to partake with us of our spiritual mercies, and to join in our religious exercises.

4. Cornelius received the apostle with deepest reverence and respect, and paid him excessive honour; he fell at his feet, as he entered the house, and worshipped him, prostrate before him, as if he had been the mightiest potentate. But the apostle, too humble and modest to accept such profound admiration, *took him up*, would not suffer him to stay in that posture, saying, *Stand up, I myself also am a man, a poor mortal, of like passions with thyself, though honoured with this office of apostleship*. And thereupon familiarly conversing with him, he entered into the house, where a number of persons were assembled, desirous to hear Peter's words, and affording him a larger field of usefulness than he might have expected. *Note*: It is a great encouragement to speak, where we meet a large and attentive audience.

5. St. Peter inquires the cause wherefore Cornelius sent for him, saying to him and the company, *Ye know that it is unlawful, and looked upon as an abominable thing, for one that is a Jew, as I am, to keep company with, or come unto one of another nation in any way of familiar intercourse*. But, though I long thought so, *God hath of late skewed me, that I should not call any man common or unclean, on account of his being of a different nation*. Obedient therefore to the admonition of God, *came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for*; perfectly persuaded of his will in this matter. *I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?* that I may be able suitably to improve the present opportunity, to God's glory, and for your good.

6. Cornelius relates the late occurrences, which occasioned the present meeting. *Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, when the evening sacrifice was offering, one of the usual hours of prayer: and behold, in answer to my requests for divine direction and guidance, a man stood before me in bright clothing, an angel in a human form; and, addressing me, said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God: send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner, by the sea side, who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee, and give thee the direction which thou art seeking*. Immediately therefore, without delay, *I sent to thee; and thou hast well done, that thou art come*; we regard it as a singular kindness done to us, and doubt not but it will be highly pleasing to God. *Now therefore are we all here present before God*; met in his fear, hoping for his mercy, and expecting his special presence and blessing, seriously disposed to hear, and desirous to embrace and obey all things that are commanded thee of God, whom we with all reverence receive as a messenger expressly sent from him to lead us in the way of salvation. *Note*: (1.) The gospel then comes with effect, when those who sit under it shew solemn attention and seriousness, receiving it not as the word of man,

common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9 But the voice answered me again from

heaven,¹ What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

10 And this was done^m three times: and

¹ Mat. 15. 11. Ch. 10. 15, 23. & 15. 8, 9.

^m John, 13. 38. & 21. 17.

man, but as the word of God. (2.) They who are sincere with God, desire to hear and know *all* his will; not merely what he promises, but what he commands, however displeasing it may be to flesh and blood.

4thly, St. Peter, on comparing his own vision with that which Cornelius related, was now fully persuaded of God's gracious designs toward the Gentiles; and therefore with great warmth of affection, delight, and earnestness, addressed this attentive auditory.

1. He expresses his full persuasion, notwithstanding all his former prejudices, that the Lord had now abolished all national distinctions, and designed that his gospel should indiscriminately be preached to Jews and Gentiles. *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, on account of any external circumstances of birth, rank, or country; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*—Not that we are to conceive that these are the foundation of acceptance before God: no: they are only the fruits of that faith which embraces the righteousness which is of God, (see my Annotations on this chapter, and on the Epistle to the Romans). The meaning of the apostle seems to be, That Gentiles, as well as Jews, though uncircumcised, were capable of partaking of God's favour, and their works were accepted through faith. Of this number Cornelius was one: and God in mercy therefore was now leading him into fuller discoveries of the truth as it is in Jesus.

2. He refers them to the reports which had been every where spread of the life, miracles, doctrines, death, and resurrection of Jesus. *The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, the glad tidings of reconciliation with an offended God through him, (He is Lord of all, the self-existent Deity, God over all, and as Mediator incarnate invested with all power in heaven and earth)—that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, after the baptism which John preached, by Jesus himself and his disciples, the fame of which could not but have reached them; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, authorizing and enabling him to perform the most astonishing miracles in proof of his divine mission; who went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men, by his heavenly doctrine instructing them, and by his miracles of grace healing all that were oppressed of the devil, under whatever disease or torment, or corporal possession, they laboured: for God was with him, mightily supporting him, and testifying his high approbation of him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, having been his constant followers and disciples; whom they slew and hanged on a tree, a death the most painful and ignominious, in hatred of his pretensions as the promised Messiah, because he corresponded not with their carnal notions of his character and office: him God raised up the third day, to their confusion, and in testimony of his perfect satisfaction in this divine Redeemer's undertaking;*

† 8

and showed him openly, after his resurrection; not to all the people, who had so obstinately rejected the clearest evidence of truth; but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead; and, from the fullest conviction of our senses, were assured of his resurrection, and were appointed by him to bear our testimony thereto. *And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead, before whom all must appear, and give an account of the things done in the body. To him give all the prophets witness, from the beginning speaking of him as the great subject of their discourses, and pointing to him under various types and figures, that through his name, through his sacrifice and obedience unto death, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins, justified freely and fully from all his transgressions, whether he be Jew or Gentile.* Note; (1.) The remission of sins is the first great gospel promise, and the door of admission to all the rest. (2.) If we believe that Jesus shall indeed shortly be our Judge, we cannot but be anxiously solicitous to secure an interest in his favour.

5thly, While these words were yet dropping from the apostle's lips, God himself appears, bearing witness to the gospel which Peter preached.

1. *The Holy Ghost, in his miraculous gifts as well as gracious influences, fell on all them which heard the word, as on the disciples at the day of Pentecost; and they of the circumcision, which believed, were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost, though they were neither circumcised nor baptized; for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God; like the other ministers of the gospel, they were equally qualified for that service, in which, probably, the Lord designed to employ the first-fruits of the Gentiles; and in the various languages which they spoke, adored God for the blessings of that redemption in Christ Jesus, of which they now were made partakers.* Note; They who have received the Holy Ghost, cannot but desire to magnify God, seeking the divine glory in the exercise both of his gifts and graces.

2. St. Peter, no longer dubious, hesitates not to admit them into the church by the instituted rite of baptism. It would be highly absurd for the most rigid Jewish Christian to object against admitting those to the sign and seal of the covenant, who had received the gifts and graces of the covenant. *Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* The point was too clear to admit of a scruple; and therefore he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Hence it appears evidently, that water-baptism is an ordinance to be used by those who are most clearly baptized with the Holy Ghost.

3. They entreated St. Peter to tarry certain days with them, that they might enjoy the edification and comfort

of

'all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cesarea unto me.

12 And ° the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house :

13 ° And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter :

14 Who shall tell thee ° words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

15 And as I began to speak, ° the Holy

Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, ° John indeed baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as ° God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ ; what was I, ° that I could withstand God ?

18 When they heard these things, ° they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, ° Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

19 ¶ ° Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about

* Mat. 8. 11. Eph. 3. 5—8. & 2. 4—22. Ch. 15. 14. Rom. 15. 8—12, 16. Col. 1. 20. ° Ch. 10. 19. & 16. 6, 7. & 21. 4. John, 16. 13.
 Ch. 10. 3—6. 30—32. & 9. 43. Pf. 91. 11. & 34. 7. ° Mark, 16. 15, 16. Rom. 1. 16, 17. John, 20. 31. ° John, 5. 9—13, 20. Ch. 16. 31.
 Luke, 19. 9, 10. Rom. 10. 17. ° Ch. 2. 4. & 10. 43—47. ° Ch. 1. 5. & 19. 4. Mat. 3. 11. Mark, 1. 8. Luke, 3. 16. John, 1. 26. If.
 44—5. Joel, 2. 28. Prov. 1. 23. ° Ver. 15. Ch. 10. 44—47. & 15. 8, 9. ° Rom. 8. 31. Job, 40. 2. & 9. 3, 4, 12. Dan. 4. 35. Ch.
 10. 47. ° Josh. 11. 30. Ch. 21. 20. If. 54. 1—5. ° Ch. 5. 31. & 20. 21. 2 Cor. 7. 11. Jer. 31. 18—20. Pf. 22. 27. If. 55. 5, 7.
 Ch. 8. 1, 4. Mat. 10. 23.

of his farther ministrations. *Note* ; (1.) They who have received a blessing under the discourse of a gospel minister, covet to hear more. (2.) The most advanced in gifts and graces are never to think themselves above attendance on the ministry of the word.

CHAP. XI.

Ver. 2. They that were of the circumcision contended with him.] How good an argument soever this may be against the supremacy of St. Peter, it is none against the inspiration of the apostles ; for it only proves that some who did not well understand the principles on which they acted, took upon them, without reason, to arraign their conduct ; and consequently did not, in this respect, pay a becoming deference to them. It plainly shews how little deference was paid to any uncircumcised persons, whatever profession they might make of worshipping the God of Israel.

Ver. 3. Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised,] Saying, wherfore—διὰ τί—did you associate and eat with the uncircumcised ? See Gen. xlv. 4. Luke, ii. 49.

Ver. 4. But Peter rehearsed the matter, &c.] But Peter beginning, opened to them the matter in order. As it is probable that they were only some of the Jewish converts who questioned St. Peter about what he had done, he might, no doubt, have overborne them by urging his apostolical authority, and referring them to the miracles by which it was established : but as he could with no great propriety blame them, because he himself, till of late, had been as bigoted to the Jewish nation as any of them, he treats them in the most gentle and condescending manner, laying before them the reason of his conduct, and appealing to their judgments, whether, in such circumstances, he had not acted according to the divine direction ; herein giving a most amiable example of humility and condescension, which it would be the glory and happiness of Christ's ministers to follow in circumstances which bear any resemblance to this.

VOL. I.

Ver. 5. I saw—a certain vessel descend, &c.] I saw— somewhat descending, in the form of a great sheet. See on ch. x. 11. It is generally supposed, that in this sheet all sorts of creatures, clean and unclean, were represented, promiscuously mixed together ; but some expositors are of opinion, that they were only of the sorts prohibited by the law ; because, say they, there would have been no room for St. Peter's scrupling to eat, had he seen any creatures there but what he apprehended to be prohibited by the law : but his expression of nothing common or polluted and unclean, may lead us to conclude, that the apostle, according to the Jewish principles, conceived the clean animals to be polluted by their intermixture and communication with the unclean.

Ver. 14. Who shall tell thee words,] Who shall teach thee what is necessary for the salvation of thyself and thy family.

Ver. 17. Forasmuch then as God gave them, &c.] Since therefore God has granted the same gift to them as to us, &c.

Ver. 18. When they heard these things, &c.] When they had heard St. Peter's apology, they were silent, and acquiesced, turning their accusations of the apostle into praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God, who had granted unto the devout Gentiles, through Jesus Christ his Son, all the privileges of the gospel ; and had received them into the Christian church equally with the believing Jews, without their being first circumcised and brought into subjection to the whole law of Moses. But though these particular persons now acquiesced, yet this was the foundation of the grand controversy in the apostolic age ; for we shall find, as the history proceeds, that it broke out again with respect to the devout Gentiles, ch. xv. and was afterwards extended to the converts from among the idolatrous Gentiles, as appears from most of St. Paul's epistles : and the attentive reader will there find, how very difficult it was to allay the prejudices of the Jews and Jewish Christians against the admission of the Gentiles, unless they would first, according

Stephen travelled as far as ^a Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word ^b to none but unto the Jews only.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and ^c Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the ^d Grecians, ^e preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 ^f And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

22 ¶ Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and ^g they sent forth Barnabas, that

he should go as far as Antioch.

23 Who, when he came, and ^h had seen the grace of God, was glad, and ⁱ exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would ^k cleave unto the Lord.

24 For he was a ^l good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25 Then departed Barnabas to ^m Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year ⁿ they assembled them-

^a If. xxiii. Ch. 13. 4. Ver. 26. ^b Mat. 10. 5, 6. Ch. 3. 26. & 13. 46. & 10. 28. ^c Ch. 2. 10. Luke, 22. 26. ^d Jews who spake Greek, ch. 6. 1. & 9. 29. John, 12. 20. ^e Ch. 8. 35. & 9. 20. ^f 1 Cor. 1. 23, 24. & 2. 2. Eph. 3. 8. ^g If 53. 1. Rom. 1. 16. Ch. 1. 41, 47. & 4. 3, 32. & 5. 14. & 6. 7. Ver. 24. ^h Ch. 8. 14, 15. & 13. 2, 3. ⁱ Mat. 7. 16—21. & 12. 31. Gal. 5. 22, 23. ^j Peter, 1. 4—9. ^k Ch. 13. 43. & 14. 22. ^l Gal. 2. 20. Mat. 16. 24. ^m 1 Cor. 15. 58. Col. 1. 22. & 2. 6, 7. Deut. 10. 20. & 30. 20. Josh. 22. 5. & 23. 8. ⁿ Ch. 6. 3, 5. 8. & 24. 16. ^o Ch. 9. 11, 30. & 22. 39. John, 1. 3. ^p Ch. 2. 41—47. & 4. 32.

according to the Jewish phrase, become profelytes of righteousness, and of course be circumcised.

Ver. 20. And some of them were men of Cyprus] But some of them, &c. St. Peter having opened the door of Christian faith, and laid the foundation of a Christian church among the Gentiles, after God had testified very plainly that it was agreeable to his mind and will,—other Christians, hearing of this event, took occasion thence to imitate St. Peter's example: particularly, some Jewish Christians of the island of Cyprus and of the country of Cyrene in Africa, travelling in their dispersions to Antioch in Syria, preached the Christian doctrine there, not to the Jews only, but also to the Gentiles; and God blessed and prospered their labours. The Jews frequently called all nations except their own, *Greeks*, from the time of the Macedonian or Grecian empire, just as the Roman empire was afterwards called *the whole world*, because it extended over the most considerable part of the then known world. See Rom. x. 12. 1 Cor. xii. 13. Gal. iii. 28. Col. iii. 11. See also on ver. 26.

Ver. 23, 24. The grace of God,] The happy effects of the divine goodness, in taking such a number of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Christian church. Barnabas, like a true son of exhortation, exhorted them to persevere with steadfastness and resolution;—*to adhere to the Lord with full determination of heart*; and indeed he was a very proper man to be sent among these converts; for he was not only a Cypriot, and born on Gentile ground, but he was a man of great benignity and sweetness of temper,—*Αντιόχεια*,—and on these accounts less bigoted to his own, and against the Gentile converts, and less likely to lay any unnecessary burden upon them.

Ver. 26. When he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch.] Barnabas might go in quest of Paul, from a persuasion, that, as he was by his country a Greek, though by descent an Hebrew of the Hebrews; that is, descended from two Jewish parents, he would be peculiarly fit to assist him in his great work, especially considering on the one hand his fine accomplishments as a scholar, and on the other his extraordinary conversion, and eminent zeal and piety.

Antioch was the metropolis of Syria; for magnitude, situation, and other agreeable circumstances, the third city in the Roman empire, being excelled by none except Rome and Alexandria. It was built by Seleucus, and called *Antioch* from the name of his son *Antiochus*. There was a Jewish university in this city, and a great number of profelytes according to Josephus, out of whom was formed a large Christian church, which was looked upon as the mother church of the Gentiles, as the church of Jerusalem was of the Jewish, or of *all the Christian churches*; and they were likewise the first fruits of the devout Gentiles out of Palestine. The Jewish converts had hitherto been called by their enemies, *Men of that way*, or *sect*; *Galileans*, *Nazarenes*, and other like names of reproach; and among themselves they had been called *disciples*, *believers*, *the church*, *the saints*; and to denote the unity and concord which were among them, they stiled one another *brethren*. But now the Gentile converts at Antioch were called by the name of **CHRISTIANS**, taking their denomination immediately from their Lord and Master **CHRIST** himself, just as among the philosophers, the *Platonists*, *Pythagoreans*, &c. took their names from their several masters. This name was first given to the converts at Antioch, I doubt not, by divine appointment; for the word *χριστιανισμός*, here used, signifies “to be warned by a divine admonition;” see Matth. ii. 12. Luke, ii. 26. Acts, x. 22. and accordingly Doddridge renders it *were called by divine appointment*. Dr. Mill has informed us, that the Cambridge manuscript reads this sentence thus; *and then they first named by divine appointment, χριστιανισμός, the disciples, CHRISTIANS, in Antioch*; whereby is signified, that Barnabas and Saul first gave them the name of *Christians*; and indeed the common reading, fairly rendered, seems to intimate the same thing: *and it came to pass that they assembled, &c. and that they called the first disciples at Antioch by the name of Christians*. Barnabas knew how unlikely it was that the church at Jerusalem should allow them the name of *brethren*, considering how strongly they had been prejudiced against them, and how backward they had been to receive them into the Christian church; though afterwards indeed the appellation of

elves * with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called ° Christians first in Antioch.

27 ¶ And in these days came † prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28 And there stood up one of them named † Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all

the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cefar.

29 Then the disciples, every man † according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea:

30 Which also they did, and sent it to the † elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

* Or in the church. ° Mat. 16. 16, 24. Rom. 8. 1, 2, 9. 1 Cor. 6. 17. & 17. 12. Phil. 2. 5. & 3. 3. Col. 3. 3. 1 John. 2. 20, 27. † Mat. 23. 34. 1 Cor. 12. 28. & 14. 32. Eph. 4. 11. Rev. 22. 9. Ch. 2. 17. & 13. 1. & 15. 32. & 21. 4. † Ezr. 2. 69. Neh. 5. 8. Ch. 6. 1. & 12. 25. Rom. 15. 25. 1 Cor. 10. 1, 2. 2 Cor. 8. 3, 4, 9. & 11. 8. & 9. 1. 1 Peter, 4. 11. Gal. 2. 10. Heb. 13. 6. † 1 Peter, 5. 1. 2 John, 1. Ch. 12. 25.

of brethren was given them by the church at Jerusalem upon a full and mature consideration of their case. See chap. xv. 23. However, as the Jewish Christians could not presently get over all their former prejudices, and allow those Gentile converts to be upon a level with themselves, and as it was nevertheless proper that they should have some name to distinguish them from such of the Gentile proselytes of the gate as had not embraced the Christian religion;—for these, and such like wise reasons, they were called and distinguished by the name of Christians; and if that name was given them by a divine admonition, as we have shewn, it indicates the divine concern for them, and the honour which Heaven put upon them, in dignifying and distinguishing them by so high and honourable an appellation. Witius thinks it a circumstance of remarkable wisdom, that this celebrated name should arise from *Antioch*, a church consisting of a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, rather than from Jerusalem, dignified in so many other respects; and that it was a kind of victory gained over Satan, who, from Antioch some ages before, had raised so many cruel persecutors of the church of God.

Ver. 28. And there stood up one of them named Agabus,] Agabus prophesied that the famine should spread throughout the whole world, which phrase was frequently used in those times to signify the whole Roman empire, which included most of the then known world. Accordingly, Eusebius says of this famine, that it oppressed almost the whole empire; and that it was recorded by historians *most averse to our religion*. For instance, Suetonius, in the life of Claudius, says it happened *ob assiduas sterilitates,—through a long barrenness*. Josephus says, that it raged so much in Judea, that many perished for want of victuals. And Dion Cassius says, that it was a very great famine, and happened when Claudius and Caius Larius were consuls, that is, in the second year of Claudius; though it seems rather to have been that which happened (as Eusebius in his *Chronicon*, and Orosius, l. 7. 6. place it) in the fourth year of Claudius. However, I see no sufficient reason to suppose that the phrase *throughout the whole world*, should not be taken in the strictest sense, and that the famine was not really universal.

Ver. 29. Then the disciples, every man, &c.] It had been a custom for the Jews and proselytes, in their several dispersions, to send presents to Judea, and especially to Jerusalem; and the Jews in Judea seem to have expected it, as in some sort their due; particularly we find that Helena, queen of the *Adiabenes*, and her son *Izates*, who had lately

become proselytes to the Jewish religion, were very generous to the poor at Jerusalem in this ensuing famine; for the queen went to see the temple, and to offer sacrifices there; and finding Jerusalem oppressed by the famine, and many perishing through want, she sent abroad her officers, some of them to Alexandria, to buy corn; others to Cyprus to purchase dried figs; who returned quickly, and distributed food to the necessitous; by which means she laid a lasting obligation upon the whole nation of the Jews; and her son *Izates* also, having heard of the famine, sent a large sum of money to the chief men at Jerusalem. Thus also the Gentile Christians at Antioch, upon *Agabus's* prediction of the famine, determined to give (every man in proportion to his own ability and plenty) towards a charitable collection for the relief of the Jewish converts in Judea, and especially in Jerusalem, whence the sound of the gospel first proceeded. See Rom. xv. 25, &c. &c. For “as they were made partakers of their spiritual things, they thought it their duty to minister unto them in temporal things.” Thus remarkably does the wise and over-ruling Providence of God adapt the common course of things so, as to subserve his own great and beneficent designs, as plainly appears in the instance now before us. For the reception of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Christian church, had a little soured the minds of the Jewish converts; but, upon this approach of a famine, an early occasion was given for cementing and uniting the Jewish and Gentile converts into one church and body, under Jesus Christ their common Head and Lord; kindness and charity most of all things tending to sweeten men’s minds, and beget a favourable opinion of the persons who are so bounteous and liberal: the helping them in their distress, therefore, was the most effectual way to win over the Jewish converts; and the knowing the famine beforehand gave them an opportunity to provide for it. When the church was in its tender infant state, and many had forsaken all to preach the gospel, the gifts of the Spirit, and among them the gift of prophesying, were highly necessary: for such extraordinary difficulties and discouragements could not have been prevented, or over-ruled, without extraordinary helps and directions.

Ver. 30. Sent it to the elders] The elders in the primitive church, were of three sorts, 1st, *αὐτόπται*, the eye-witnesses, or those who had seen our Lord in the flesh, and were among the first disciples or most early converts; 2dly, *ἀπάρχαι*, the first converts in any particular place, who were always honoured for their early conversion and ready acceptance

C H A P. XII.

King Herod persecuteth the Christians, killeth James, and imprisoneth Peter, whom an angel delivereth upon the prayers of the church. Herod in his pride, taking to himself the honour due to God, is stricken by an angel, and dieth miserably. After his death the word of God prospereth.

[Anno Domini 44.]

NOW about that time ^a Herod the king ^{*} stretched forth *his hands* ^b to vex certain of the church.

^a Not the tetrarch. Luke, 3. 1—19. & 13. 31. & 23. 7. Ch. 13. 1. but his nephew. 20, 21. & 16. 2. ^c Mat. 20. 23. & 4. 21. ^d John, 12. 43. Gal. 1. 10. ^e John, 21. 18. Mat. 24. 9. Luke, 21. 12.

^{*} Or *bragan*. ^b Mat. 10. 17, 18. & 24. 9. John, 15. ^c Mat. 4. 18. & 26. 75. ^d Exod. 12. 15—20. & 13. 7.

acceptance of the gospel, and were the primary elders of particular churches; 3dly, the διαδόχοι, successors of the ἀπάρχαι, elders of the second sort. Those elders to whom Barnabas and Saul carried a charitable collection, were probably of the first sort; and such of them as were not apostles, were honoured as next in dignity and eminence to the apostles. Upon the persecution which followed the martyrdom of St. Stephen, most of the Christians had fled from Jerusalem, except the apostles: when that persecution ceased, as it did some time before this, many of them returned again to Jerusalem, among whom were very probably the elders here mentioned. When they returned, the apostles could the better leave that city, and visit the other countries, as having left the mother church at Jerusalem in safe hands; and the absence of all the apostles appears to have been known to the Christians at Antioch, from their sending their contribution to the elders at Jerusalem. It may be proper just to observe, that this is the first mention we have of *elders* in the Christian church; and that Dr. Hammond labours to prove in a large note on this place, that these elders were the same officers with those who were called ἐπίσκοποι, or *bishops*; and he thinks there is no certain evidence from Scripture, that the name of πρεσβυτεροι, or *elders*, was given so early to another order between *them* and *deacons*.

Inferences drawn from the name of CHRISTIANS. Ver. 26.—Who can help making a serious pause of gratitude and wonder, that casts his eye over this comprehensive sentence; *the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch!*—*Christians!*—The followers of the Son of God incarnate, how honourable a distinction!—The disciples of Jesus Christ!—Those who are alive from the dead! called from darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel! How glorious a change, and how inexpressible the goodness of God towards guilty sinners in effecting this change!

Just at the time that men's abominations had rendered them ripe for destruction, the Almighty Father published his glad tidings of mercy to all, and assured them of his everlasting loving-kindness, if they would hearken to the voice of his well-beloved Son. Christ Jesus came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; to deliver us by the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation; to cast down all abomina-

2 And he ^c killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And ^d because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take ^e Peter also. Then were the days of unleavened bread.

4 And ^f when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

tions, and every thing that loveth and maketh a lie; to recover envying mortals to the use of their reason; to dethrone the empire of sin and Satan; to put iniquity to open and universal shame; to banish all animosities, and revenge, and sedition; all bitterness, envying, and every evil work, from the earth; to humanize the tempers, and soften the hearts of men, by inculcating upon their minds every civil and social virtue, by enforcing them under new and more powerful sanctions, and by uniting all mankind together in the bands of love; in short, to conquer death and the grave, and, upon the ruins of darkness and violence, to establish a kingdom of light and peace; that he might lead us, not to a *land flowing with milk and honey*, but to a heavenly country,—the everlasting city of the great king.

These were the glorious purposes of the captain of our salvation; and, in order to accomplish those purposes, what a multitude of troubles did he encounter? what calumny and scorn? what watchings and fastings? what poignant distresses of every kind did he endure? and how undauntedly did he brave them all! The bar of Pilate could not move his integrity; the coronet of thorns could not make him desert his cause; the ignominious cross could not terrify or shame him. Unconquered even in death, obedience to the will of his heavenly Father, and the good of perishing souls, were his only concern. As a lamb therefore led to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth: when stretched out on the accursed tree, he could behold the hands of the executioners raised against him, and the horrid nails just ready to pierce his sacred body, without recoiling, without a single complaint: nay, and under the inconceivable load of sorrows which oppressed him, his compassion towards sinful creatures never failed him; but, instead of reproaching them for that barbarous usage which he met with, in the midst of his agonies, he prayed to his heavenly Father to have mercy even upon those wicked men, by whom he was crucified and slain!

Such was the Saviour of the world; such that Master after whom we are called *Christians*; such his love to frail mortals, from his cradle to his grave! Yea, and after he had shaken off the fetters of mortality, his love was still the same; he rose from the dead to satisfy the diffident, and to confound the gainsayers; he conversed with his disciples for 40 days together, and, at last, to confirm all their

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but
* prayer was made ^b without ceasing of the

church unto God for him.

6 And when Herod would have ⁱ brought

^a Or instant and earnest prayer was made. ^b Luke, 18. 1. 1 Theff. 5. 17. Eph. 6. 19, 20. 2 Theff. 3. 2. James, 5. 16. Heb. 13. 3, 18. ⁱ Ver.
2. Ch. 7. 54, 57.

their hopes beyond the possibility of being deceived, he ascended up visibly into heaven; nay, and still further to animate and establish their souls in the faith, he sealed those who believed, with the *Spirit of promise*, his almighty power from on high.

Hence therefore genuine believers now know, and are assured, *That they have not followed after cunningly devised fables*; that the calls of the gospel are not weak and delusive, but the *power of God*, and the *wisdom of God*. Hence they know, that they are no longer *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*, but a *chosen generation, a peculiar people*, the favourites of heaven, the sons of God, and heirs of glory. Our great Redeemer has purchased an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away: he has brought out his saints from the most dreadful abyss of misery and confusion, into the light of truth and the adoption of celestial love: Baal and Dagon are alike fallen: *The Lord, he is God*, even Emmanuel is their king!

How glorious a revolution, would we but duly consider its blessings! how strikingly expressive of the grace of God! The temple is no more at Jerusalem only; every true believer is himself a temple of the Holy Ghost; and in every corner of the globe, where the sound of the gospel has been heard, the foundations are laid for the dwelling-place of the Most High. The middle wall of partition is thus broken down, and the doctrines of a future state are as certainly established, as that Jesus himself is risen from the grave. A happy, an everlasting possession is put into our hands, if we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called in him; an incomparable inheritance, far above all sublunary enjoyments; a kingdom never to be moved; a treasure that never can perish or decay, and which is more than the most exalted conceptions that we can form of such objects; *for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*. Such are the privileges which we enjoy as *Christians*.

Can we then possibly reflect upon them without being moved? Can we reflect upon them, without ever after making them the most delightful subject of our meditations? What are all the pomp and glory, the riches and power, nay, the health, or strength, or beauty, or any other gratifications that we can enjoy in this world? What but mean and contemptible, uncertain and fluctuating things, no more to be esteemed than as dross and dung, when compared with these durable, these *Christian* privileges?

And shall we then resign these privileges for any other acquisitions of inferior name? give up the substance for the shadow, and the treasures of eternity for the things of time?—Shall the wise man glory in his wisdom, the mighty in his strength, the rich in his riches, the man of gallantry in his folly and his vices, and every sinner in his shame? And shall not we much more glory in what is so truly glorious,—that we are *Christians*? What is the name of Greek or Roman, what the name of Briton, when contradistin-

guished with this, which we are so honoured to bear? “CHRISTIAN, as the poet finely expresses it, *Christian is the highest stile of man*”; a name which has spread so far and wide, whose sound has filled the earth, and which has been so dear to some, and so odious to others; a name, which, in its genuine and original meaning, included in it every thing that is holy or amiable, just or charitable, noble and divine; and a name which would still have had the same glorious meaning, had it not been so frequently and so vilely prostituted by multitudes, who have made great pretensions to it, while their tempers and practices have been very different from their profession.—How abominable and provoking in the sight of God, as well as uncharitable and highly injurious to men! Would to God that *Christ* had been the only master, in whose name Christians had ever gloried! that all who had ever been called by this sacred and venerable name of *Christians*, had answered their character by their temper and conduct!

All other nominal distinctions are too often the offspring of pride, or ignorance, or folly, and not at all to be desired to make one wise; but *Christian*, like that of its great original, is a name that is above every name; more precious than riches; more honourable than all the ensigns of royalty: and every one who is possessed with the least insight into its excellency and importance, will aspire after, will contend for, will rejoice in it, more than in any other name.

But alas! what avails it that we call ourselves *Christians*, if we have not an interest in the atonement which Christ has made?—if we do not receive with unfeigned assent whatever Christ has delivered?—if we do not obey with ready souls all those sacred precepts which he has enjoined? if we are not indeed *followers of Christ*, why do we stile ourselves *Christians*? If we call ourselves *Christians*, why do we not prove ourselves such, and imitate our Master? He has set us a bright, a glorious example; and in vain, utterly in vain, shall we bear his name, if we labour not also to conform ourselves to the pattern he has set us, if we hold not pure the sacred faith which he has delivered; if we obey not sincerely and affectionately the divine lessons which he has taught us.

What a disgrace then, what a reproach are they to the Christian name, who, so far from imitating the example, keeping pure the faith, and sincerely obeying the laws of Christ, live in a direct—in a continued contrariety to each, to all of these? and call themselves *Christians*, while they live worse than heathens, *earthly, sensual, devilish*! Far better would it be for such, that they had never known, that they had never heard the name of Christ! Far better had it been for them never to have been born, than to have defiled that holy name by their unholy practices. For alas! all the benefits and all the blessings which arise from that name to the sincere and upright, will to them be turned into curses;—for they rejected the salvation of Christ; they despised his laws; they would not have this

Man

him forth, the ^k same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains :

and the keepers before the door kept the prison.
7 And, behold, ^l the angel of the Lord

^k Gen. 22. 14. Deut. 32. 36. 1 Sam. 23. 26. Rom. 5. 1. Pf. 3. 5, 6.

^l Ch. 5. 19. 1 Kings, 19. 5, 7. Heb. 1. 14. Pf. 91. 11, 12. & 34. 7.

Man to reign over them ; and therefore they must not, they shall not reign eternally with him.

Let the reflection awaken us to duty ; for if it be deservedly accounted baseness and degeneracy to stain our blood, and reflect shame and dishonour back upon those forefathers who were men of like frailties and passions with ourselves, think how incomparably more heinous a provocation it must be, when those, who *name the name of Christ*, the eternal Son of God, *depart not from iniquity*, but minister occasion to libertines and infidels to blaspheme him and his gospel through their impure and vicious, that is, indeed, their infamously *absurd* and contradictory conversation ? For it is no indifferent matter how we behave ; nor does it affect only ourselves. As *Christian* is a common name, so a *wicked Christian* is a common reproach, and a common evil ;—a stumbling-block in the way of numbers, drawing many weak ones to offend, who are apt to cry out, “ In what are these *Christians*, as they call themselves, better than others ? Nay, we see, in many respects, they are as bad or worse than others.—Tell us not of embracing *Christianity*, till we see that its professors are more holy and exemplary men.” To such discreditors of the gospel and *Christian* name we may apply what Alexander the Great said to a pitiful coward of the same name with himself, *Aut nomen, aut mores muta ;* “ Either change thy name or thy manners. No longer profess thyself *Christian*, or act and live as becomes that high and venerable appellation ! otherwise when thou shalt give an account of thyself to the impartial almighty Judge, what canst thou urge in plea ? What canst thou offer in excuse of thy evil deeds, having been called a *Christian*, and yet having never obtained an interest in *Christ*—never imitated the example, obeyed the precepts, or regarded the doctrines of thy Lord and Master !”

There cannot surely be a character so odious, so justly abominable in the sight of God and every honest man, as that of him, who, calling himself a *Christian*, thus gives up all regard to every duty of *Christianity* ; who dares to call *Jesus Christ* *Lord*, *Lord*, though he does not *the will of his heavenly Father*. Amazing and unaccountable temerity ! how can we reflect upon it without a generous disdain and indignation !

Have we then, my readers, enlisted ourselves under the sacred banners of truth, and righteousness, and peace ? Let our lives be a standing demonstration to whom we belong. We who make *our boast of the gospel*, let us not *dishonour Christ*, through transgression of that Gospel. We who profess to embrace that religion which *descendeth from above*, let us not give occasion to Jews and Mahometans, and baptized infidels, through our vices, to blaspheme its blessed author. For, to use the argument of the great apostle, “ Verily *Christianity* profiteth, if through almighty grace we keep the laws of the gospel : otherwise our *Christianity* is as no *Christianity*, a mere farce and horrid mockery of God. For, to whomsoever we yield our-

“ selves servants to obey, his servants we are to whom we obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness and life eternal through *Jesus Christ* our Lord.”

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The conversion of the Gentiles, and the admission of those into the *Christian* church who were uncircumcised, was a thing so new and extraordinary, that it soon reached *Jerusalem*. And we are told,

1. What offence it gave to some of the *Christians* there, who were as yet wedded to the Jewish ritual. *They that were of the circumcision contended with Peter* ; so far were they from entertaining any thought of his supremacy or infallibility, which his pretended successors have since claimed, that they called him to account for what he had done, as if it was a matter of blame, saying, *Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them* ; supposing it a prostitution of their privileges, and a high disgrace to the apostolic character. Note ; (1.) Even good men are sometimes strangely enslaved by prejudices and bigotry. (2.) Rash censures have sometimes dropped from men who have been in a measure gracious ; and we must mildly bear with them, and answer in the spirit of meekness. Even godlike charity will be sometimes called latitudinarian by narrow minds, that have not fully tasted the warm sensations of generous, catholic love.

2. St. Peter relates the whole transaction from the beginning, and then refers the matter to their judgment. It is a debt that we sometimes owe ourselves and our brethren, to set what is misrepresented in its true colours, and remove, as far as we can, the prejudices of others.

[1.] He informs them of the vision which he himself had seen in all its particulars : wherein God intimated to him that all the *Mosaical* distinctions between meats and persons were now at an end.

[2.] He relates the vision which *Cornelius* was favoured with, and the express command given him to send for Peter from *Joppa*, as the person by whose words he and his house should be saved, through faith in that Saviour whom the apostle should preach unto him, and out of whom there is no salvation.

[3.] He declares the express command which he had from the Spirit to go with the messengers that *Cornelius* sent, and his prudent precaution to take several of the brethren with him, that his journey might be the less subject to any misrepresentation, when he had them as witnesses for his conduct.

[4.] He pleads, what above all other arguments vindicated his procedure, the attestation which the Holy Ghost bore to his word almost as soon as he began to speak to them of the gospel salvation, giving them the same miraculous gifts as he had bestowed on themselves at the beginning. And this brought to his mind *the word of the Lord*, just before his ascension, *Acts*, i. 5. *how that he said, John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost*. Seeing therefore this promise thus eminently fulfilled,

came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.

fulfilled, and that God made no distinction between Gentile and Jewish converts, *who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ*, and expected salvation by faith in him alone, *what was I, that I could withstand God?* or refuse to admit to baptism those whom he had so eminently called to the participation of the glorious privileges of the gospel?

3. An account so satisfactory silenced every cavil. No objections could possibly be made to St. Peter; but contrariwise *they glorified God* for this unexpected event, *saying with wonder and delight, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.*

2dly, We have an account of the planting of the gospel at Antioch the metropolis of Syria, and one of the most celebrated cities in the Roman empire.

1. The preachers of the gospel, who, on the persecution which arose after Stephen's death, were dispersed abroad, carried the glad tidings of the gospel as far as Phenice, a province of Syria, and Cyprus, a large island of the Mediterranean sea, and Antioch. But as they knew not yet the extent of their commission as reaching to all nations and every creature, they confined themselves wholly to the Jews who were dispersed in these countries. *And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, a city in Africa, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians; not only to the Hellenist Jews; but, on hearing of the conversion of Cornelius and his friends, and that the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles had been approved by the apostles, they enlarged their field of usefulness, preaching to the Grecian Gentiles the Lord Jesus, whose character, offices, grace, and glory, were the constant subjects of their ministrations. And the hand of the Lord was with them, not only enabling them to perform astonishing miracles, but blessing their labours with signal success: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord, effectually brought to Jesus as their only Redeemer and Saviour, on whose infinite merit and intercession they placed their entire dependence. Note; (1.) The labours of God's ministers are only then effectual, when the hand of the Lord is with them: without him, Paul must plant and Apollos water in vain. (2.) True faith will ever shew itself in real conversion of heart, from the ways of sin and the world, to the love and service of the blessed God.*

2. The church at Jerusalem, whither the apostles still frequently resorted, no sooner heard these glad tidings, than they sent forth Barnabas, a Hellenist, a native of Cyprus, and a man of singular abilities, *that he should go as far as Antioch*, passing through the places where the gospel had got footing, to strengthen and establish the new converts. Barnabas readily accepted the mission, and proceeded to Antioch; and when he had seen the grace of God, visibly manifested in the conversion and conversation of those whom the Lord by his gospel had called in that city, he was glad, and exhorted them all, *that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord*; encouraging them to maintain their profession amidst all opposition, and suggesting the most powerful arguments to establish their fidelity; *for he was a good man, of a noble, generous, disinterested spirit, sweet and affable in his discourse, and full of the Holy Ghost,*

possessed of very eminent gifts and graces, *and of faith in a most abundant measure; and much people was added unto the Lord* by his ministry and labours. *Note; (1.) They who are truly partakers of the grace of God in their own souls, behold with singular delight the powerful effects of the same grace upon the hearts of others. (2.) They who turn to the Lord, must cleave to him in a persevering course of fidelity: but if any man draw back, aggravated perdition must be the consequence. (3.) When we are ourselves deeply and fully persuaded of the truth, we shall be enabled to speak more forcibly and powerfully to others.*

3. The field being large, and the prospect promising, Barnabas sought an able fellow-helper; and knowing that Paul was yet at Tarsus, about a hundred miles off, he went to seek him, and invite him to Antioch, where his labours were greatly wanted. Having found him at Tarsus, he entreated him to return with him to Antioch, to which Paul readily consented; and for a year they assembled themselves with the church, leading the religious assemblies of the faithful, and taught much people, vast multitudes attending their ministrations. *Note; (1.) They who have the glory of their Lord simply at heart can take pleasure in the greater gifts and abilities of others, and are happy to procure their assistance, though they may be more admired and useful preachers than themselves. (2.) The work of the ministry is doubly pleasing, when we see the fruits of our labour in the growing edification of the faithful, and the conversion of sinners to God.*

4. *The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch*, not by their enemies as a term of reproach, but by some divine intimation, and solemn act of their own. Thus they would abolish the distinction of Jew and Gentile, and in their very name, as *Christians*, make profession of their full and entire dependence on Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Are we Christians then? let our lives prove the reality of the profession that we make.

3dly, Among the eminent gifts bestowed on the primitive Christians, some were endued with the spirit of prophecy. We are told,

1. Of a visit from certain prophets of Jerusalem, who, hearing the great success of the gospel at Antioch, came thither to help forward the glorious work, and to comfort and establish the hearts of the disciples.

2. One of them, named Agabus, had it revealed to him by the Spirit, *that there should be great dearth throughout all the world*; and, standing up in the midst of the assembled church, signified to them this afflictive event. See the Annotations.

3. *Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea*, who, by the persecutions they had suffered, were greatly reduced; and those who were once rich, had at the first parted with all for the service of the gospel; and probably it was suggested that the famine would be most severely felt in those parts. No sooner was the matter resolved, than the contribution was made, *and they sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul*, to be distributed accord-

ing

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done

by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of its own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forth with

^m Pf. 126. 1. Gen. 45. 26. Luke, 24. 17.

ⁿ Ch. 16. 26. Pf. 146. 7.

ing to the necessities of the faithful; than which nothing could serve more to conciliate their minds to the Gentile converts, and to remove their deep-rooted prejudices. *Note;* (1.) Every Christian, according to his ability, is bound to contribute to the assistance of his brethren. (2.) God will take care of his poor, and by some means or other provide that in the time of dearth they shall be supplied. He that feedeth the ravens, will not leave his children to famish.

CHAP. XII.

Ver. 1. Herod the King] The Syriac version reads, *Herod the king, surnamed Agrippa*: Josephus styles him *Agrippa*; which probably was his Roman, as *Herod* was his Syrian name. He was the grandson of Herod the Great, by his son Aristobulus; nephew to Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist; brother to Herodias, whom that incestuous tetrarch married; and father to that Agrippa, before whom St. Paul made his defence, ch. xxv. 13. Caius Caligula, with whom he had an early friendship, when he became emperor, released this Agrippa from the confinement under which Tiberius had on that very account kept him, and crowned him king of the tetrarchy of his uncle Philip; to which he afterwards added the territories of Antipas, whom he banished to Lyons in Gaul: in this authority Claudius confirmed him, and made him king of Judea, adding to his former dominions those of Lysanias. This person desired to ingratiate himself with the Jews by every method; and finding that the Christians were under the popular odium, he stretched forth his hands to harass and molest them; he did not reflect upon the injustice of persecuting the Christians, though he and his countrymen had taken it so ill that the heathens, and particularly Caligula, had persecuted the Jews; as if it had been persecution only to molest the Jews for their religion, but had lost its nature, and ceased to be persecution, when practised by the Jews upon the Christians. See on ch. ix. 31.

Ver. 2. And he killed James] Thus was our Lord's prediction, relating to them, fulfilled, Matth. xx. 23. I know not how far we are to depend upon the tradition which we find cited by Eusebius, from a book of Clemens Alexandrinus, now lost, in which he reported, "That the person who had accused James, observing the courage with which he bore his testimony to Christianity, was converted, and suffered martyrdom with him;" but it seems very beautifully observed by Clarius, who had a great deal of the true spirit of criticism, that this early execution of one of the apostles, after our Lord's death, would illustrate the courage of the rest in going on with their ministry; as it would evidently shew, that even all their miraculous powers did not secure them from dying by the sword of

their enemies. Hereby the number of apostles was reduced to eleven; but no other apostle was substituted in the stead of James, nor had the apostles any successors in their apostolic office, authority, and dignity.

Ver. 3. And, because he saw it pleased the people] This prince, as Josephus tells us, was a great zealot for the Mosaic law; dwelt much at Jerusalem, and was as fond of all opportunities to oblige the Jews, as his grandfather Herod had been of pleasing strangers—a character very agreeable to what St. Luke here says of him. St. Peter was apprehended about the beginning of April, and most probably in the third year of Claudius Cæsar.

Ver. 4. To four quaternions of soldiers] That is, to sixteen, consisting of four in each party, who were to watch him by turns, four at a time; two of them being chained to him, and two of them watching before the door of the prison: one end of one chain was fastened to St. Peter's right hand, and the other end to the left arm of one of the soldiers; the other chain was in like manner fastened to St. Peter's left arm, and to the soldier's right arm: see ver. 6. Very likely the Jews remembered how all the apostles had escaped when they had formerly put them in prison; and perhaps they suspected the fidelity of the guards. It was therefore most probably at their request, that such a number of soldiers were appointed to guard the apostle. But the confining him was not all; for Herod intended after the Paschal Lamb was eaten, and the seven days festival quite finished, to bring him out to the people, and gratify them by putting him to death, and that publicly. During the festival the Jews used to spend their time in such mirth and festivity, that prisoners were commonly released, rather than executed. But notwithstanding all their zeal about rituals, they could submit to be concerned in the vilest immoralities. See chap. xviii. 16. Instead of *after Easter*, the Greek would more properly be rendered *after the passover*.

Ver. 5. Without ceasing] The original word *ἄνευ*, signifies not only *continuance*, but likewise *earnestness*, *importunity*, and *vehemence*.

Ver. 7. The angel of the Lord] *An angel of the Lord*. Instead of *smote Peter on the side*, Dr. Heylin reads, *touched Peter on the side*.

Ver. 9. And wist not] *And knew not*.

Ver. 10. When they were past the first and the second ward,] *The first and second watch*, where the guards were placed to secure the prison. Heylin renders it very agreeably to the Greek, *the first and second guard*. It was usual among the Easterns to plate over their gates with thick iron. Pitts tells us, that Algiers has five gates; and some of these have two, some three other gates within them; and some of them are plated all over with thick iron: bishop

bishop

the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, ° that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 And when he had considered *the thing*, p he came to the house of Mary the mother of q John, whose surname was Mark; where r many were gathered together praying.

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came * to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, ' Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is ' his angel.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, u beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them v how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And w he departed, and went into another place.

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had sought for him,

° Dan. 6. 22. 2 Tim. 4. 17. Pf. 34. 7. & 46. 1. p Ch. 4. 23. & 15. 37. q Ver. 25. Ch. 13. 5, 13. & 15. 37. Col. 4. 10. 2 Tim. 4. 11. Phil. 24. r Ver. 5. 11. 65. 24. & 58. 9. Dan. 9. 20, 21. James, 5. 16. Mat. 18. 19. s Or to ask who was there. t Luke, 24. 11. Gen. 19. 14. u Heb. 1. 12. Mat. 18. 10. Pf. 34. 7. & 91. 11, 12. v Ch. 13. 16. & 19. 33. & 21. 40. w Ver. 11. Pf. 102. 20, 21. & 146. 7. x Mat. 16. 17, 23. John, 7. 1. & 8. 59. & 10. 40. & 11. 54.

Bishop Pocock tells us the same of some gates not far from Antioch. The angel having conducted St. Peter into the street left him; for when things are within men's own power, it is folly and presumption to expect extraordinary assistance.

Ver. 11. *Now I know of a surety, &c.*] The apostle may be understood here as alluding to a similar deliverance, chap. v. 19. The time in which he was delivered was very critical,—it being the night preceding the day appointed for his execution; and if the apostle had not been thus miraculously freed, he would probably have been put to death like Stephen or James.

Ver. 12. *And when he had considered the thing,*] And making haste, (σπευδων) Hammond. *And deliberating with himself, or recollecting where he was;* Heylin and Doddridge. The *Mark* here mentioned is thought by Grotius to have been a different person from St. Mark the evangelist. He was the *Son of Mary*, as we are here informed, and he is spoken of as sister's son to Barnabas, (Col. iv. 10.) who appears to have had a great affection for him, not only by taking him with him to Antioch, and thence to Pamphylia, but by his insisting afterwards, when setting out upon another progress, that Mark should go with them to visit the churches, to which Paul was so averse, that they parted; chap. xv. 37—40. We have no further account of him in the Acts; but he appears to have so far retrieved his character, that he is recommended afterwards by the apostles to the Colossians as above; and when he was at Rome, St. Paul mentions him among his fellow-labourers, Phil. ver. 24. and at last speaks of his desire to see him, as one who was *useful to him in the ministry*, 2 Tim. iv. 11.

Ver. 13. *At the door of the gate,*] The word *πυλῶν*, here, properly signifies what we generally call *the gateway* of a large house; and it is probable that this was no small house, as many were assembled there. *Rhoda* signifies in

English *rose*; and Grotius has observed, that the Jews frequently gave to their female children the names of agreeable flowers or plants. Thus *Susanna* signifies a *lily*, *Hedeffa* a *myrtle*, *Tamar* a *palm-tree*, &c. See the note on Mark, ii. 4.

Ver. 15. *It is his angel.*] Many commentators understand this as if they had said, "It is his messenger, or one sent from him;" and it is certain that the word *ἄγγελος* has frequently this sense in the scripture; but as the maid averred that she knew his voice, and was assured that it was Peter himself, it seems clear that they judged it to be something supernatural. Possibly they might imagine that it was an angel who assumed his form, to bring them some tidings of him; or that he had been executed in prison, as John the Baptist was, in the night, and that his separate spirit appeared as a token of its being employed, as angels are, in ministering to the church on earth. See Matth. xviii. 10. It is by no means certain that they imagined this to be his guardian angel; for Philo speaks of it as a received notion among the Jews, that the souls of good men deceased officiated as ministering spirits.

Ver. 17. *Unto James,*] As *James the brother of John* was dead, ver. 2. the person here referred to, must have been St. *James the Less*, the son of Alpheus, who was probably the only apostle then at Jerusalem, except St. Peter. He was in great esteem among the apostles, and wrote the *epistle* which bears his name. The papists will have it that St. Peter, at this time retiring from Jerusalem, went to Rome, to found a Christian church there; but they say so, only because they apprehend that it makes for their purpose to have men believe so: for they have no ancient or authentic history to support their assertion of his going thither so early, if at all.

Ver. 19. *And commanded that they should be put to death.*] *And commanded them to be led away to execution.* It is well known that the word *ἀποθνήσκειν* has this signification;

and found him not, he examined the keepers, and ^a commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to ^b Cæsarea, and *there* abode.

20 ¶ And Herod ^{*} was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus † the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was ^b nourished by the king's *country*.

^{*} Prov. 1. 16. & 4. 16. & 12. 10. Pl. 26. 9, 10. & 76. 10.
† Gr. *that was over the king's bed-chamber.*

^a Ch. 9. 40. & 21. 8. & 23. 23. & 25. 4.
^b 1 Kings, 5. 9, 11. Ezek. 27. 17.

^c Or *bare an hostile mind, intending war.*
^d Dan. 4. 30, 37, 37. Job, 40. 2, 11, 12. & 9. 13.

thus the wicked suffered in the room of the righteous. Herod, probably, punished the keepers with such severity, lest the apprehension of a miraculous deliverance should have prevailed, and so Christianity have gained, as it probably did, additional strength. What had so notoriously happened to all the twelve apostles, in a circumstance much resembling this, ch. v. 19. would no doubt add great weight to such a representation; and it seems that this seasonable interposition of Divine Providence, joined with the death of Herod soon after, put a speedy end to this persecution.

Ver. 19. 20. And he went down from Judea, &c.] See on ch. viii. 40. Herod the Great, after he had built Cæsarea Palestinæ, had instituted games to the honour of Cæsar, which were to be celebrated every fifth year. Not long after the apprehending of St. Peter, the usual time recurred for the celebration of these games. Herod Agrippa went down to Cæsarea upon this occasion. Another affair which called him to that part of his dominions was, his being highly offended with the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, against whom he meditated a war; but they being trading cities, and unable to carry on their traffic without a free commerce in Galilee and other parts of Herod's dominions, whence they used to purchase large quantities of corn and other provisions, they bribed Blastus the king's chamberlain, who had great influence over his master, and by that means obtained peace. Josephus confirms this account of Herod's journey, which, according to him, was in the third year of his reign over the whole country. See 1 Kings, v. 9—11. Ezek. xxvii. 17. Instead of *was highly displeased*, Heylin reads *was preparing to make war*, — Συμαχίων: and instead of *was nourished*, he reads *subsisted*.

Ver. 21—23. And upon a set day Herod, &c.] Upon occasion of the games and approaching festival hinted at in the last verse, there was a great resort of the governors and principal men of the neighbouring provinces, and of persons of figure from all the surrounding countries. On the second day of that solemnity, Herod Agrippa came early in the morning, most probably into the amphitheatre, built by his grandfather Herod the Great, dressed in a robe of most curious workmanship, all made of silver, as Josephus informs us; which, reflecting the rays of the rising sun with an unusual and almost insupportable splendor, gave him a most awful and majestic appearance. In that

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

22 And the people gave a shout, *saying*, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.*

23 And ^d 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.

magnificent manner he sat upon his throne, and made an oration to the people; which when he had finished, they cried out with flattering acclamations, “Surely this is the *Bath kol*, — the *speech of God*, — and not of any mortal man!” See the Syriac version. The king was pleased with this blasphemous applause, and did not reprove the persons, nor reject their impious adulation. Mr. Fleming imagines, that they herein referred to the glory with which the *Shechinah* used to appear; and that Herod being profane enough to assume the honour of it, provoked the Divine Majesty beyond any further sufferance; so that he sent a disease upon him, which rendered him equally *contemptible* and *miserable*. “As he did not rebuke this impious flattery, says Josephus, he was immediately seized with exquisite and racking tortures in his bowels, so that he was compelled, before he left the place, to own his folly in admitting such acclamations, and upbraided those about him with the wretched condition in which they saw *their God*; and being carried out of the assembly to his palace, he expired in violent agonies the fifth day after he was taken, in the fifty-fourth year of his age, and the seventh of his reign;” reckoning from the time of his first advancement by Caligula to the tetrarchy of his uncle Philip, being the fourth year of the emperor Claudius, in the year of the Christian æra, 44. The word Σκωληκώδρωτος, ver. 23. signifies in the general *consumed with vermin*, and may express the disease called *morbus pedicularis*, of which several cruel and persecuting princes have died. Eilsner has given several instances of the madness of heathen princes, who arrogated divinity to themselves, and came to the most infamous and shocking ends. Antiochus Epiphanes and Herod the Great both died in the same manner with Herod Agrippa. See 2 Maccab. ix. 9. and on Matth. ii. 19. Herod Agrippa's knowledge of the true God, and of his jealousy with respect to divine honours, no doubt aggravated his guilt. The reader will find, by referring to Josephus, a wonderful harmony between the accounts which he and St. Luke have given of this affair. Josephus is indeed larger and more express; though out of a partial fondness, as it seems, for Herod Agrippa, whom he had so much extolled, he has concealed the particular disease, which was the true cause of the excruciating pains in the bowels which he mentions. Herod left behind him a son called *Agrippa*, then

24 ¶ But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 ¶ And Barnabas and Saul returned from

Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them ² John, whose surname was Mark.

* If. 2. 2, 3. & 55. 11. Ch. 6. 7. & 19. 20. Col. 1. 6. 23. & Theff. 3. 1. Prov. 28. 28. ¹ Or charge. Ch. 11. 29, 30. ² Ver. 12. & 13. 5, 13. * 15. 37, 38. Col. 4. 10. Philom. 24. 1 Pet. 5. 13.

then seventeen years of age, before whom St. Paul afterwards appeared, and made an apology for Christianity. He left also two daughters, taken notice of in the New Testament; namely, *Berenice*, who was married to Herod king of Chalcis, his father's brother, being sixteen years of age; and *Drusilla*, who was afterwards married to the governor Felix; as well as *Mariamne*, of whom there is no mention in the Scripture. After the death of Herod Agrippa, the kingdom was again reduced to a Roman province, when the persecution of the Christians for a while abated. Comp. 2 Sam. xxiv. 16. 2 Kings, xix. 35.

Ver. 24. Grew and multiplied.] The expressions here used relate properly to vegetables, and may be intended to signify, that the growth of the gospel, that is, its prevalence in the minds and lives of some, was, as it were, the means of sowing that divine seed in the hearts of many more. See Mark, iv. 26, &c.

Ver. 25. And—when they had fulfilled their ministry,] When they had delivered up the alms which they brought from Antioch to the elders at Jerusalem, ch. xi. 29, 30. and finished all their ministerial business there.—Thus ends the second period of the history of the first planting of Christianity, in which the conversion of the devout Gentiles, otherwise called proselytes of the gate, is chiefly treated of; and here the history of the *Apostles of the circumcision* is very naturally dropped; for it does not appear from the New Testament that they ever preached to idolatrous Gentiles; at least, before the destruction of Jerusalem. That was the province of the apostle of the *uncircumcision* and his co adjutors, whose labours with, and success among the idolatrous Gentiles, form the subject of the following chapters.

Inferences.—How strange a consideration is it, that a murder like this of St. James should *please the Jews!* To see the *slaughter* of one of the most excellent persons that ever adorned their nation, one of the greatest benefactors that had ever appeared in all the list of the prophetic and inspired race, *slain with the sword* of a lawless, time-serving tyrant! yet thus it was that they proceeded to *fill up the measure of their fathers*, Matth. xxiii. 32. and such was still the hardness of their hearts, that after having rejected the message, they soon came to hate the messengers, and to thirst for their blood;—the surest token of wrath coming upon them to the uttermost! As indeed it was but a few years more, and such an execution was done upon them, as seemed to be the accumulated vengeance due for all the righteous blood from Abel to James.

Peter is also imprisoned, and bound in chains; but the prayers and tears of the church contending for his delivery, despicable as they might appear to his enemies, pierce the clouds of heaven; and they find, to their shame and confusion, that *his Redeemer is strong*, Jer. 1. 34. The *angel of the Lord Jesus* is sent to his faithful servant in his

tribulation: he comes, and finds him, secure in his innocence, and happy in hope, *sleeping between those two guards*, who, perhaps, in a few hours were to have been his executioners; and sleeping so sweetly found, that the brightness of the angelic presence did not immediately awaken him. The angel *smites him*, and his *chains fall off*; the *iron gates are opened*, as with a thought, and the prisoner is set at full liberty:—and thus does the angel of death *smite* as it were, but with a gentle blow, the servants of Christ; and the fetters of mortality fall off; the doors of the dungeon are opened; they are led triumphantly into the new Jerusalem, and there find another kind of society, another kind of rest, another kind of joy, far more noble, sweet, and high, than Peter knew even in the first transports of his wondrous deliverance.

The apostle was so venerated and beloved by the disciples, that on his behalf we find the prayers of the night are added to those of the day. Pious men and women, the aged and the young, with equal solicitude, assemble on this important occasion; and, while they are praying, the God who *heareth prayer* answers them: *while they are yet speaking, he hears their cry*, Isai. lxxv. 24. Behold! Peter himself is sent among them, to bring the astonishing news of that *real deliverance*, which at first seemed to him but as a *vision of the night*. What delight must *such a mercy* give their melting hearts, especially when considered as an *answer of prayer!* What an encouragement must it be to them all, to *hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering*, and, in every future exigence, by *prayer and supplication to make their requests known unto God!*

St. Peter was solicitous that it might be known to the surviving James, and the other apostles, that so they might glorify God in him, and take encouragement from it to go on boldly in the prosecution of their work. With such views as these should *we* also own the goodness of God in any deliverance he grants us, that others may learn to confide in him, and may join their praises with ours.

Herod, in his disappointment, turns his rage on the soldiers, and makes those unhappy men the victims of his wrath,—unhappy indeed, if they had not learnt from St. Peter, while they had him in their power, that lesson which his charity would be so glad to teach them, in what he apprehended to be the last moments of his life,—to believe in Jesus for life and salvation. But whatever they suffered, a much severer fate was reserved for Herod, on whom God quickly began to visit that innocent and pious blood which he had spilt, and that too after which he had thirsted; for in *His* all-piercing sight he must have appeared the *murderer of Peter*, as well as of James.

The *wrath of a king*, says Solomon, *is as messengers of death; but a wise man will pacify it*, Prov. xvi. 14. The world generally teaches this wisdom to its votaries; and the ties of *interest* are felt, when those of *affection* have but little force. *Tyre and Sidon were nourished by the King's*

C H A P. XIII.

Paul and Barnabas are chosen to go to the Gentiles. Of Sergius Paulus, and Elymas the forcerer. Paul preacheth at Antioch, that Jesus is Christ. The Gentiles believe; but the Jews gainsay, and blaspheme: whereupon they turn to the Gentiles.

[Anno Domini 45.]

NOW ^a there were in the church that was at Antioch certain ^b prophets and

teachers; as ^c Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, ^d which had been brought up with ^e Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ^f ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, ^g Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

^a Ch. 11. 20, 25, 26. & 12. 25. & 14. 26. ^b Ch. 11. 28. & 21. 10, 11. ^c Ch. 4. 36, 22—26, 30. & xiv. xv. Gal. 2. 9, 13. Rom. 16. 27. ^d Or Herod's sister brother. ^e Luke, 3. 1, 19. & 13. 31. & 23. 7. not ch. xii. ^f Deut. 10. 8. & 18. 5, 7. 1 Chron. 23. 13. Mat. 9. 15. Ch. 6. 4. & 2. 42. ^g Numb. 8. 11. Mat. 9. 38. Ch. 9. 15. & 22. 21. Rom. 1. 1. & 10. 15. Gal. 1. 15. & 2. 8, 9. Eph. 3. 8. 1 Tim. 2. 7. 2 Tim. 1. 11. & 2. 2. Heb. 5. 4.

country, and therefore they sought peace with him. But how much more necessary is it for all countries, and people, and princes, to seek peace with the God of heaven, by whom the earth and all its inhabitants are nourished; who giveth rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and can, by his sovereign word, turn the heavens into brass, and the earth into iron. Deut. xxviii. 23.

How vain and impious was the applause of the servile multitude, when they were so ready to compliment a mortal man, in shining apparel, and on a royal throne, with the title of divinity! How wretched the infatuation of his mind, when he could receive that ascription without horror, nay, and even with complacency! Thus do pomp and power, wealth and grandeur, corrupt and take away the heart of their possessors. Never is a mortal nearer to destruction, than when he forgets that he is a mortal.

With pleasure, no doubt, did the angel of the Lord come down to execute upon this proud and persecuting prince the vengeance due to the honours of God which he had invaded, and the blood of his saints which he had spilt.—Let us adore the triumph of the injured Majesty of heaven. Herod was smitten with death, with a death equally tormenting and ignominious. Vermin devoured this god: nor could all his robes, his guards, or his physicians, preserve his living body from being as easy a prey to them, as the carcase of the meanest slave.

Thus is the Almighty Sovereign of the universe known by the judgments which he executeth upon the haughty ones of the earth: and well might the gospel flourish on occasion of such an event, when this royal corpse was (as it were) given for manure to the roots of that sacred vine, which he, in contempt of the King of Kings, by whom it was planted, had impiously endeavoured to root up and destroy.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Herod had now, through the favour of Claudius the Roman emperor, received the government of Judea as well as of Galilee. Being a bitter enemy to Christianity, he interrupted the rest which the church had for a while enjoyed, and lighted up afresh the fire of persecution.

1. He began to harass and distress the saints at Jerusalem; either countenancing those who insulted and abused them, or imprisoning and persecuting them on account of their profession. The faithful must be always prepared to suffer.

2. He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. Thus did the apostle James drink of the cup with his Lord, as was foretold; and was the first of the apostles who sealed his testimony with his blood. He was probably executed in prison, like the Baptist, by a private order from the king, and led the way to his brethren, who were hereby taught to prepare for the like fate and be faithful unto death.

3. Because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also; glad to ingratiate himself with the people, at the same time that he gratified his own enmity against the disciples of Jesus; and as St. Peter, as an especially active, zealous preacher, was peculiarly obnoxious. Then were the days of unleavened bread, the feast of the Passover approaching. When therefore he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quarters of soldiers, sixteen in number, who guarded him by four at a time, and relieved each other, to keep him, that he might not escape, intending after Easter, or the Passover, to bring him forth to the people, to gratify them with the pleasing spectacle of his ignominious execution. Note: (1.) They who study to please men, will be led into many a guilty deed. (2.) Success in wickedness often emboldens sinners to proceed to greater lengths.

2dly, To human view St. Peter's case seemed desperate; and a few days would complete the triumph of his persecutors. But God had otherwise ordained; and then the craft of the wisest and the power of the mightiest are alike vain.

1. During St. Peter's imprisonment, prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him; they were fervent and frequent at the throne of grace; perhaps one company after another continued their incessant supplications, deeply concerned for fear of losing him after all their other breaches, and trusting that, though no human prospect of his deliverance appeared, the Lord would, in his own time and way, rescue his suffering servant from the hands of his blood-thirsty persecutors. Note: When the faithful ministers of Jesus are suffering for their testimony, the church is called to pray earnestly for them, that, if the Lord so please, they may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, and spared for farther usefulness.

2. The time fixed for St. Peter's execution now drew near; the next was the fatal day appointed to bring him forth to the people. St. Peter, in the mean time, was kept with the greatest care, chained to two soldiers within the prison,

3 And ^s when they had fasted and prayed, and laid *their* hands on them, they sent *them* away.

4 So they, ^a being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to ¹ Cyprus.

^s Ch. 6. 6. & 8. 15, 17. & 14. 23. 1 Tim. 5. 22.

^a Mat. 9. 38. Rom. 10. 15. Ch. 20. 23. & 16. 6, 7.

¹ Ch. 11. 19. & 4. 36. & 27. 4.

prison, while the guards kept the door without, to prevent any rescue or escape; and never could greater precaution be taken. Yet, though his danger was so imminent, his case so desperate, unterrified, composed, in peace he sweetly slept, while probably the eyes of his malicious foes were held waking, and their disturbed minds could take no rest on beds of ivory. A good cause, a good conscience, and the desire to glorify God, whether by life or death, raised him superior to every fear; and, though expecting no deliverance, he took his wonted repose. *Note*; (1.) God suffers us sometimes to be reduced to extremities, that his power and grace in rescuing us from our trials may appear with more distinguished lustre. (2.) When wicked men seem to have ensured the success of their enterprizes, God is often pleased to blast their designs, and to cover them with confusion.

3. God sends his angel to deliver the faithful prisoner; and he, whom neither gates nor guards could exclude, suddenly entering the prison in a blaze of light, awakened Peter with a gentle touch from his slumbers; then, bidding him arise, his chains marvellously fell off from his hands; and, being now at liberty, the angel said unto him, *Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals; and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.* St. Peter obeyed, and as yet apprehended not the reality of the facts, but supposed the scene was merely visionary. Passing now the first and second bodies of guards without molestation, who were cast into a profound sleep, they came unto the iron gate, which opened of its own accord; and, being now in the city, the angel accompanied Peter through one street, and then departed, his presence being no longer needful; and Peter could then provide for his own safety. *Note*; (1.) We have in St. Peter's deliverance a lively image of our redemption. We lie by nature fast bound in the chains of sin, and sleep securely, not apprehensive of danger, though ruin is before us. Then God sends his gospel as this angel, and, if we will receive it, his Spirit smiting our hearts awakens us from our security and insensibility. Quickened by grace, the chains of corruption fall off, and we are now enabled to rise and walk, clothed with the Spirit of holiness, and our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Under divine light and guidance the faithful saints are enabled to pass through numberless difficulties, and through hosts of enemies hold on their way, till the iron gate of death appears in view, and, opening wide, admits them into the new Jerusalem. (2.) No difficulties are insurmountable, if God be for us. (3.) When we have the ordinary means before us, we are not to expect miracles.

4. St. Peter, being left alone, soon recovered from his surprize, and, reflecting on what was past, was fully assured that the scene was not visionary, but real; that the Lord had sent his angel, and delivered him out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews, who waited impatiently for his execution. Deliberating then

whither in prudence he should direct his steps, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together, praying; and importunate no doubt they were, when the danger was now so near: when, lo! a most astonishing answer is given to their prayers; behold, Peter knocked at the door,—a visitant little expected by them. A damsel, named Rhoda, ran immediately into the porch, to listen whether it were a friend or foe, before she opened the gate; when, hearing Peter's well-known voice, so transported was she, that, instead of opening the door, she ran into the room where they were all assembled for prayer, and told them, to their astonishment, that Peter stood before the gate. Unable to credit so strange an incident, they said, *thou art mad*; it is impossible. But she constantly affirmed the certainty of the fact, that it was even so. Then said they, it is his angel, one of the celestial spirits, who imitates his voice, and brings some tidings concerning him, or his own spirit delivered from the flesh. Meantime Peter repeated his knocks at the gate; and, going down, they opened the door, when with amazement they beheld him; and, eager to know the circumstances of this extraordinary event, they together began to ask him concerning it: whereupon he beckoned with his hand, commanding silence, while he declared to them his miraculous deliverance. And as no time was to be lost to secure himself, having charged them to inform James and the brethren of his escape, for their comfort and encouragement, he departed, and went into another place, where he might be secured from the danger. *Note*; (1.) They who persevere in prayer, will at last meet an answer of peace. (2.) Though when called of God, neither death nor danger must deter us from the way of duty, yet, when the Lord opens a door for our escape, we may lawfully provide for our own safety.

5. The next morning the guards were in the utmost consternation at finding their prisoner gone, and justly dreaded the rage of the king, as if they had been chargeable with neglect or connivance. In vain strict search is made by Herod every where; and, unable to find Peter, he wreaks his vengeance on the keepers, who could not give the least satisfactory account of the matter, and therefore were ordered to be put to death for their supposed negligence or corruption. Then retiring from Judea to Cæsarea, in order to celebrate games in honour of Augustus Cæsar, he abode there for some time. *Note*; God can, when he pleases, hide his people from the malice of their most envenomed foes.

3dly, Proud persecutors justly meet an avenging God.

1. Herod's pride now reached the summit of wickedness. On some provocation given him by the maritime cities of Tyre and Sidon, Herod was highly offended; and, justly fearing the wrath of this haughty monarch, they instantly dispatched ambassadors to him to make their submission, and deprecate his displeasure; for, as they chiefly drew their provision from his territories, if he had prohibited

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God^k in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also^l John to *their* minister.

6 ¶ And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain^m sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jetus:

7 Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation)ⁿ withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

^k Mat. 10. 17. Ch. 5. 20. & 14. 1. & 17. 1, 2, 10. & 18. 4, 6, 7, 19. Ver. 14, 46. ^l Ch. 12. 12, 25. & 15. 37. Ver. 13. Col. 4. 10. ^m Ch. 8. 9. Rev. 21. 8. ⁿ Exod. 7. 11. 2 Tim. 3. 8.

hibited his subjects from supplying them, it would have exposed them to a famine. Therefore having by presents gained Blastus the king's chamberlain for their friend, who had a considerable influence with his master, *they desired peace*; and a day was fixed to give them public audience. Herod, arrayed in royal robes, glittering, says Josephus, with silver, and reflecting the sun-beams so strongly as dazzled the eyes of the spectators, and seated on his gorgeous throne, *made an oration unto them*, probably expatiating on the provocations of the Tyrians, and displaying his own clemency in pardoning them on their submission. The people, delighted with his splendid appearance, pleased with his discourse, and willing to flatter his pride, shouted their blasphemous admiration, as if they heard a present deity, saying, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man*; while he, well pleased, received the impious adulation.

2. Instantly God smote him, and hurled him from his towering height of pride into the abyss of despicable wretchedness. An angel, the executioner of wrath, struck the fatal blow, *because he gave not God the glory*, and dared accept such adoration. A foul, filthy, and tormenting disease seized his vitals; in agonies he lingered five days; worms bred in his putrid carcase; and, devoured alive, he miserably perished, a spectacle of horror to every beholder. So easily can God abase those who walk in pride, and make the meanest worm that crawls, an instrument of his vengeance.

3. In spite of all persecution and opposition, *the word of God grew and multiplied*, spreading with rapidity and vast success. And Barnabas and Saul, having finished their business at Jerusalem, returned again to Antioch. *Note*: When ministers are called abroad, and have finished their work, they must hasten back again to their regular appointed labours.

CHAP. XIII.

Ver. 1. Now there were in the church—at Antioch] The last verse of the foregoing chapter ought to have been the first of this; for ch. xii. 24. finishes the history of Herod's death, and the effects which it had upon the Christian church; and then, ver. 25. a new history is begun, which is carried on in the present chapter. Some have conjectured that *Niger* mentioned in this verse, was Simon the Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, who was compelled to bear the cross after Christ; for it is very probable that he was called, *Niger*, as being of a *tawny* or *black* complexion, as the Africans generally are. The only

objection to this is, that *Lucius*, who is next mentioned, is called a *Cyrenian* by way of distinction from the other, as if he had been the only Cyrenian there present. But this Simon, called *Niger*, might be a native of some other part of Africa. Whoever he was, the Romans most probably had given him the surname of *Niger*. This is one instance out of many, of St. Luke's Latinizing, where he preserves even the Latin termination. *Manaen*, probably, from the circumstance here mentioned, was a person of some rank and condition. Josephus mentions one *Manaen*, an Essene, who had foretold to Herod the Great, while he was a boy, that he should be a king, and who was afterwards in high favour with him; and some have thought this was his son.

Ver. 2. For the work whereunto I have called them.] If there be any reference to a past fact in these words, it is probably to some revelation personally made to Paul and Barnabas, to signify that they should take a journey into several counties of Asia Minor, to preach the gospel there. See ch. xi. 20, 21.

Ver. 4. Sent forth by the Holy Ghost.] This seems to be added to remind us, that though they were solemnly recommended to God by the prayers of their brethren, their authority was not derived from *them*, but from the Holy Ghost; and consequently affords a further proof of the miraculous conversion of St. Paul. See the *Inferences* on ch. ix. *Seleucia* lay fifteen miles below Antioch, upon the same river, the Orontes, and was five miles from the place where that river falls into the sea. It had its name from Seleucus Nicator, by whom it was built. From hence they sailed to the island of Cyprus, situated in the eastern part of the Mediterranean sea, being the native country of Barnabas. As this island was not far from Judea, it abounded with Jews. The first place which they arrived at in that island, was the city Salamis, which lay upon the eastern extremity, and was one of the highest ports to Syria. See the next note.

Ver. 6—8. Paphos.] The city of Paphos was seated on the western extremity of the island of Cyprus, and famous among the Heathens for the temple and obscene worship of the Paphian Venus. There resided Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul, who was a man of good understanding, and well disposed to receive the truth, and obey it; and as he had heard of the character of these two apostles, and, very probably, some imperfect rumour of the Christian religion, he sent for them, and desired that they would give him an account of the Christian doctrine. As he

9 Then Saul, (who also is called ° Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 And said, ° O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease ° to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12 Then the ° deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

13 ¶ Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch ° in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and sat down.

15 And after ° the reading of the law and the prophets the ° rulers of the synagogue

° A Roman name, fit for an apostle of the Gentiles. Ver. 4. 7. P Mat. 3. 7 & 13. 38. & 23. 33. John, 8. 44. 1 John, 3. 8. 9 Mat. 23. 13. Luke, 11. 52. 1 Ezek. 6. 14. Gen. 19. 11. 2 Kings, 5. 18. Ch. 2. 5, 10. & 9. 5, 8. ° Roman governor. Ver. 7. Mat. 27. 2. Mat. 27. 54. Luke, 7. 16. Ch. 3. 5, 11, 14. & 12. 23, 24. & 19. 17. ° Ch. 12. 25. Ver. 5. Ch. 15. 38. Phil. 2. 21. ° Not Antioch in Syria, as ver. 1. Ch. 11. 19—26. & 14. 26. ° Ch. 16. 13. & 17. 2. & 18. 4. Ver. 5. ° Ver. 27. Ch. 15. 21. Luke, 4. 16. ° Mark, 5. 22. Luke, 13. 14.

was the first of the idolatrous Gentiles, to whom the gospel was ever preached, Barnabas and Saul did not go to offer it to him; but he sent for them, as Cornelius, the first-fruits of the devout Gentiles, sent for St. Peter; requesting it as a favour, that he might hear them preach the gospel. But with the proconsul there was one of the *magi*, a false prophet of the nation of the Jews, whose name was Barjesus. He had a great influence over the governor; and when this Barjesus (who was otherwise called *Elymas*, which in the Arabic tongue signifies the *magician*;) found that the proconsul was inclined to hear and embrace the Christian doctrine; he secretly, and with all his might, endeavoured to dissuade him from it. St. Paul soon detected his malice and wickedness, and severely reprimanded him, denouncing against him the approaching judgments of God; just as St. Peter had reprimanded the hypocrisy and wickedness of Simon the magician, or magician, and by his apostolic power inflicted death upon Ananias and Sapphira for their fraud and lying.

Ver. 9. Saul, (who also is called Paul,) The reasons which have been assigned for Saul's taking the name of Paul, are various and many. Some think that he had the name of Paul given him from converting Sergius Paulus, as Scipio was called *Africanus* from his conquering Africa, and as other Romans had names given them from subduing other countries. Others suppose that he had received at his circumcision the two names of Paul and Saul; that is, Paul as his Roman name, for he was born a freeman of Rome;—and Saul, as his Jewish name; for he was a Jew, and even an Hebrew of the Hebrews. As therefore he used to be called Saul, while he continued among the Jews, that being a more common and acceptable name among them; so henceforth, being to go among the Gentiles, he took the name of Paul, as one which would be better known, and more acceptable to them. For the same reason Silas, who was afterwards St. Paul's great companion, appears to have had also the name of Sylvanus, and to have gone by the former name among the Jews, and by the latter among the Romans; for he seems to have been a freeman of Rome, as well as St. Paul. Beza thinks, that

St. Paul having conversed hitherto chiefly with Jews and Syrians, to whom the name of Saul was familiar, and now coming among Greeks and Romans, they would naturally pronounce his name Paul; as one whose Hebrew name was *Jochanan*, would be called by the Greeks and Latins, *Johannes*, by the French *Jean*, by the Dutch *Hans*, and by the English *John*; and he thinks that the family of this proconsul might be the first who addressed or spoke to him by the name of Paul.

Ver. 13. Now when Paul and his company] It is observable, that from this period St. Luke generally mentions Paul before Barnabas, whereas he had hitherto always mentioned him last: nay, in reckoning up the five, who were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch, he put Barnabas the first, and Saul last; because very probably Barnabas was one of the oldest, and Saul the youngest convert among them: but now, when he became so eminent an apostle, as not to come a whit behind the chief of the apostles, he is mentioned the first, as the principal person of the history, and the most honoured of them all. Looking with the rest of his company from Paphos, they sailed, most probably, up the river *Cestrus*, to Perga, a town of Pamphylia, not far from the coast of Asia Minor, near to which was a temple dedicated to Diana. There seems to have been neither a Jewish synagogue, nor profane temple in that town; for we read nothing of their attempting to preach the gospel there at this time. But there it was that John Mark left them, and went back to Jerusalem; as supposing perhaps that St. Peter, in whose company he seems to have delighted most, might be returned thither; especially as king Herod was dead, who had made such an attempt upon the life of that apostle. Whether Mark made any scruple of receiving the idolatrous Gentiles into the Christian church, or was discouraged by the dangers and difficulties of such an attempt; or was prevailed upon to return merely out of his extraordinary regard and affection for St. Peter, cannot now be determined with any certainty.

Ver. 14, 15. But when they departed from Perga, &c.] From Perga, Paul and Barnabas went further into the country,

sent unto them, saying, ^b Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

16 Then Paul stood up: and ^c beckoning with *his* hand said, ^d Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17 ^e The God of this people of Israel chose

our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, ^f and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

18 ^g And about the time of forty years ^h * suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19 And ⁱ when he had destroyed seven

^b Ch. 1. 16. & 2. 29, 37. & 7. 2. & 15. 7, 13. & 22. 1. with Heb. 13. 22. ^c Ch. 12. 17. & 19. 33. & 21. 40. ^d Ver. 26, 43, 46. ^e Gen. 17. 7—14. Exod. i—xiv. Deut. 4. 20. & 11. 2—4. Pf. lxxviii. cxiv. cvii. cxxxvi. 1f. 63. 7—14. Jer. 32. 20, 21. Ezek. 16. 3—14. & xx. Neh. 9. 9—11. ^f Exod. 6. 6. & 12. 31. & 13. 14, 16. ^g Exod. 16. 2. Num. 14. 22, 34, 35. Pf. 78. 38. & 95. 10. ^h * Or bore and fed them as a nurse. ⁱ Gen. 15. 19—21. Exod. 23. 23. Deut. 7. 1. Josh. xii—xxi. Pf. 78, 55.

country, and came to Antioch, a considerable city in the district of Pisidia; which lay north of Pamphylia, and consequently further from the sea. The situation of this place is particularized by the sacred writer, to intimate how carefully it should be distinguished from Antioch in Syria, so much more frequently mentioned in this history. The apostles, as was usual, entered into the Jewish synagogue at Antioch on the sabbath-day, and sat down most probably in the chairs of the doctors, to intimate their errand. The ancient Jews had divided the law into fifty-three or fifty-four sections, and the prophets into as many; and by usually reading a section of each every sabbath-day, and joining two of the shortest together for two sabbath-days, they read the greatest part of the Old Testament over once every year. Some say, that the custom was introduced by Ezra, and indeed it appears to have been of an ancient date. Till that reading of the law and the prophets was over, Paul and Barnabas sat as hearers; but after the reading of the Scriptures, the rulers of the synagogue used to permit or desire whom they pleased to explain what had been read, or to make some useful exhortations to the people; and either knowing something of the character of these two apostles, or perhaps merely from their sitting in the chairs of the doctors, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, desiring that if they had any doctrine or pious exhortation to deliver to the people, they would speak freely and openly in the synagogue. See the note on Luke, iv. 16.

Ver. 16. Men of Israel, and ye that fear God.] This discourse seems chiefly intended to illustrate the divine œconomy in opening the gospel gradually, and preparing the Jews by temporal mercies, for others of a yet more important nature. The apostle, in consequence of this, had a very good opportunity of shewing his acquaintance with their scriptures, which it is well known they esteemed as the highest part of literature. The expression, *ye that fear God*, is ambiguous, and would best suit those who had, by embracing the Jewish religion, entered into covenant with the true God; yet so, as not to exclude any others, in whom a filial reverence for the Divine Being was a governing principle.

Ver. 17. The God of this people] The apostle preached the same God in whom the Jews already believed, and would have persuaded them likewise to have believed in Jesus of Nazareth, the promised Messiah, the eternal Son of God, God over all, blessed for ever. To convince them that he was so, they argued both from facts, and from the prophecies of the Old Testament. This was their usual method of treating both the Jews and devout Gentiles;

but when they addressed devout Gentiles alone, they did not recite the history of the Old Testament, and take their rise from the renowned ancestors of the Jewish nation; on the contrary, their language then was, *In every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him*: but when the Jews were the only, or the principal persons addressed, then they took their rise from the history of past dispensations, and particularly from Abraham the father of the nation, who was the first that was separated from an idolatrous world, and had the most express promise, *that in his Seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed*, as they were very eminently in Jesus Christ, his great Descendant. Abraham, for his faith and cheerful obedience, was entitled, “The father of the faithful;” and pious holy men were stiled, “The children of Abraham.” His name was in high esteem among the Jews, and one of the most likely to procure attention. St. Matthew, who wrote his gospel more immediately for the use of the converted Jews, begins our Lord’s genealogy with Abraham. St. Peter introduces his discourse to the Jews with the name of that great patriarch, ch. iii. 13. So does St. Stephen, ch. vii. 2. and St. Paul in this place mentions the name of Israel, taking occasion from the history of past dispensations to introduce the gospel doctrine; which was in brief, that the great promise made of old to the fathers, was now accomplished, and the Messiah actually come; for the Abrahamic covenant and the gospel had a great affinity, the law of Moses being only an intermediate state, to preserve at least one nation from idolatry, and prepare them for the reception of the Messiah. May we not hence conjecture, whenever they are said to go to the Jewish synagogue, and preach the word, that this was their common method, which they used more largely or briefly, as they saw occasion. Instead of *exalted*, Dr. Heylin reads *signalized*; and instead of, *brought them out with an high hand*, he reads, *brought them forth with high demonstrations of his power*. The sense of the verse may be expressed thus: “The God of Israel, the one only living and true God, chose our fathers, to bear their testimony against idolatry, and to receive the revelations of his mind and will; and he increased their numbers, and made them considerable: even when they were strangers in the land of Egypt, and when they were oppressed there, he miraculously, and by his mighty power, raised them from their low estate, and brought them out thence.”

Ver. 18. Suffered he their manners] Ἐτροπωθήσαν: He endured their behaviour, perverse and ungrateful as it was.

Ver.

nations in the land of Ghanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20 And after that he gave unto them judges, about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he had removed him, he

raised up unto them David to be their king: to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

24 When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

Judges, ii—xvi. 1 Sam. i—vii. Neh. 9. 27. 1 Kings, 6. 1. 1 Sam. viii—xxxi. Hosea, 13. 11. 1 Chron. x. 1 Sam. 15. 28. & 16. 13. Pf. 7. 6. & 78. 70—71. & 89. 19, 20. 1 Sam. 13. 14. 2 Sam. 7. 12. Pf. 89. 35. & 132. 11. 11. 11. 1. & 9. 7. Jer. 23. 5. Luke, 1. 32, 69. with ch. 2. 30. & 3. 22, 26. & 5. 30. & 7. 37. Mat. 1. 21. Titus, 2. 13. Mal. 3. 1. & 4. 5, 6. Mat. 3. 1—5. Mark, 1. 2, 5. John, 3. 23.

Ver. 20. And after that, &c.] And after these things, which lasted about four hundred and fifty years, he gave them judges, until Samuel the prophet. Mill in Loc. Carpzov. Introd. part i. p. 186, &c. According to this, the apostle begins his computation from the birth of Isaac, when Canaan was promised to Abraham and his seed, and carries it down to their getting possession of that land, and its being divided unto them by lot, which was about four hundred and fifty years; so that, according to this interpretation, the time in which the judges reigned in Israel is not hence determined. There are, however, chronologists who settle the matter satisfactorily enough, according to our version. Sir John Marsham, and others after him, have conjectured, that the judges in Israel did not reign over the whole nation one after another, but sometimes more than one reigned at the same time in different parts of the land. However, the reigns of the several judges, when added together, amount exactly to four hundred and fifty years; and it is likely that was the common computation of the Jews in St. Paul's days, from which the apostle had no particular occasion to vary. Dr. Whitby also has the authority of many great names, ancient and modern, to justify him in following the chronology of Josephus, who places the building of the temple in the five hundred and ninety-second year after Israel's going out of Egypt; which would admit of allowing three hundred and thirty-nine years for the administration of the judges, and one hundred and eleven for the years of the several tyrannical oppressions; in all four hundred and fifty years; reserving forty for Samuel and Saul together, forty for David, and four for Solomon, in whose fifth year the temple was begun; and the coincidence of the numbers in the book of Judges is remarkable, as illustrated by Dr. Lightfoot on the place, and Biscoe in his Boyle's Lectures, p. 666. See Lampe's Compendium of Eccles. Hist. lib. i. cap. 5. Benson, L'Enfant, Whitby, &c.

Ver. 21. By the space of forty years.] Several very considerable critics are of opinion, that the forty years here spoken of, do not all belong to the actual reign of Saul, but include a considerable part of Samuel's government. Biscoe, who is followed by Bedford, in his *Chronology*, seems to have proved very satisfactorily, that the reign of Saul continued all these forty years. He is far from thinking that Saul's reign is to be reckoned only from Samuel's

death; the contrary is most apparent; and he has abundantly proved, that the actions assigned to him must have taken up many years. But of the *forty* in question, it may well suffice to allow twenty to him from his anointing, and the former *twenty* (computed from the grand action at Misphe) to Samuel, who might at that time be past his prime, and so be inclined to associate his sons with him; till, on their miscarriages, the people took occasion to demand a king; who, at first, we are sure, from the history, lived privately, and whose authority was never so great as to swallow up that of so illustrious a prophet and judge. It was a common opinion prevailing among the Jews, that Saul survived Samuel but little more than two years.

Ver. 22. A man after mine own heart,] Though we have spoken largely on this head in the proper place (1 Sam. xiii. 13, 14.) yet as the expression has been cavilled at by some, we cannot withhold the following observation of Dr. Benson's: "When it is said, that king David was a man after God's own heart, it ought to be understood of his public, not of his private character: he was a man after God's own heart, because he ruled his people Israel according to the divine will. He did not allow of idolatry; he did not set up for absolute power; he was guided in the government of the nation by the law of Moses as the standing rule of government, and by the prophet, or the divine oracle, whereby God gave directions upon particular emergencies. Whatever Saul's private character was, he was not a good king in Israel. He did not follow the law, the oracle, and the prophet, but attempted to be absolute, and thereby to subvert the constitution of the kingdom. That this was the meaning of David's being a man after God's own heart, will easily appear from comparing the last-mentioned passage, 1 Sam. xv. 28. xxviii. 17, 18. 1 Chron. x. 13, 14. Pf. lxxviii. 70, &c. and lxxxix. 20, &c."

Ver. 24. When John had first preached] St. Paul mentions the preaching of John the Baptist in this incidental manner, as a thing already known to them, because it gave so universal an alarm to the whole Jewish nation, that it might probably be heard of in foreign countries, at least as remote as Pisidia. Raphelius has taken pains to prove, from similar passages in the Greek classics, that both the clauses in the next verse, *Whom think ye that I am not he*, may be considered as united in an affirmation, and rendered,

25 And as John ^o fulfilled his course, he said, ^p Whom think ye that I am? I am not *he*. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of *his* feet I am not worthy to loose.

26 ^r Men *and* brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because ^t they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which ^v are read every sabbath-day, they have fulfilled *them* in condemning *him*.

28 ^w And though they found no cause of death *in him*, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, ^x they took *him* down from

the tree, and laid *him* in a sepulchre.

30 ^y But God raised him from the dead:

31 ^z And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his ^{aa} witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the ^{ab} promise which was made unto the fathers,

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, ^{ac} Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, ^{ad} I will give you the sure ^{ae} mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*,

^o Ch. 20. 24. ^p Tim. 4. 7. ^r John, 1. 20, 26, 27. ^s Mat. 3. 17. ^t Luke, 3. 16. ^u Ch. 19. 4. ^v Phil. 3. 8. ^w 1 Cor. 2. 2. ^x 2 Cor. 4. 5. ^y See ver. 15, 16, 42. ^z Pf. 147. 19, 20. ^{aa} Mat. 10. 6. & 22. 8, 9. ^{ab} Luke, 14. 21. ^{ac} Ch. 3. 26. ^{ad} Ver. 42, 46, 47. ^{ae} Ch. 28. 23. ^{af} Ch. 3. 17. ^{ag} John, 7. 26, 48. & 15. 21. & 16. 3. ^{ah} Luke, 23. 34. & 24. 20. ^{ai} 1 Cor. 2. 8. ^{aj} 1 Tim. 1. 13. ^{ak} 2 Cor. 3. 14. ^{al} Rom. 11. 25. ^{am} Ch. 15. 21. & 26. 22. & 28. 23. & 2. 16—26. & 4. 26—28. ^{an} Mat. 27. 22, 23. ^{ao} Mark, 15. 13, 13. ^{ap} Luke, 23. 21, 23. ^{aq} John, 19. 4—6. ^{ar} Ch. 3. 13—15. ^{as} Ch. 4. 30. ^{at} 1 Cor. 15. 4. ^{au} 1 Peter, 2. 24. ^{av} Mat. 27. 59. ^{aw} Mark, 15. 46. ^{ax} Luke, 23. 53. ^{ay} John, 19. 38. ^{az} If. 51. 9. ^{ba} Mat. 28. 6. ^{bb} John, 2. 19. & 10. 17. ^{bc} Ch. 2. 24, 32. & 3. 13, 26. & 4. 10. & 5. 31. & 10. 40. & 19. 31. ^{bd} Heb. 13. 20. ^{be} Mat. xxviii. ^{bf} Mark, xvi. ^{bg} Luke, xxiv. ^{bh} John, xx. xxi. ^{bi} Ch. 1. 3. ^{bj} Luke, 24. 48. ^{bk} Ch. 1. 8, 22. & 10. 41. ^{bl} Ch. 2. 39. ^{bm} Gen. 3. 15. & 22. 18. & 26. 4. & 49. 10. ^{bn} Deut. 18. 15. ^{bo} 2 Sam. 7. 12. ^{bp} Pf. 132. 11. ^{bq} H. 4. 7. & 7. 14. & 9. 6. & 11. 1. ^{br} Jer. 23. 5. ^{bs} Ezek. 34. 23. ^{bt} Daniel, 9. 2, 24—26. ^{bu} Gal. 3. 16. ^{bv} Pf. 2. 7. ^{bw} Heb. 1. 5. & 5. 5. ^{bx} If. 55. 3. ^{by} Septuagint, in many places, use for that which in the Hebrew signifies *mercies*. ^{bz} Pf. 89. 2—4, 19—29. ^{ca} Gr. *ta ofia, ho'y, or jast things*: which word the

rendered, "I am not the person whom you suppose me to be, that is, the Messiah." See Annot. ex Herodot. p. 251. The reader will refer for what follows to the passages in the margin.

Ver. 26. *And whosoever among you feareth God,*] That is, "You devout profelytes, who worship the true God; and whom we look upon as brethren, as well as the Jews." See ver. 16.

Ver. 27. *For they that dwell at Jerusalem, &c.*] He here anticipates a strong objection, "Why did not they at Jerusalem, and especially their rulers, believe?"—*They knew him not*, because they understood not those very prophets whom they read or heard continually. Their very condemning him, innocent as he was, proves that they understood not the prophecies concerning him; though their ignorance was wilful, being caused by their pride.

Ver. 29. *They took him down from the tree,*] The apostle was far from being ashamed to mention the most ignominious circumstances of his Master's sufferings to those who were strangers to the gospel, knowing how sufficiently he answered all that could be thence objected, by what he added and testified concerning his resurrection. See the next note.

Ver. 32, 33. *And we declare unto you glad tidings, &c.*] "And we ourselves, having seen the Lord Jesus since his resurrection, readily join in their testimony; and are come hither to proclaim to you the most joyful tidings

"that ever reached the ears of the sinful sons of men, viz. That God having in former ages made a gracious promise of the Messiah in whom all nations should be blessed, and having often repeated it to the patriarchs our pious ancestors, has now in his faithfulness actually accomplished it to us, their descendants, and the imitators of their faith; forasmuch as he has given the highest proof and demonstration of the divine and office-character of our Jesus, in that he raised him from the dead; and so shewed that he is the very person spoken of in the second psalm, where the eternal Father is brought in as saying to the Messiah, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*: that is, 'Thou art my true and proper Son; I, in the unsuccessful day of my eternity have, in an ineffable manner, begotten thee; and in the day of thy resurrection have I eminently manifested and declared it, and have further notified thee to be Lord and Heir of all, as the first-begotten and first-born from the dead, whom I have raised to all the honours of thy kingdom. See Rev. i. 5. Col. i. 18." Bishop Pearson well observes, that it is with peculiar propriety and beauty that God is said to have begotten Christ *on the day of his resurrection*, as he seemed then to be *born out of the earth anew*. See Rom. i. 4. Mr. L'Enfant says, that the anointing day of kings is sometimes called *their birth-day*, for which Heinius has produced some authorities.

Ver. 34. *Now no more to return to corruption,*] As Christ never

'Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

36 For David, * after he had ° served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption :

37 But he, whom God raised again saw no corruption.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins :

39 And by him † all that believe are justified from all things, from which ^h ye could not be

justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the ^l prophets ;

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish : for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

42 ¶ And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the ^k Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them † the next sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious profelytes

* Pf. 16. 10. Ch. 3. 27, 31. ° Or after he had in his own age served the will of God. ° Pf. 78. 70—72. Ch. 2. 29. & 20. 24. 2 Tim. 4. 7. † Kings, 2. 10. 1 Chr. 29. 28. † Ch. 2. 38. & 3. 26. & 4. 12. & 5. 31. & 10. 43. Luke, 24. 47. If. 53. 5, 11. & 59. 20. Jer. 31. 34. Dan. 9. 24. Zech. 12. 10. Rom. 3. 24—28. & 8. 3, 4. Gal. 2. 16. Heb. 7. 19. & 8. 12. & 9. 15. 1 John, 2. 1, 2, 12. † Pf. 32. 1, 2. If. 1. 18. & 4. 4. & 44. 22. Rom. 8. 1—4. & 10. 4. & 3. 22. 2 Cor. 5. 21. Jer. 50. 20. Col. 1. 14. & 2. 10, 13. ^h Heb. 9. 13, 14. & 10. 1, 11. Rom. 3. 19. 20. Gal. 2. 16. † Hab. 1. 5. Prov. 1. 30. & 13. 15. If. 28. 14. & 29. 14. with Mat. 8. 11, 12. & 21. 41, 43. & 22. 7. & xxiv. Luke, 19. 27. † 1 Thess. 2. 16. 1 Pet. 4. 17. † Gr. in the week between, or sabbath between.

never saw corruption at all, ver. 37. the Greek word διαφθορα, corruption, must signify the grave, as ΠΝΨ, shebet, in the Hebrew, also does; (compare Pf. xciv. 13. and Lam. iv. 20.) just as the coffin of a man raised from the dead, as soon as he was put into it, might be called his sarcophagus, though his flesh had not been consumed in it. The blessings of the Messiah's reign may be called the sure mercies of David, either as they were promised to that prince,—to which sense the translation of 1729 determines it, by rendering the passage, I will faithfully perform the promise made to David; or, because the name of David is sometimes given to the Messiah himself, as the great heir of David, of whose victories and glories David's were but a faint shadow: and when Isaiah calls them sure mercies, he may probably refer to the last words of David, in which he uses the same expression with regard to them, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. The propriety of the application here is evident, as it was the resurrection of Christ which rendered the blessings that he promised sure to his faithful people, who, without that, could have had no hope from him, as the apostle argues at large, 1 Cor. xv. 14, &c. See Isai. lv. 3.

Ver. 36. David, after he had served, &c.] After that in his generation he had served the will of God. Blackwall, p. 184.

Ver. 39. From which ye could not be justified, &c.] The law appointed sin-offerings to expiate smaller offences, so far, as that the offender who offered them should be free from all further prosecution on account of them; but this very view of them shews how absolutely necessary it was to the being of society, that they should not be admitted in cases of murder, adultery, &c. These crimes therefore were made capital; nor was the dying criminal, however penitent, allowed to offer these sin-offerings, which would have been quite inconsistent with the temporal pardon connected with them: but the expiatory sacrifice of Christ takes away the guilt of all sin: and though it by no means affects the manner in which offenders would stand in human courts, (which the Mosaic sacrifices did,) it delivers

from the condemnation of God in the invisible world, with respect to which the others could have no efficacy at all; as it was a very supposable case, that an impenitent sinner might present them in all their exactest forms. See Rom. viii. 3. Gal. ii. 16. Heb. x. 4.

Ver. 41. And perish:] And disappear, ἀφανίσθητε. See the note on Matth. vi. 16. Dr. Heylin reads the sentence, Consider, ye despisers; be amazed and utterly confounded. Instead of shall in no wise, &c. we ought to read, will, &c. The passage may be thus paraphrased: "Behold, ye scornful men who look with haughty contempt on that cornerstone which I lay in Zion, the judgment I will execute upon you is so terrible, that it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. In like manner too the prophet Habakkuk speaks, when he says, ch. i. 5: Behold ye, and regard, and wonder marvellously, turn pale with terror, and disappear, as those that shall perish at once, and vanish (as it were) out of sight, consumed in a moment by the fierceness of my vengeance. For I perform a most amazing work in your days, even a work which ye shall not believe, if any one tell it to you."

Ver. 42. And when the Jews were gone out:] But when the Jews were going out. Heylin and Doddridge. However, Capellus and Whitby have shewn, that the expression, as given in our version, is not an unexampled manner of speaking: nor do I see the least impropriety in supposing, that St. Paul and the Gentiles might continue for a little time in the synagogue after the Jews had retired.

Ver. 43. In the grace of God.] In that religious disposition which divine grace had produced in them, or in the faith and practice of the gospel, which is often called the grace of God, and the word of his grace, with the utmost propriety, as containing the richest display of his grace, in the free pardon of our sins by Christ, the sanctification of our souls by the Holy Spirit, and the provision he has made for our eternal happiness. See ch. xiv. 3. xx. 24. Rom. vi. 14. Gal. v. 4. Col. i. 6. Tit. ii. 11. 1 Pet. v. 12.

followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them¹ to continue in the grace of God.

44 ¶ And the next sabbath day^m came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes,ⁿ they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas^o waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should^p first have been spoken to you: but

seeing^q ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo,^r we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For^s so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

¹ 2 Cor. 6. 1. Tit. 2. 11, 12. Heb. 12. 15. 1 Pet. 5. 12. Ch. 11. 23. & 14. 22. & 20. 22, 24. 1 Cor. 15. 58. Jude, 20, 21. 2 Pet. 3. 14, 17, 18.
^m Gen. 49. 10. If. 11. 10. ⁿ Job, 5. 2. Eccl. 4. 4. Ver. 50. Ch. 14. 2, 19. & 17. 5, 13. & 18. 6. & 6. 9. Mat. 23. 13. 1 Thess. 2. 16. 1 Peter, 4. 4. ^o Ch. 4. 13. Eph. 6. 19, 20. ^p Mat. 10. 6. Ch. 3. 26. & 13. 26. Rom. 1. 16. Mat. 15. 24. & 22. 3, 4, 9. Rom. 9. 4, 5. John, 4. 22.
^q Exod. 32. 9. Ch. 7. 51. John, i. il. Pf. 81. 11, 12. ^r Exod. 32. 10. Deut. 32. 21. Rom. 10. 19. If. 55. 5. Mat. 8. 11, 12. & 21. 28, 41, 43. Ch. 1. 8. & 18. 6. & 28. 28. ^s Mat. 28. 19. Mark, 16. 15. Luke, 24. 47. Ch. 1. 8. with If. 49. 6. & 41. 6, 7. Ch. 9. 15. Eph. 3. 6, 8. Pf. 98. 2, 3. Luke, 2. 32. ^t Luke, 2. 10, 11. Rom. 15. 8—12. ^u Ch. 2. 47. Rom. 8. 28—30 & 9. 23. & 11. 7. 2 Tim. 2. 19. John, 10. 16. If. 56. 8. & 43. 6. & 49. 12. & 54. 1, 3. ^v If. 2. 3. Ch. 6. 7. & 19. 4, 20. & 12. 24. Col. 1. 6, 23. 2 Thess. 3. 1.

Ver. 45. They were filled with envy,] Now that circumstance in the parable, of the elder brother's murmuring at the return of the prodigal son, was remarkably fulfilled. See Luke, xv. 25, &c. The word *blasphemy*, in this connection with *contradicting*, must signify their *giving them abusive language*: Heylin reads,—*With abusive language opposed what Paul taught*. Probably they charged the apostles to their faces with falsehood and villany, and represented the cause they were carrying on as most contemptible and wicked. It may seem strange, that this did not prevent the conversion of the Gentiles; but through the blessing of God they would easily see it was the regard that Paul and Barnabas expressed for them, which had exasperated the Jews; and it is not improbable, that some miracles might have been wrought during the preceding week, which would set the character of these divine teachers above the danger of being overthrown by the malicious insinuations or confident assertions of those furious opposers.

Ver. 46. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, &c.] *With great freedom of speech said, &c.* The words, *Judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life*, plainly shew that persons are said to be self-condemned, who furnish out matter of condemnation from their own words, though they do not actually pass sentence on themselves; for nothing was further from the thoughts of these Jews, than declaring *themselves unworthy of eternal life* for not believing the gospel. They rather expected that life by rejecting it. See on ver. 48. When the apostles say, *Behold, we turn to the Gentiles*, their meaning is not, that they intended no more to make an offer to the Jews; for we find they continued to address them first, wherever they came; but they openly declared, that while they continued at Antioch, they would lose no more time in fruitless attempts on their ungrateful countrymen, but would employ themselves in doing what they could for the conversion of the Gentiles.

Ver. 47. For so hath the Lord commanded us,] The mighty

have argued this very properly from the passage which they quote, as well as from their very commission itself. Comp. Matth. xviii. 19. and Acts, i. 8. But St. Paul had also received a more express command to this purpose. See ch. xxii. 21. xxvi. 17, 18.

Ver. 48. As many as were ordained to eternal life] We observe, 1st, upon this text, that whatever the exact meaning of the word rendered *ordained* may be, it does not here refer to the *decrees* of God, but to the *disposition* of the minds of these Gentiles; as is very evident, from its being used by way of antithesis to the persons mentioned, ver. 46. that is, to the unbelieving Jews; who, by their obstinacy and wickedness, condemned themselves as unworthy of eternal life; whereas, on the contrary, several of these Gentiles, by their candour and probity of mind, manifested in so readily submitting through grace to truth and evidence, and embracing a religion so different from what they had received, and so contrary to their worldly interests, shewed themselves to be *well disposed* for the reception of the gospel. And this we observe, 2diy, appears to be the true meaning of the original, the word *τεταγμένοι* most commonly signifying *disposed*, or *set in order*; and hence it is very frequently used as a *military term*, for the regularly *drawing up*, or *setting in rank and order*, an army. Thus it is used by St. Luke, ch. vii. 8. *I am a man set under authority*. And thus it is used by many of the best Greek classics. So that the meaning of the passage seems to be this: *As many as were disposed*, or *determined for eternal life*, and brought through preventing grace to a resolution of courageously facing all opposition in the way to it, *believed*; and openly, as well as experimentally, embraced the Christian religion, as the means to prepare them for an endless life of the greatest purity, as well as of the greatest glory, and most perfect happiness. (See my Annotations on John, vi. 44, &c.) In this sense the Syriac, one of the most ancient versions of the New Testament, has rendered these words;—which is of great moment,

50 ¶ But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 * But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

7 See ver. 45, 43. Ch. 21. 10. 2 Tim. 3. 11. Mat. 10. 23. 8 Mat. 10: 14. Ch. 14. 6, 11. & 18. 6. 9 Ver. 48. Ch. 2. 46. & 5. 41. Eph. 3. 13. Phil. 2. 17, 18. 1 Pgt. 4. 13, 14. & 5. 10.

moment, as that translation was made before the sense of this place was disputed by the different sects and parties of Christians. In this sense many of the most learned expositors understand it. Dr. Heylin's translation and glossary upon it is, "As many as were in a fit disposition for eternal life, believed—literally, in a rank, in a fit temper or disposition to enter into that spiritual life, which is rightly called eternal; for justice is immortal. They were *υθετοι*, well disposed, Luke, ix. 62. therefore *τεταγμενοι*, ranked. Those who think themselves, in their present state, not capable of that experimental knowledge of God and Christ, in which consists eternal life, John, xvii. 3. judge themselves unworthy of it, ver. 6." That we may leave nothing, which can elucidate and explain this text, we here subjoin Dr. Doddridge's judicious observations upon it, which confirm what has been before advanced: "In the Greek classics, I think it [*τεταγμενοι*] in its passive form signifies men who, having been appointed for some military expedition, (and set in their proper offices, as we render it, Luke, vii. 8.) are drawn up in battle array for that purpose. So that it expresses, or refers at once to, the action of their commander in marshalling them according to the plan he has formed in his own mind, and to their own presenting themselves in their proper places, to be led on to the intended expedition. This I take to be precisely its sense here, and have therefore chosen the word *determined*, as having an ambiguity something like that in the original." We observe, 3dly, that St. Luke does not say *προτεταγμενοι*, foreordained; for he is not speaking of what was done from eternity, but of what was then done through the preaching of the gospel. He is describing that ordination, or disposition, and that only, which was at the very time of hearing it. "During this sermon, those believed, says the apostle, to whom God then gave the gift of faith." It is as if he had said, "They believed, whose hearts the Lord had opened;" as he expresses it in a clearly parallel place, speaking of the same kind of ordination, ch. xvi. 14, &c. It is observable, that the original word is not once used in scripture to express eternal predestination of any kind. It is rendered *ordained*, *ordered*, *determined*, *addicted*, and most frequently *appointed*.—The sum is, all those, and those only, who were now *ordained* or *disposed*, now *believed*; not that God rejected the rest: it was his will that they also should be saved, but they thrust salvation from them: nor were they who then *believed*, constrained to believe; but grace was then first copiously offered them, and they, being well inclined, embraced and improved it thankfully. In a word, the expression properly implies a present operation of divine grace, working faith in *well-disposed* hearts. See particularly Dr. Hammond's note on the place; Raphael, ex-

Herod. p. 353, &c. Wetstein, and Archbishop Sharpe's Works, vol. vi. p. 348.

Ver. 50. *Devout and honourable women,*] As Antioch in Pisidia was a Gentile city, the Jews had not the civil power in their hands; but they were so incensed at the success of the two apostles, and particularly at the reception of the idolatrous Gentiles without requiring them first to become proselytes of righteousness, that they exasperated some women, who were devout Gentiles, and persons of some quality and distinction; and by their means drew their husbands, or such other leading men of the city as they could influence, into their quarrel. If we suppose that these devout women were newly proselyted to Judaism, and full of an opinion of the sanctity and privileges of the people to whom they now belonged; nothing can be more natural than to suppose that they would instigate their husbands and other relations to the warmest resentment against Paul and Barnabas, whom they would look upon as levellers and apostates.

Ver. 51. *And came unto Iconium.*] This is at present *Cogbi*. It was formerly the capital of Lycaonia, and lay, not in the middle, as it is often placed, but on the western borders of it; on the confines of Pisidia, Galatia, and Phrygia, to the latter of which it seems once to have belonged.

Inferences.—We, who were once *sinners of the Gentiles*, and now, by the divine goodness, are brought, at least in speculation, to the knowledge of the gospel, have abundant reason to be thankful, that inspired messengers were sent to teach it, being separated for that purpose by the direct appointment of the Holy Spirit. May they who go out to this sacred work, in all nations, and in all times, maintain a becoming regard to his influences; and may he make their way prosperous!

Wherever the messengers of the gospel go, they must not be surprised if Satan raise up his instruments and children to oppose them; especially where they would endeavour to introduce religion into the hearts of princes, or other great men. Well does the prince of the power of the air know, how dangerous every such blow is to his kingdom. Nor can any of the kings or nobles of the earth shew a more solid and important prudence, than to inquire impartially into the evidence of the gospel, and to give themselves up as rational and accountable beings, to be governed by it: a happy resolution! which they will most probably be disposed to form; in proportion to the degree in which they observe its nature and tendency; for surely every intelligent person that does so, must, like Sergius Paulus, be struck with the doctrine of the Lord, as well as with the miracles which were wrought to confirm it.

Justly

CHAP. XIV.

Paul and Barnabas are persecuted and driven from Iconium. At Lystra Paul healeth a cripple; whereupon they are reputed as gods. Paul is stoned. They pass through divers churches, confirming the disciples in faith and patience: returning to Antioch, they report what God had done with them.

[Anno Domini 46.]

AND it came to pass in * Iconium that they went both together ^a into the sy-

^a A city eastward of Antioch in Pisidia. ^b Mat. 10. 27. Ch. 13. 46, 5, 14. & 17. 1, 2, 10. & 18. 4, 6, 7, 19. & 3. 26. ^c Gen. 49. 10. If. 11. 10. Ch. 13. 48. ^d Ver. 19. Ch. 13. 45, 50. & 17. 5, 13. & 18. 6. Jer. 26. 11. Amos, 7. 10. 1 Theff. 2. 16. ^e Ch. 20. 24. Ch. 2. 1. & 19. 12. Mark, 16. 20. Heb. 2. 4. John, 14. 12. ^f Ch. 20. 32. Rom. 1. 16. & 15. 19.

Justly might St. Paul pronounce that man who endeavoured to obstruct the progress of divine truth in the world, a child of Satan, and an enemy of all righteousness. Justly might God, who knew all his secret wickedness and perverseness of soul, smite him with a blindness, which, while it rendered him incapable of seeing the light of the meridian sun, seemed but a doleful emblem of that more fatal darkness, which, through the corruption of his heart, had spread itself over his mind, and prevented the light of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, from shining upon it. See 2 Cor. iv. 4.

And have not we reason to fear, that God may, in his righteous judgment, punish that iniquity of spirit with which many now rise up against the right ways of the Lord, —not ceasing to pervert and disguise them, that so they may more plausibly and effectually oppose them? And what punishment so likely or so suitable as an internal blindness, a darkness of soul, in which they may wander on through life to their destruction? — And if others stupidly, but wilfully, permit themselves to be guided by them, what can be expected, but that the blind leading the blind, both leaders and followers should fall into the pit?

That the scriptures have been publicly read in Jewish and Christian assemblies from the primitive times, is a noble evidence of their genuine authority, which it will be our undoubted wisdom to transmit to those who may arise after us. From them succeeding generations will be fully informed of that edifying history which the apostle here briefly recounts; — of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and their settlement in the land of Canaan, according to the promise of God made to their fathers; and they will also learn the ungrateful returns which they made to the divine goodness, when they rejected the Lord from being king over them.

Were we the greatest princes upon earth, we, like David, must see corruption in the grave, whither we are going. But let us rejoice to think that Jesus, whom God raised up according to his promise, saw no corruption; and that if we will indeed be his faithful people, he will ransom and redeem us from it. See Hof. xiii. 14.

Nor let us ever forget that this same Jesus, though so outrageously and infamously treated by the Jews, was nevertheless in the most powerful and convincing manner declared to be the Son of God, his only-begotten Son.

nagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

2. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

3. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs

Such a resurrection as his, proclaimed him to be so: and in consequence of it, the sure mercies of David are now given by him to all the faithful saints of God; and the plenary remission of all the most aggravated transgressions is through him proclaimed. For ever adored be his glorious name; most thankfully accepted be his overflowing grace! which frees genuine believers from the guilt of those offences which the law of Moses condemned without mercy, and takes out the dye of scarlet and crimson sins!

Let us take heed, lest, if we despise so great a salvation, we meet with an astonishing vengeance; the justice of which will be attested and applauded by all the messengers of God. All the prophets, and John the Baptist, superior to them all, who bore witness to Christ, and all the apostles, have concurred to admonish us of our danger; and they will another day rise up together in judgment against us; if all these admonitions are given in vain.

It is a great comfort for the ministers of the gospel, that, amidst the incredulity which too generally prevails, many are found who will credit the gospel—many to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed in conquering their prejudices against it. With these and an increasing number will God support his faithful servants: and may the instances of that consolation be more numerous and more remarkable continually in our days!

It is matter of some encouragement, when numbers crowd to attend upon the preaching of the gospel, for faith cometh by hearing. They who reject the counsel of God against themselves, will no doubt be provoked at such a circumstance; and the malignity and envy of their hearts will stir up opposition and contention. But God knows how to bring good out of evil; nor should his ministers be discouraged by the contradiction of sinners, but rather turn themselves to those who may be more willing to hear. In the mean time, let those that thrust from them the word of God, know, that, in the language of scripture, they adjudge themselves unworthy of everlasting life; and since they will not accept of it on these terms, the great Author thereof will not condescend to give it on any other: and the day is coming, when we shall see, and the whole world shall see, how much reason they have to glory in that height of spirit which they now shew.

Let it be the daily joy of our souls, that the Lord Jesus Christ was given for a light of the Gentiles, and for God's salvation to the ends of the earth. Through the tender mercy

and wonders to be done by their hands.

4 But the multitude of the city was di-

vided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

† Luke, 2. 34. John, 7. 43.

of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us, Luke, i. 78. Let us pray that it may arise, and shine upon the remotest nations, and that the whole earth may be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea! And indeed, if we are entirely unconcerned about its propagation in the world, we have great reason to fear, that we ourselves have no part in the saving benefits which it confers. May the silver trumpet every where sound to awaken the nations to lift themselves in the holy war under Christ, against all the enemies of salvation; and may many champions appear determined for eternal life, and, like these converts at Antioch, courageously set themselves in battle-array against every thing which would oppose their progress towards it!

Vain then will all the rage of persecution be, by whomsoever it is excited or maintained, though by persons of the highest rank, or the most honoured characters. If the messengers of Christ be cast out of one place, they will appear with renewed zeal in another; and they who are truly converted to Christianity, though in never so great a flight of afflictions, will have the Spirit of God and glory resting upon them; and be enabled to rejoice, not only in the midst of their trials, but even on account of them. In the mean while, the dust shaken from the shoes of the rejected ambassadors of the Prince of peace, will be recorded as a witness against those who have despised the message, and will expose their souls to a final condemnation in the day of judgment—a condemnation more intolerable than that which was once executed on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, or which their wretched inhabitants are then to expect. See Mark, vi. 11.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though the gospel had now begun to make its entrance into the Gentile world, none had yet been publicly ordained and appointed to that service, till Paul and Barnabas, by the immediate order of the Holy Ghost, were set apart thereunto.

1. The church at Antioch flourished greatly. There were certain prophets, who ranked next to the apostles in the church; and teachers, eminent for their gifts and graces; as Barnabas and Simeon, who, probably from his dark complexion, was called Niger; and Lucius of Cyrene, an African by birth; and Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, his friend and companion; but now had quitted the honours of a court for the reproach of the gospel; and Saul, so famous in the records of Christianity. These ministered to the Lord, and fasted, diligently employed in the service of immortal souls; and at seasons, in more solemn acts of prayer and fasting, waited upon God for his blessing and direction in their labours.

2. While they were, on a certain day, thus engaged, the Holy Ghost, by his immediate suggestion, and by his own divine authority, said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to be

chiefly employed in their service. Learn hence, (1.) The personality of the Holy Ghost, and his co-equal glory with the Father and Son. (2.) The true call to the ministry must come from above.

3. Pursuant to this order, Paul and Barnabas were solemnly set apart, with fasting and prayer and imposition of hands, for the peculiar service to which the Holy Ghost had appointed them: and the brethren sent them away, wishing them all success in their arduous undertaking. And henceforward we find them the two great apostles of the Gentiles, spreading the glorious gospel to distant lands, whither the glad tidings had never reached before.

2dly, Being in this solemn manner sent forth, Paul and Barnabas immediately applied themselves to their work.

1. They directed their course to Cyprus the native land of Barnabas, going to Seleucia; and thence sailed for Salamis, the chief town of the eastern part of the island. And first, as was their custom, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews, giving them the preference; and, if they rejected the gospel, leaving them thereby inexcusable: and they had also John to their minister, to assist them in their work, provide necessaries for them, and execute any service which might be appointed him.

2. They travelled through the greatest part of the island, preaching the gospel, till they came to Paphos, the chief city on the western coast. There they met with one Barjesus, which signifies the son of Joshua, a Jew by birth, addicted to magic, who set up for a prophet, and had insinuated himself into the favour of Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor of the island, who was a prudent, considerate, thinking man, and who, hearing of the fame of Barnabas and Saul, desired to learn from themselves that new doctrine which they taught as a revelation from God. But the forcerer, knowing that, if the deputy received the gospel, his influence with him would be at an end, set himself to oppose these ministers of Christ, and to turn away the deputy from the faith. Note: (1.) It is prudence to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. (2.) Wherever the gospel comes with power, Satan will find some tool to employ, in order to cast stumbling-blocks in the way of those who desire to hear.

3. Saul, who henceforward is always called by his Roman name Paul, as more agreeable to the Gentiles, among whom for the future he chiefly conversed, filled with the Holy Ghost, fired with zeal for the gospel, and under a divine assaunt, set his eyes on him, with indignation and abhorrence of his wickedness, and said, O full of all subtilty, expert in every art of deceit, taught by the great deceiver, and, like him, set on all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, the implacable foe to truth and godliness, and to that gospel which is designed to promote them, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? to misrepresent men, and by every artful and malicious suggestion to prejudice men against the Lord Jesus, and those ways of his grace, which alone can lead to eternal life.

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use *them* despitefully, and to stone them,

* Pf. 2. 1, 2. & 83. 5. John, 7. 48. 2 Tim. 3. 11. Mat. 5. 11. & 10. 13, 22.

life and glory? *And now behold, as an evident token of God's displeasure, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, in righteous judgment; and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season*—the emblem and punishment of the wilful blindness of thy heart. *Note*: (1.) Subtily, and delight in mischief, united, form the strongest image of the devil. (2.) They who are enemies to the gospel, must be enemies to all righteousness, since this alone can effectually produce true holiness in the heart. (3.) The Lord's ways are all right, and lead direct to happiness and heaven: they who pervert or misrepresent them, as unreasonable, unpleasant, or unprofitable, shall bear their burden.

4. His doom is no sooner pronounced than executed. *Immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness, and, his sight being entirely lost, he went about groping his way, and seeking some to lead him by the hand.* Struck with the evidence of the miracle, perceiving the forcerer confounded by the arguments, and unable to stand before the power with which Paul was evidently invested, *the deputy believed in Jesus, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord,* which came with such convincing power and energy to his heart, and contained such amazing discoveries of God and his great salvation, with which he had been before utterly unacquainted.

5. Having shortly after set sail from Paphos, Paul and his companions directed their course to Perga, a city of Pamphylia. There John, their minister, quitted them, and returned to Jerusalem. A worldly or timid spirit prevailed against him: he wanted perhaps to see his mother; or he was weary of the fatigues of the Gentile mission; or some temporal affair drew off his attention from the ministry of the word: which Paul much resented, and which laid a ground of future contention between him and Barnabas. See the Annotations.

3dly, How long they stayed, and what success the apostles had at Perga, is not recorded; but more is preserved of their labours at Antioch, the capital of Pisidia, which was their next remove.

1. On the sabbath-day, according to their custom, they went into the synagogue, and sat down, waiting a proper opportunity to deliver the message which they brought.

2. After the reading of the law and the prophets as usual, *the rulers of the synagogue, being acquainted perhaps with their public characters, and willing to hear what they had to say, sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.* *Note*: The preaching of the word, and expounding it with application to the hearts of the hearers, is one most essential end and use of our assembling on the Lord's day.

3. St. Paul declined not the invitation, but gracefully rising, and waving his hand that silence might be kept, he very affectionately and seriously addresses his brethren, entreating a patient and attentive audience.

[1.] He opens with reminding them of the peculiar favour which God had shewn to their fathers. God had chosen the Jewish people in a covenant of peculiarity, and,

according to the promise made to their fathers, had wonderfully multiplied and exalted them in Egypt, where they sojourned; and at last, when they were oppressed by Pharaoh, had brought them thence with a high hand. In the wilderness, amidst all their provocations, his patience bore with them, and his bounteous hand fed them forty years. After destroying the accursed nations of Canaan, he gave them the country, by lot, for their inheritance; and for about the space of four hundred and fifty years from their deliverance from Egypt, continued, in their emergencies, to raise them up divinely appointed officers, called judges, to save them from the hands of their enemies, until the times of Samuel the prophet. Afterwards, indulging them in their desire, he appointed Saul the Son of Kis, a Benjamite, their king; whose reign, with Samuel's government, filled the space of forty years. (See the Annotations.) And when he was rejected, then was David anointed to sit on Israel's throne, and raised from his low estate to that high dignity—a man, to whom God bore the most honourable testimony, as one *after mine own heart*, approved and known to be faithful, *which shall fulfil all my will*, and answer all my purposes and designs.

Herein the apostle seems to desire to conciliate the Jews to him, and engage their regard to his discourse; when it appears, that far from having any prejudice against the Jewish nation as was suggested by many, or despising their peculiar honours, he dwells upon them with pleasure, in order to introduce the discourse of the Messiah, the son of David; which was the great object that he had in view.

[2.] As God had made to David a promise, that of his seed the Messiah should spring, the glorious hope of Israel—that promise he had now fulfilled in Jesus, the Saviour of all that perseveringly believe in him, from sin, misery, death, and hell; to introduce whose appearing, John had preached *the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel*, inviting them to turn to that Messiah, whose forerunner he was; that by faith in him they might obtain remission of sins, (Mark, i. 4. Luke, iii. 3.) disclaiming that title himself, when the people were in doubt whether he were the Christ or not, but directing them to one presently to appear after him, so far transcending him in dignity, that he should count it an honour of which he was unworthy to perform the meanest offices to him. This being then the main point in view, to bring them acquainted with him, to whom John bore record, he pathetically urges them to consider the matter. *Men and brethren, possessed of rational and immortal souls, children of the stock of Abraham, and of the promise made unto our fathers, and whosoever among you feareth God, whether Jews or Proselytes, to you is the word of this salvation sent, and you are first called to partake of the inestimable blessings of the redemption which this Jesus hath obtained.* *Note*: (1.) It is among the most invaluable mercies, to have the word of salvation sent to us. (2.) No condemnation will be so great and aggravated as theirs who reject the gospel-word.

[3.] He plainly tells them of the great guilt and wickedness

6^h They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about :

7^l And there they preached the gospel.

^h Mat. 10. 17, 23. Ch. 8. 1. ^l Ch. 8. 4. & 11. 19. Gal. 6. 9. Eph. 3. 8, 9. 2 Tim. 4. 2.

ness of the Jewish rulers, in rejecting, persecuting, and murdering the Lord's Christ. *They knew him not*, so fatally and wilfully blinded were their minds by the prejudices which they had entertained, and the expectations they had formed of a temporal Messiah; *nor yet the voices of the prophets, which are read every sabbath-day*, in which the sufferings and death of the Messiah were at large foretold: but God so over ruled their wickedness, that undesignedly they have fulfilled these scriptures in condemning him: *and though, even by the confession of his judge, his innocence was acknowledged, and they found no cause of death in him; yet, so malicious and enraged were they against him, they desired Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, concerning his sufferings and death, even in the most minute particulars, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre*, brought to the grave, the lowest step of his humiliation. *Note*; (1.) Ignorance of the scriptures is often found, where the sound of them in the ears is heard every sabbath-day. (2.) It will not excuse the sins of persecutors, that they committed them ignorantly in unbelief, when they rejected the means of better information.

[4.] He insists at large on the glorious resurrection of Christ, as the grand point, on which all the sure hope of salvation through Jesus depended. His enemies thought they had effectually defeated all his pretensions when they laid him in the grave; *but God raised him from the dead*, to their confusion, and, as a token of the fullest approbation of his character and undertaking,—a fact attested by a great cloud of witnesses, who had been most intimately acquainted with him before his death, and, during forty days, had many conferences with him, and ate and drank with him after his resurrection; the truth of which some of them had already sealed with their blood, and others in the face of death and danger still continue to declare. And to this resurrection of Jesus we, now present, bear testimony, proclaiming it as the most joyful tidings, *that the promise made unto the fathers, of that Messiah in whom all nations of the world should be blessed, God hath now fulfilled unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again*; whereby it appears that he was the glorious Personage of whom David speaks; *as it is written also in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*; from eternity the relation subsisted; and as God bore testimony to the dignity and divine character of his Son in his baptism and transfiguration, so most eminently was Jesus declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. i. 4.). And that God raised him from the dead, no more to see corruption, is evident from Isa. lv. 3. where he says, *I will give you the sure mercies of David*. Having there appointed his Son to be the leader and commander of the people, and by an oath confirmed his promise, it became necessary, that he who by his sufferings and death was to ratify the covenant, and obtain these mercies for his faithful saints, should rise again to be eternally the Head of his glorified church. In farther proof of which, *he saith also in another psalm, Thou*

shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption, (Ps. xvi. 10.) which words can only be applicable to the Messiah; for as to David himself, it is evident, *after he had served his own generation by the will of God, discharging his high office with great fidelity for his people's good, he fell asleep in the arms of death, resting from all his labours, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption*, his corpse, like others, returning unto dust: *but he whom God raised, even Jesus, the Messiah, of whom David spake in this psalm, exactly fulfilled it, and, rising on the third day, saw no corruption, nor ever shall, God having exalted him to his own right hand in glory everlasting, to bestow these mercies on all his faithful people, until time shall be no more.* *Note*; (1.) We must learn not to live for ourselves, but for God's glory, and the good of mankind. (2.) To a faithful saint death is but the sleep of the body, while the soul rests from its labours, and is in joy and felicity. (3.) The more we examine the scriptures, the more confirmed shall we be, that Jesus is the Christ, in whom we shall see all the prophecies so eminently and exactly fulfilled.

[5.] He applies what he said to their hearts, as a matter in which they were most nearly concerned. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins*; by his sufferings unto death it is obtained, in his name it is declared, and by his authority bestowed: *and by him, through the merit of his obedience unto death, all that believe are justified from all things*; discharged from the condemnation of the law, and the guilt of all their transgressions, be they never so many, great, or aggravated; *from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses, legal or ceremonial, none being able to fulfil the moral law in immaculate perfection, and the ceremonial prescribed no sacrifice for wilful transgression*: and therefore all who looked for justification by the deeds of the law, were necessarily left under wrath and condemnation. *Note*; One of the chief gospel promises and privileges is the forgiveness of sins. In Christ Jesus there is a free and full pardon offered to the miserable and the desperate.

Lastly, He solemnly warns them of the danger of rejecting this salvation. *Be ware therefore, lest, through your obstinate infidelity, that fearful and alarming threatening come upon you which is spoken of in one of the prophets*, (Hab. i. 5.) concerning the men of that generation in which he lived; *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder at your own obstinacy and stupidity, and my vengeance ready to light upon you; and perish*, be covered with shame, and hide yourselves in terrors at the approaching judgments; *for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you*; such as the destruction of their temple and nation by the Romans, a judgment more terrible than ever fell upon them by the hand of the Chaldeans. It may also refer to the glorious work of redemption and mercy which should be extended to the Gentiles, while the Jews would be rejected for their wilful unbelief and impenitence; neither of which would they

8 ¶ And there sat a certain man at Lyffra, his mother's womb, who never had walked :
 impotent in his feet, * being a cripple from 9 The same heard Paul speak : who stead-

* Ch. 3. 2. & 8. 33. John, 5. 5. Luke, 13. 16.

they believe, though told them by persons of the most undoubted credit and authority.

4thly, Nothing could be more kindly spoken than this discourse of the apostle, or more respectful to the Jewish people. But we are told,

1. The ill reception that many of the Jews gave to his sermon. They went *out of the synagogue*, in open contempt of the apostle and of the doctrine of Christ which he preached; intimating thereby an avowed resolution never to hear him again, or regard aught that he could say. And justly are they abandoned to their infidelity, who obstinately reject the counsel of the Lord against their own souls, and will not even give the gospel a candid hearing.

2. The Gentiles hereupon, the profelytes of righteousness, who attended the Jewish worship, *besought*, that if the Jews refused to receive the gracious message, *these words might be preached to them the next sabbath*. They longed for that salvation which the others slighted.

3. Though the generality of the Jews turned their backs on the apostles and their preaching, many were affected by what they heard, both of the native Jews, and religious profelytes, and they *followed Paul and Barnabas*, that they might in private have some farther conference with them on a matter so important: and the apostles, glad to see them thus impressed, conversed freely with them on the subject, to carry on the good work begun on their hearts, warmly exhorting and persuading them by every powerful argument *to continue in the grace of God*, faithfully embracing, and boldly professing the gospel doctrines, depending on the Spirit's influence, and waiting in the use of all appointed means upon the Lord. *Note*; They who truly receive the word of Christ, will follow his ministers, and long for farther instruction in righteousness.

4. The next sabbath, the auditory was immense. Probably on the week days, the apostles had improved every opportunity to spread the truths of God; and as the Gentiles were graciously received by them, they flocked together on the sabbath, and not only the religious profelytes, but many of those who were before idolatrous, invited by curiosity, or from better motives, assembled *to hear the word of God*.

5. *When the Jews*, who were enemies to the gospel, *saw the multitudes*, and among them many of the idolatrous Gentiles whom they abhorred, *they were filled with envy*, that to them the word of God should be spoken, and that these new preachers should grow so popular; *and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming*; with the utmost rage and passion they disputed against the doctrines of the gospel, abused and vilified the preacher, and blasphemed the holy name of Jesus, who was the great subject of the apostle's discourse. *Note*; It is no new thing to hear the glorious truths of Christ and his salvation treated with virulence and blasphemy by men of corrupt minds.

6. *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold*; far from being intimidated by such opposition, they appeared inspired with greater zeal, and shewed more undaunted courage in delivering their message, *and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you*; in respect to the privileges of your birth, and the command of our Master, who sent us forth to publish his gospel, beginning at Jerusalem, and giving the first calls to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: *but seeing ye put it from you*, and wilfully reject and vilify this great salvation of the Messiah, *and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life*, which can only be obtained by that faith in him and his gospel which you despise, and are unworthy to hear any more, *lo, we turn to the Gentiles*, leaving you Jews of this place to your obstinate impenitence and infidelity, and henceforth proclaiming the salvation which is in Jesus Christ to the heathen: and herein we act by divine warrant, and in exact correspondence with the scriptures. *For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth*, Isaiah, xlix. 6. *Note*; (1.) The more obstinately sinners oppose the word of God, the more bold and zealous should his ministers be in maintaining the truths of his gospel. (2.) They who reject God's ministers, and their message, pronounce sentence on themselves, as *unworthy of everlasting life*. (3.) Christ is the sun of righteousness arisen on this benighted world; in him we see the way to present and eternal salvation opened; and all, to the ends of the earth, are invited to look to him, and be saved.

7. *When the Gentiles heard this*, that the salvation which the apostles preached, extended to them, according to God's express word and warrant, *they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord*, praising him for sending the light of his truth among them; *and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed*. See my annotations on this passage. *And the word of the Lord*, which was with such gracious effect preached in the capital, *was published throughout all the region*, both by the apostolic labourers, and the Gentile converts, who longed to engage their brethren to share with them in this common salvation. *Note*; (1.) The gospel is glad news to the sinner who sees and feels the need of that pardon and grace therein promised. (2.) They who have tasted the preciousness of God's word, cannot but glorify him for his unspeakable gift. (3.) If we have ourselves received the knowledge of Jesus, and his rich grace, we shall delight to spread abroad the favour of his name.

8. The unbelieving Jews, filled with malice and enmity against the apostles, *stirred up the devout and honourable women* who were profelytes, and most zealous for Judaism, *and the chief men of the city*, probably by their means, representing the apostles as dangerous men; *and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts*. *Note*; (1.) Wherever the gospel is preached with success, there the ministers of it may expect the devil's rage. (2.) None persecute so bitterly as bigots, who

fastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had¹ faith to be healed,

10 Said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying

in the speech of Lycaonia, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was

¹ Mat. 9. 22. Mark, 9. 23, 24] ² Mark, 3. 5. Ch. 3. 6, 8. If. 35. 6. ³ Ch. 8. 10. & 18. 6.

who are apparently devout, and make profession of religion. (3.) The best of men have been expelled with ignominy from places where their successful labours provoked the enmity of those who should have protected and honoured them; but such reproach is their highest honour, such suffering their truest preferment.

Lastly, Being thus violently driven out of the city, *they shook off the dust of their feet against them*, in detestation of their wickedness, and as a testimony against their persecutors in the judgment-day, according to their Master's order, Luke, ix. 5. *and they came to Iconium*, the chief city of Lycaonia, a neighbouring province. *And the disciples, whom they left behind, though deprived of these faithful teachers, and beholding these persecutions, far from being disheartened, were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost, blest with the most abundant consolations in their souls, mightily enriched with the gifts and graces of the Spirit, and making a bold and noble profession of their faith amidst all opposition.* Note; (1.) Woe to the place against which the rejected ministers of Jesus shake off the dust of their feet; Sodom's vengeance shall be lighter than the doom of that city. (2.) As our tribulations for Christ abound, he can, and usually does, cause our consolations to abound also.

C H A P. XIV.

Ver. 1. Of the Greeks] Several writers suppose that these were proselytes of the gate; but it seems more probable that they were Gentiles of the place, who, though they did not usually attend the synagogues, yet might be drawn thither by the fame of such extraordinary teachers as Paul and Barnabas.

Ver. 2. Brethren] That is, *the Christians*; of whom this was one appellation before they were so called at Antioch. See on ch. xi. 26.

Ver. 3. Long time therefore] Some think the 2d verse should be included in a parenthesis, and that the particle *therefore* refers to the success which Paul and Barnabas had met with at Iconium, mentioned ver. 1. as what induced them to continue preaching there for a long time: while others, who would make no breach in the connection, choose rather that the words *Μετ' οὖν* should be rendered *for indeed*; and supposing the rage of the Jews to have been exasperated by their long stay and preaching there, they would render the beginning of the verse, *for indeed they had tarried a long time, &c.* But the connection may properly enough be preserved, though we retain the usual sense of the particle, as in our version; if we consider what is here expressed as an account of the great firmness and undaunted zeal with which these faithful

ministers pursued their work—that since the Jews were so intent upon opposing them, and laboured to incense the Gentiles too against them, *they therefore* thought it needful to continue preaching with the greatest boldness, and to make the longer stay there, for the establishment and confirmation of the new converts, and for the vindication of their own character, and of the cause they were engaged in, from the injurious calumnies and aspersions of their neighbours, till they proceeded to such violent methods, that they no longer could remain with any safety there.

Ver. 6. They were ware of it,] Having received intelligence of it, they fled, &c.

Ver. 7. And there they preached the gospel,] Some manuscripts add, *And the whole multitude were moved at their doctrine; but Paul and Barnabas continued at Lystra.*

Ver. 8. Being a cripple from his mother's womb,] This circumstance serves greatly to illustrate the miracle; for weaknesses born with a person, and continuing inveterate to a more advanced age, hardly ever give way to art. See on ch. iii. 2.

Ver. 10. Stand upright on thy feet,] Some manuscripts here read, *I say unto thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, stand upright, &c.*

Ver. 11. In the speech of Lycaonia,] This, as some say, was not a dialect of the Greek, but rather approached the Syriac, as the language of Cappadocia is said to have done. It appears from numberless passages in the heathen writers, that they supposed it a very common thing for their gods to come down in the likeness of men; and Elser on the place has shewn, that this notion particularly prevailed with respect to Jupiter and Mercury.

Ver. 12. They called Barnabas, Jupiter, &c.] The heathens represented *Jupiter* as an old but vigorous man, of a noble and majestic aspect, and large robust make, which probably might be the form of *Barnabas*; whereas *Mercury* appeared young, lively, and active, as Paul might probably do; for he was yet but a young man. This is Chryostom's observation: St. Luke, however, assigns another reason why the Lystrians gave the apostles these appellations. *Mercury* was generally represented as the attendant on *Jupiter*, and was esteemed the god of eloquence. Mr. Harrington well observes, in his works, p. 330. that this persuasion might gain the more easily on the minds of Lycaonians on account of the well-known fable of *Jupiter* and *Mercury*, who are said to have descended from heaven in a human shape, and to have been entertained by *Lycaon*, from whom the Lycaonians received their names.

Ver. 13. Then the priest of Jupiter,] This might be rendered more exactly, *then the priest of the Jupiter, that is*

before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and ° would have done sacrifice with the people.

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they p rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And laying, Sirs, q why do ye these things? We also are men r of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these s vanities unto the t living

God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea and all things that are therein :

16 u Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 x Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings y scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacri-

° Dan. 2. 46. Rev. 19. 10. & 22. 8. Ch. 10. 25. Hof. 4. 9. p Mat. 26. 65. Gen. 37. 29, 34. If. 36. 22. & 37. 1. q Ch. 10. 26. Rev. 19. 10. & 22. 9. r Ch. 10. 26. James, 5. 17. s 1 Cor. 8. 4. 1 Sam. 12. 21. 1 Kings, 16. 13. If. 43. 9—20. Jer. 10. 14, 15. Amos, 2. 4. Rom. 1. 21. E-h. 4. 7. t Jer. 10. 10. John, 5. 26. Ch. 4. 24. Exod. 20. 11. Pom. 1. 20. Jer. 32. 17. Zech. 12. 1. Ch. 17. 25. Gen. 1. 1. Pl. 146. 6. & 124. 8. Rev. 14. 7. u Pl. 81. 12. Ch. 17. 30. v Ps. 4. 3. R m. 1. 24, 26, 28. Pl. 107. 20. Eph. 3. 5. & 2. 12. x Pom. 1. 20. Pl. 19. 1. 2. & 36. 5, 6. & 145. 9. Mat. 5. 45. Lev. 26. 4. Deut. 11. 14. & 28. 12. Job, 5. 10. Pl. 65. 10. & 68. 9, 10. & 147. 8. Jer. 14. 22. y Jer. 13. 23, 27. If. 48. 4.

to say, of the image of Jupiter, before the city gate. It was customary to build temples to their idol deities in the suburbs, and to set up their images before the city, at the gates. The heathens considered their several images—of Jupiter, for instance, or any other of their gods,—as so many distinct Jupiters; that is, as having some spirit sent from the god, to whom their worship was ultimately referred, to reside in them. It may, however, by a common ellipsis, be, *the priest of the temple of Jupiter*. Some are of opinion, that the *garlands* here mentioned were those which the heathens used to put on the horns of their victims, being generally made of such leaves of trees or flowers as were sacred to the gods to whom they were offered; but others have observed, that among the heathen petitioners to the idol gods, they used to supplicate them with green boughs in their hands, and crowns upon their heads, or garlands upon their necks. These boughs were commonly of laurel or olive, about which they wrapped wool; and these were what the Greeks called *σεμματα*, the very word made use of in the sacred text, and rendered *garlands*. The scholiast on Sophocles explains the word *σεμματα* to signify “wool wrapped about a green bough.” With these boughs it was usual to touch the knees of the statue, (or sometimes of the man,) whom they addressed: if they had confidence of success, they were raised as high as its chin. This seems to have been the intention of the priest of Jupiter at this time; and the *garlands* mentioned were probably these *boughs*, not the chaplets or crowns about the horns of the unicorn.

Ver. 15. *Of like passions, &c.*] *Obnoxious to the same common infirmities*, ὁμοσπαθείς; so it also signifies in James, v. 17. “We are only frail and mortal men, like yourselves; liable to the common evils, afflictions, and infirmities of life.” The word *vanities* is, as we have observed in the Old Testament, frequently used for idols. It appears a bold expression when considered and addressed to a whole crowd of bigoted idolaters with their priests at their head. It naturally leads us to reflect, how unlike the conduct of the apostles was to that of the heathen philosophers, who, instead of entering a generous protest against the absurdities of the established worship, though it often led to such scandalous immorali-

ties, meanly conformed to it themselves, and taught their disciples to esteem such conformity an essential part of a good citizen's character, which seems to have been the design even of the dying words of Socrates himself.

Ver. 16. *Who in times past suffered all nations, &c.*] That is, all the Gentiles. God left all nations, except the Jews, to the light of the heathen dispensation. It does not appear that any prophet except Jonah, was sent to the Gentile world, from the days of Noah or Abraham. See 1 Peter. iii. 20. Ch. vii. 2, 3. and my Annotations on the epistle to the Romans.

Ver. 17. *He left not himself without witness,*] Though left to the heathen dispensation, the Gentiles were culpable for their idolatry, and other abuses of the light afforded them, inasmuch as the works of creation always manifest the being of the true God; and it is a plain evidence of his goodness, power, and providence, in that he, the one true God, is the author of all good, and sendeth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons to the just and unjust; not only providing necessities for mankind, but filling their hearts with joy and gladness, and thereby inviting sinners to repent and hope for mercy. The author of “*Displayed*” observes very pleasingly, that, as a friend, in sending us frequent presents, expresses his remembrance of us, and affection to us, though he neither speak nor write; so all the gifts of the divine bounty, which are scattered abroad on every side, are so many witnesses sent to attest the divine care and goodness, and speak it in a very sensible language to the heart, though not to the ear. Aratus, a pagan poet, asserts particularly, that “rain is “given from God:” and as St. Paul was conversant in these writings, has quoted this very poet in another speech, and was addressing himself to persons who might be no strangers to this author, his speech, among other things, may in a distant manner allude to that passage. Dr. Hammond mentions a Jewish proverb upon this place, “That “the keys of life, rain, and the resurrection, were always “kept in God's own hand,” by which they seem to have looked upon rain as much an incommunicable attribute of God, as either the giving or restoring of life. Hence it is frequently stiled, “the power of rain,” because it descends not but by power, and it is one of the things in which the power

see unto them.

19 ¶ And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 ¶ And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

22 ^a Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

24 And after they had passed throughout Pifidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the

^a 2 Cor. 12. 25. Ch. 7. 48. & 14. 45. 2 Tim. 3. 11. Heb. 13. 12. ^b Luke, 2. 10, 11. Mark, 16. 15. ^c Mat. 28. 10, 20. ^d Gr. *discipled many*. ^e Ver. 1, 6. Ch. 13. 14, 15. 2 Tim. 2. 11. ^f Ch. 15. 32, 41. & 8. 23. ^g Ch. 11. 23. & 17. 43. ^h Col. 3. 23. ⁱ Jude. 3, 20, 21. ^j Mat. 10. 38. & 15. 23. ^k Luke, 22. 28, 29. & 24. 26. ^l Rom. 8. 17. 2 Tim. 2. 11, 12. & 3. 12. ^m Tit. 1. 5. 1 Tim. 4. 14. ⁿ Ch. 8. 18. & 1. 26. & 6. 6. & 13. 3. & 20. 32. 1 Cor. 3. 6, 7. The words may imply that Paul and Barnabas led and directed in the elections. ^o Ch. 13. 13, 14. ^p In Syria. Ch. 11. 19, 26. & 13. 1. & 15. 38. ^q See ver. 23. Ch. 20. 32. & 13. 1—13.

power of God shews itself. See Matth. v. 45. and Jer. xiv. 22.

Ver. 19. *Having stoned Paul, drew him out, &c.*] The remarkable humility wherewith the apostles behaved, in so uncommon an instance of popular applause as that above related, plainly shewed by what Spirit they were actuated. This, however, could not prevent them from the attacks of envy and malice. The Jews, their most constant enemies, followed them from Antioch and Iconium; and, incensing the populace against them as impostors and ill-designing men, they prevailed with them to stone St. Paul, upon the same account as he himself had formerly consented to the stoning of St. Stephen; and when they had, not in a legal, but in a tumultuous manner, stoned him, they dragged him out of the city, thinking that he was quite dead. The apostle very probably alludes to this, 2 Cor. xi. 23—25. So short-lived are human passions, not moderated by principle, that from imagining him to be a god, the thoughtless multitude were easily persuaded to stone St. Paul, as one of the vilest of men. Thus Israel fell into idolatry within forty days from God's giving them the law from mount Sinai; nor could St. Paul expect any better treatment, when he considered that his Lord and Master was applauded as king of the Jews, and followed with the acclamations of the same multitude who, about six days after, petitioned Pilate that he might be crucified. But though St. Paul's enemies left him for dead, yet the Christians would not leave him: most probably there was something extraordinary in the appearance of his body in this circumstance, which led them to conclude he was dead, while he was yet alive; for one can hardly imagine, that such bitter persecutors would have been content with any very slight and transient inquiry whether he were dead or not. It is observable, we read of no such injury offered to Barnabas, who seems to have had no share in the effects of this popular fury: and it is probable that Paul's distinguished zeal marked him out as the object of their distinguished cruelty.

Ver. 20. *He rose up, &c.*] That, just after he had been stoned, dragged about the streets, and left for dead, he should rise, and walk back into the city, must certainly have been the effect of a miraculous cure, approaching as near as one can well conceive to a resurrection from the dead. This is the more illustrated by his going the next day to Derbe; whereas, in the course of nature, he would then have felt his bruises much more than at first; and probably, after the best care that could have been taken of him, would scarcely have been able to move. Possibly by coming into the city, and shewing himself to the new converts at least, if not to others, he hoped, as he reasonably might, to confirm their faith, and their holy courageous attachment to the gospel. St. Paul evidently alludes to his treatment at these places, and to the time of his being there, 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11. As Timothy was a Lydian, he had very probably been an eye-witness of the sufferings of St. Paul at that place, and even one of those who stood by when the apostle revived, after he was stoned, and left for dead.

Ver. 23. *When they had ordained them elders*] Though the word *χειροτονω*, rendered *ordain*, was originally used by the Greeks in a peculiar sense, to stretch out, or lift up the hand, as the people did when they gave their votes in popular elections; yet it came, in time, to be used in a laxer sense, and to signify nothing more than barely to appoint or constitute; for it is used by several Greek authors concerning one person's appointing another to an office, as Dr. Hammond on this place has abundantly shewn; and here it is predicted of the two apostles, and not of the people. See ch. x. 41.

Ver. 25. *Attalia*:] This was a maritime town on the coast of the Mediterranean sea. Some manuscripts and versions read here,—and preaching the gospel there.

Ver. 26. *And—sailed to Antioch*.] Not thinking it proper at that time to travel through Cilicia, though they were then on the borders of it, and some Christian churches had already been planted there, (see ch. ix. 30. xv. 41.) they

grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how

he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

¹ 1 Cor. 4. 2. 1 Tim. 2. 2. & 4. 2, 5. Col. 1. 25. & 4. 17. Eph. 4. 12. Col. 4. 3. Rev. 3. 7, 8. 2 Theff. 3. 1.

^m Ch. 4. 11. & 15. 4, 12. & 21. 19. ⁿ 1 Cor. 16. 9. 2 Cor. 2. 12.

they took shipping, and sailed thence to the coast of Syria, and went up the river Orontes to Antioch in that province.

Ver. 27. And how he had opened the door of faith, &c.] It is certain that the gospel was carried by the apostles, in this journey, to many celebrated countries, which it had never before reached. In the Ottoman empire at this day, when a call, or new levy of janissaries, is made, it is said to be "the opening of a door for janissaries."

Inferences.—Happy are the ministers of Christ, in the midst of labours, and of persecution too, if they have but the presence of their Master with them; if the Lord bear witness to the word of his grace. Almighty Saviour! leave us not destitute of that presence, which is our hope and our joy! but bear witness with all thy faithful servants, while they are bearing their testimony to thee.

Infinite wisdom governs those revolutions in providence, which seem most mysterious. The repeated oppositions which the apostles met with in their work, seemed to threaten their destruction; but they served in effect to render their testimony more credible when borne amid so many dangers: and while they tended especially to exercise the graces of these new converts, and to add a growing evidence to Christianity throughout the remotest ages, they were also the means of spreading the gospel to a greater variety of places, when the apostles were forced to make such short visits at many, through the inhospitality of those, from whom they deserved a far different reception.

The cure of the cripple above mentioned was but one miracle of a thousand which the power of Christ rendered common in those days. The effect of it, one way and another, was very remarkable. The multitude, struck with this exertion of an energy truly divine, by an error to which human nature is, alas! but too incident, fix their eyes on the instruments, and pay that honour to mortal men, which was due only to that God by whom the wonderful operation was wrought. Yet is there a mixture of (what shall I call it?) piety amidst all that superstition, which cannot fail to strike the mind with some pleasure, joined to the compassion we must feel, to find it so wretchedly misguided. When they thought that the gods were come down in human form, they were desirous immediately to pay honour to them. Such was the conduct of Heathens under an idea of the divine presence: what then should that of the sincere Christian be?—The Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh; but alas! in how different a manner was he generally received? with what outrage and infamy, with what malice and contradiction of sinners, instead of that prostrate adoration and praise, to which he had so just and infinite a claim!

How different is the behaviour of the apostles before us!

With an honest indignation they reject the homage offered them; they justly conceive it robbery thus to be made equal with God, and regard all these pompous solemnities with horror rather than delight. It was a courageous testimony which they bore to the vanity of those heathen deities, while surrounded with adorers and their priests. Their address in the present critical circumstance is remarkable and exemplary:—while they confess their own infirmities, as weak and mortal men, they, with heroic boldness and sacred truth, proclaim the one living and true God, Creator and Governor of the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is therein. May we follow the fair example, and adore this Almighty Being, as the author of all the blessings of providence, giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons; and, while our hearts are filled with food and gladness, may they rejoice to Him, and to Him devote all that vigour which we derive from his daily bounties. Above all, let us praise Him, that we have not these witnesses alone, of his presence, his power, and his goodness; but that he has revealed unto us the clear path of salvation, and given us the true Bread from heaven in a superabundant manner under our high dispensation.

Who would value himself upon the applauses of a multitude, when he sees how soon these changeable inhabitants of Lystra were instigated to assault him as a malefactor, whom but a few days before they were ready to adore as a God; and how easily they were persuaded to exchange the instruments of sacrifice for those of murder! Behold,—they stone him, and drag him out of the city for dead. And who that had seen this lamentable sight, would not have concluded that here the labours of St. Paul were ended, and that henceforward we should hear no more of him in this glorious history? But God, who amidst all their outrage secretly preserved the flame of life from being utterly extinguished, miraculously interposes to heal his wounds and bruises, and on a sudden restores him to perfect health.

And thus could he always have protected his apostles, so that, in a literal sense, not an hair of their heads should have perished: but it was more suitable to those wise maxims on which he proceeded in the government of the world, to suffer them at length to fall by the hands of their enemies, and to pour out their blood, as a seal of their doctrine, and of the sincerity with which they taught it: nor could any death be more glorious, or, when taken in its full connection, any more happy.

With pleasure let us trace these holy men in all the stages of their undaunted and successful course, converting some, confirming others, and, upon the whole, like their divine Master, scattering blessings wherever they come. Let their exhortation still have its power with us to engage our steadfast continuance in the Christian faith, through whatever tribulations we are called to pass. Be the way ever

CHAP. XV.

Great dissension ariseth touching circumcision. The apostles consult about it; and send their determination by letters to the churches. Paul and Barnabas, thinking to visit the brethren together, fall at strife and depart asunder.

[Anno Domini 51.]

AND ^a certain men which came down from Judea taught the ^b brethren, and

^a Ver. 5. Ch. 20. 30. & 21. 20. ^a Peter, 2. 1. Rev. 2. 9. ^b Ver. 19. 23. ^c Gen. 17. 10—14. Lev. 12. 3. John, 7. 22. Gal. 5. 2—4. Ver. 5. Phil. 3. 2. Col. 2. 8, 12, 16. Titus, 1. 10. ^d Ch. 11. 25, 26, 30. & 13. 1. & 16. 4. Gal. 2. 1, 9. ^e Ch. 1. 13, 26. & 12. 1. John, 16. 13. Prov. 15. 22. & 11. 14. & 24. 6.

ever so rugged and painful, it is enough for us that it leads to the kingdom of heaven. Let us thankfully own the divine goodness, in all the assistances that we receive as we pass through life, and particularly in that which all ages derive from the *Christian ministry* settled in the church by the wise care of its blessed Founder, to be a perpetual blessing to it. May all the *prayers* which are offered for those, who in succeeding generations are *set apart to the work*, in those solemn devotions which attend their *ordination* to it, be heard and answered! And may both ministers and people flourish in knowledge and piety under the constant care of the *great Shepherd and Bishop of souls!*

To conclude. The success which attended these two apostles in their course, and the pleasure with which they returned to the place whence they had so affectionately been recommended to the *grace of God*, should be an encouragement to our prayers and our labours. Whatever we do in the advancement of the gospel, let us, with these holy men, acknowledge, that *God does it by us*; and pray, that the *door of faith* may be opened so wide, that all the *nations* of the earth may *enter in, and be saved*.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though the apostles were so ignominiously treated by the Jews at Antioch, yet did they not desist at Iconium from their accustomed manner of visiting their synagogues in the first place, and making them the offer of the gospel.

1. They went both together into the synagogue, as mutual fellow-helpers, and that out of the mouths of two witnesses every word might be established; and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed; so powerful was their preaching, and so mightily did the Spirit of God bless their ministrations to the conviction and conversion of their hearers.

2. This success, as usual, exasperated the infidel Jews, who spirited up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren, by representing them as dangerous men, who were carrying on some bad design. Persecutors would thus always cover malignity under specious pretences.

3. Though the apostles saw the prejudices and rancour entertained against them and their new converts, they were not disheartened, but abode a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, in his glorious cause, and supported by his power and Spirit, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands, as an attestation to the truth of the gospel which they preached.

said, ^c Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 ^d When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto ^e the apostles and elders about this question.

Note; (1.) The gospel is *the word of Christ's grace*, containing the richest discoveries of free, boundless, and undeserved mercy to the sinful sons of men. (2.) They who go forth in the strength of the Lord, will not be dismayed at the frowns of their enemies.

4. Notwithstanding the malice of the Jews, a strong party was formed for the apostles, and the city was divided, and for a time the persecution was restrained. At last, the Jewish party prevailing, an assault was made both of the Gentiles and Jews, supported by the magistrates, in order to seize the apostles, and to *use them despitefully*, treating them with every kind of ignominy, and then to *stone them*, as blasphemers and miscreants unworthy to live.

Note; (1.) If the gospel makes a division in a place or city which was before at peace, it is not to be imputed to any tendency which the gracious message has to create such disturbance, but to the enmity of the natural heart against God, which cannot bear to see the power of gospel grace in the conversations of others: and far better is it to bear reproach and persecution, as the troublers of the false peace of sinners, than to suffer them to swim securely down the stream into the gulph of perdition. (2.) If the enemies of the truth are so unanimous in opposition, shall the friends of the gospel be less united in the glorious cause?

5. The apostles got intelligence of this conspiracy, and, to escape from the hands of these blood-thirsty men, fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about; and there they preached the gospel, not desisting from their labours, though compelled to fly for their lives. Thus the enmity of their persecutors contributed but the more to spread that gospel which they opposed.

2dly, During their stay at Lystra, we are told,

1. Of a remarkable cure performed by St. Paul on a man lame from his birth. In the assembly where St. Paul was preaching, the man sat attentive to his discourse, when the apostle *steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving*, by the spirit of discernment, *that he had faith to be healed*, and was persuaded of the power with which the apostles were endued to cure his lameness, incurable as it was by any human means; he *said with a loud voice*, that all present might hear and take notice of the miracle, *Stand upright on thy feet; and instantly he leaped and walked*, restored to perfect strength. Note; (1.) They who love the word of God, though they are lame, and cannot walk, will be carried to hear it. (2.) The pains which some take to attend God's worship, though lame and infirm, will rise up to condemn the

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the

Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem,

^f Ch. 21. 5. 2 Tim 4. 11. Titus, 3. 13. Rom. 15. 24. 1 Cor. 16. 6, 11. 21. 19, 20.

^g Ch. 11. 19. & 8. 14.

^h Ch. 14. 27. & 13. 48, 52. &

the sloth and negligence of those, who, though so much better able to go, remain at home through a miserable indulgence. (3.) When Jesus speaks to impotent but penitent souls in his word, then their hearts exult with holy joy, and they rise to run the way of his commandments.

2. Astonished at what they had seen, the idolatrous Gentiles who were present, concluded, according to the notions of their Pagan theology, that the gods were come down to them in the likeness of men, and, in an extacy of joy at this supposed honour done them, expressed aloud in their own language the sentiments of their hearts; and, agreeable to the absurd ideas which they had received concerning their gods, they called Barnabas, Jupiter, being probably the elder man, and his stature more majestic; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker; Mercury, according to them, being the god of eloquence, and reputed the messenger who went on the errands of Jove and the superior deities. Then the priest of Jupiter who was reputed their patron god, which was before their city, or whose temple stood in the suburbs, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, the place of concourse, where Paul and Barnabas were speaking to the people, and would have done sacrifice with the people, crowning them with their garlands, and offering their sacrifices before them.

3. With horror and indignation, when the apostles perceived their design, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? Far from suffering the people to continue in so dangerous a mistake, though it brought them such honour, they desired to renounce all such vain-glory, and with earnestness remonstrated against a design so impious and idolatrous. Far from assuming divinity, we also are men of like passions with you, subject to all the infirmities of humanity, and poor worms of the earth, as the rest of mankind, and preach unto you, as ministers and ambassadors of Christ, which is the highest honour we claim, that ye should turn from these vanities, these absurd, useless, unprofitable deities, which are mere nothings, creatures of the fancy, which never existed, and whose worship is the height of folly, as well as impiety; and that ye should be brought unto the worship and service of the living God, who alone is worthy to be feared and adored, as the fountain of life, and the great Creator of all; which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein, visible or invisible; who in times past, in his mysterious ways of providence, which are all righteous and just, suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, with much long-suffering bearing with their provocations. Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, but gave them sufficient evidences of his wisdom and goodness, of his eternal power and Godhead, (Rom. i. 20.) in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, which gifts of his beneficence should have led up our hearts unto him, and left us without excuse in

our ignorance, neglect, and unthankfulness towards him: so perish therefore in these abominations of idolatry, now that the gospel light was come unto them, would be peculiarly criminal. Note; (1.) All our temporal mercies should lead up our hearts to God; and, looking above all second causes, the great Author of all should be constantly seen in all the bounties of his providence, in every drop of dew that waters the earth, and in every blade that breaks the clod. (2.) The goodness of God to us should engage our hearts towards him, and, if we lived in ignorance before, we are called to improve what better light he now graciously communicates. (3.) Our gratitude is due to God, not only for the food he bestows, but for the gladness of heart which he gives to make use of his blessings.

4. With these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them; all their expostulations and entreaties with difficulty prevailed upon them to desist, so foolishly obstinate were they in their mistaken persuasion.

3dly, How fickle is the mind of vain man! how soon are they, who have no foundation, carried about with every wind. They who are deified to-day, are thus often detested to-morrow. It becomes us, if we would have abiding honour, to seek that which cometh from God only.

1. The apostles are brought into the most imminent danger, and St. Paul stoned and left for dead. The Jews, their implacable enemies, followed them from Antioch and Iconium, on purpose to counteract their labours; and with diabolical malice to prevent, to their utmost, the progress of the gospel. And soon they found means to persuade the wavering multitude, that these men were deceivers, turbulent and seditious, and exasperated them so highly, that, seizing St. Paul, against whom they bore the bitterest grudge as the chief preacher, they stoned him in a popular tumult, and drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, lamenting over him, praying that he might be restored to life, or with an intent to bury him, he rose up, quickened by miraculous power; and, notwithstanding the late wounds and bruises that he had received, he came into the city, strengthened in his body, and not daunted in his mind by all that he had endured. Note; True disciples will not forsake their persecuted ministers, but own them in the face of every reproach and danger.

2. The next day Paul departed with Barnabas to Derbe: and when, as usual, they had preached the gospel, and taught, their ministry being blessed to the conversion of many, they returned back again to the cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, settling them on Christ the great foundation, that no troubles felt or feared, no cares or temptations, might move them away from the hope of the gospel; and exhorting them to continue in the faith of Jesus, in the belief of his office, glory, and gospel, and in the bold and open profession of his name; and saying,

they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 ¶ But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to com-

mand *them* to keep the law of Moses.

6 ^k And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 ¶ And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, ^l Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while

^l Said they. Ver. 1. Ch. 21. 20. & 6. 7. with 26. 5.

^k Heb. 13. 7, 17. 1 Tim. 5. 17. Prov. 11. 14. & 15. 22.

^l Ch. 10. 20, 34—48. & 11. 12—18.

saying, *that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*; for which therefore they must prepare, nor count as if some strange thing happened unto them, since all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must, more or less, share this common lot. *Note*; (1.) They who have received the gospel word, have still need of farther confirmation, that they may be built up on their most holy faith; and ministers must labour to establish the possessors of grace, as well as to awaken the careless. (2.) Nothing but faith can enable us to overcome the snares, the allurements, and discouragements of this present evil world; they who would stand in the evil day must continue to hold fast on Christ.

3. They *ordained elders*, or presbyters, in every church, to lead their devotions; administer the sacraments, preach the word, and watch over the flock of God committed to their charge; men of gravity and piety, selected from the other disciples, and judged best qualified for the arduous work of the ministry; and having *prayed with fasting*, for the supplies of grace and the divine benediction upon them, *they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed*, both the elders and their congregations; begging that the Lord, who had begun the good work, would perfect the same; nourishing them up in the words of sound doctrine, and preserving them unto his everlasting kingdom. *Note*; (1.) The work of the ministry cannot be undertaken with too great solemnity; and they who feel the weight of it, will not fail importunately to seek, by prayer, for more than human power to carry them through. (2.) The best parting of friends is in prayer to the Lord, mutually commending each other to his care and love.

4. The apostles continued their journey to Antioch, in Syria, passing through Pisidia, till they came to Pamphylia, where they preached the word at Perga, a city of that province, and Attalia, another town on the sea-coast; and thence they sailed to Antioch, *from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled*; and now were returned from their successful expedition, bringing back a full answer to the prayers that had been put up at their departure. *And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them*, ascribing nothing to themselves, but giving him the glory to whom alone the praise of all was due; *and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles*, great multitudes of whom had been converted to the faith of Jesus. *And there, at Antioch, they abode long time with the disciples*; comforting, establishing, strengthening them. *Note*; (1.) Whatever good is done by our preaching, we must remember that all the efficacy proceeds not from us, but from the grace of God. (2.) The way into the kingdom of grace and glory, lies through the door of faith.

VOL. I.

CHAP. XV.

Ver. 1. And certain men, &c.] A circumstance now occurred, which was the occasion of very considerable consequences in the Christian church: for some persons who came from Antioch to Judea, full of Jewish prejudices,—among whom it was a common maxim, that all uncircumcised persons go to hell; taught the Christians in their public and private discourses, that, except they were circumcised, according to the manner prescribed in the law of Moses, and became obedient to all the whole system of his precepts, they could not possibly be saved by the gospel; which, they urged, was intended to make all that were converted to it Jews, and that they could not otherwise be true and genuine Christians;—objections, which it was of the greatest consequence entirely to remove.

Ver. 2. They determined that Paul and Barnabas, &c.] It is generally allowed, that this is the journey to which St. Paul refers, Gal. ii. 1, 2. when he says, that *he went up by revelation*; which is very consistent with this; for the church in sending them might be directed by a revelation, made either immediately to St. Paul, or to some other person, relating to this important affair. Important indeed it was, and necessary that these Jewish impositions should be solemnly opposed in time; because great numbers of converts, who were *zealous for the law*, would eagerly fall in with such a notion, and be ready to contend for the observance of it. Many of the Christians at Antioch, undoubtedly knew that St. Paul was under an extraordinary *divine direction*, and therefore would readily have acquiesced in his determination alone: but as others might have prejudices against him, on account of his having been so much concerned with the Gentiles, it was highly expedient to take the concurrent sense and judgment of the apostles to the *circumcision* upon this occasion.

Ver. 3. And, being brought on their way] Being brought forward on their journey. This is plainly the sense of the word *προπεμφθέντες*; which is constantly used to express the regard shewn to those who travelled any where to preach the gospel, or to take care of the affairs of the church. Compare ch. xx. 38. xxi. 5. Rom. xv. 24. 1 Cor. xvi. 6. 11. 2 Cor. i. 16. Tit. iii. 13. and 3 John, ver. 6.

Ver. 5. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees] Some considerable commentators have thought this verse a circumstance which St. Paul adds to his history; though the connexion evidently shews, that they are the words of the *historian*; informing us that these messengers found some at Jerusalem, who had the same unhappy principles, which had so much disturbed the peace of the church at Antioch.

Ver. 7. And when there had been much disputing,] The debate which arose in this assembly, may indeed prove that

ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, ^m which knoweth the hearts, ^a bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us;

9 And ^o put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God ^p to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe ^q that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as ^r they.

12 ¶ Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul ^s, declaring what miracles and wonders God had

wrought among the Gentiles by them.

13 ¶ And ^t after they had held their peace, ^u James answered, saying, ^v Men *and* brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first ^w did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 ^x After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 ^y That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

^m Ch. 1. 24. 1 Chron. 28. 9. & 29. 17. Ps. 7. 10. Jer. 11. 20. & 17. 10. & 20. 12. Heb. 4. 13. Rev. 2. 23. ⁿ Ch. 10. 43—45. & 11. 15. & 2. 4. & 4. 31. ^o Ch. 10. 15, 28. & 11. 17. & 12. 24. & 13. 48. & 14. 1. 27. 1 Cor. 1. 1, 2. 1 Pet. 1. 22. Rom. 3. 29, 30. ^p Mat. 23. 4. Gal. 5. 1. ^q Eph. 1. 7. & 2. 7, 8. Col. 1. 14. Rom. 5. 20, 21. & 6. 23. & 8. 1—4. & 10. 4. Rev. 5. 9. Gal. 2. 16. Titus, 2. 11. & 3. 4—7. ^r Our fathers. Ver. 10. ^s Ver. 4. Ch. 11. 6. & xiii. xiv. & 14. 27. & 21. 29. ^t 1 Cor. 14. 30, 40. ^u Not Mat. 4. 21. Ch. 12. 1. but Mark, 3. 18. & 15. 40. James, 1. 1. Ch. 12. 17. ^v See Ch. 13. 15, 26. & 22. 1. & 23. 1. ^w Ver. 7, 12. Luke, 1. 78. Titus, 2. 11, 14. Rom. 11. 36. If. 43. 20, 21. ^x Amos, 9. 12, 12. If. 54. 1—5. & 42. 1, 4, 6. & 43. 6. & xlix. ix. Ezek. xl—xlvi. If. 2. 2, 3. Micah, 4. 1. ^y Gen. 9. 27. & 49. 10. If. 11. 10. & 19. 23. & 48. 1, 6, 7. & 45. 22, 24. & 49. 6. Zech. 2. 11. & 8. 20—23. Mal. 1. 11. Joel, 2. 32. Rom. 11. 29.

there were some in the church at Jerusalem who had not a due regard to the authority of the apostles; but it cannot afford any just argument against their inspiration; for this dispute does not appear to have been among the apostles themselves; and if they really had debated the case a while, their decision at last might have been under an unerring direction. There seems no reason to conclude, that their inspiration was always so instantaneous and express, as to supersede any deliberation in their own minds, or any consultation with each other.

Ver. 10. *To put a yoke upon the neck, &c.*] “A grievous and heavy burden, which neither our fathers nor we have been able cheerfully and regularly to bear, without being exposed to great inconveniences, and many transgressions in consequence of it.” The rabbinical writers apply this phrase to any practical doctrine or precept. See Jer. xxviii. 14. Matth. xxiii. 4. The force of the argument is, “Why tempt ye God, distrustful and disbelieving him, by imposing this yoke upon the Gentile converts, after he has declared his acceptance of them, by pouring forth the gift of the Holy Spirit upon them without their being circumcised?”

Ver. 11. *Saved, even as they.*] *After the same manner as they.*

Ver. 12. *Then all the multitude kept silence,*] St. Peter’s speech silenced all the multitude, and the zealots had nothing to reply to such clear and convincing arguments. The whole body of the assembly, therefore, were then disposed patiently to attend to what Paul and Barnabas thought fit to communicate to them, concerning the wonders and miracles which God had enabled them to do among the Gentiles; which was a plain confirmation that

God had sent them, and approved of their attempt to convert such persons, though they were not circumcised, nor subject to the burden of the Mosaic law.

Ver. 13. *And after they had held their peace,*] The silence being renewed, the apostle James made a speech, in which he summed up the debate, and formed the question, to which they all unanimously agreed. Hence it is plain, that the matter was not determined by virtue of any superior authority in St. Peter; and it seems very providential that St. James should have made such a speech on this occasion; and that he should have used the expression *κρίνω, I determine*, ver. 19. which, had it been found in St. Peter’s speech, would have been a much more plausible argument in favor of his weakly boasted supremacy, than the whole scripture now affords.

Ver. 15, 17. *After this I will return, &c.*] These words are quoted from Amos, ix. 11, 12. according to the reading of the LXX. Bishop Chandler seems very justly to argue, that the Jews understood and admitted the words in the sense that St. James quotes them; or they would not have submitted to his interpretation, considering how strongly they were prejudiced against the consequence that he drew from them. Instead of *the residue of men*, it is in the Hebrew, *the remnant of Edom*; one of the nations which were the bitterest enemies to Israel, and a remnant of the most abandoned and profligate idolaters; and if they were to be received into the visible church, the Jews might consequently expect that the other Gentiles would be much more reconciled to Christianity. *The Gentiles, upon whom the name of the Lord is called*, is a most proper description of those who are converted to the true religion. See the note on Amos, ix. 11.

18 ^b Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, ^c that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles ^d are turned to God :

20 But that we write unto them that they abstain from ^e pollutions of idols, and from ^f fornication, and from ^g things strangled, and from blood.

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being ^h read in the synagogues every sabbath-day.

22 ¶ Then pleased it the apostles and

elders, with the ⁱ whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas ; *namely*, Judas surnamed ^k Barfabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren :

23 And they wrote *letters* by them after this manner ; The apostles and elders and brethren *send* greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia :

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that ^l certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, *Ye*

^b Heb. 4. 13. If. 41. 22, 23. & 44. 7. & 46. 10. Eph. 1. 11. Ch. 17. 26. ^c Ver. 10, 24. Gal. 5. 1-4. Rom. 15. 2. Ver. 28. ^d 1 Theff. 1. 9. Eph. 2. 1, 4-10. Titus, 3. 5. If. 55. 7. ^e Exod. 20. 3. & 34. 15. 1 Cor. 8. 1-10. & 10. 14, 20, 21. Ch. 21. 25. Rom. 14. 14. Ver. 29. 1 John, 5. 21. Col. 3. 5. ^f 1 Cor. 5. 1. & 10. 8. Eph. 4. 17. 1 Theff. 4. 3, 5, 7. Heb. 12. 15. & 13. 4. ^g Gen. 9. 4. Lev. 3. 17. & 17. 14. & 7. 26. ^h Neh. 8. 1. Ch. 13. 15, 27. Luke, 4. 16. ⁱ Ch. 8. 1. Ver. 3. Mat. 18. 17. Ver. 23. ^k Perhaps not Josias Barfabas, ch. 1. 23. but his brother. ^l Ch. 8. 1. Ver. 1. 10. Gal. 2. 4. & 5. 12. Titus, 1. 11. 1 John, 2. 19. 2 Cor. 11. 3. Jer. 23. 16.

Ver. 18. *Known unto God are all his works*] The apostle plainly speaks here, not of God's works in the natural world, but of his dispensations towards the children of men : now he could not know those, without knowing the actions and characters of particular persons, on a correspondence to which, the wisdom and goodness of those dispensations is founded. Thus, for instance, he must have known that there would be Gentile idolaters, (a thing as dependant on the freedom of the human mind, as any thing that we can imagine,) or he could not have known that he would call them into his church. This text, therefore, must remain an unanswerable proof, amongst a thousand more from the word of God, that he certainly foreknows future contingencies. Dr. Clarke's paraphrase of the text is, "The method of his universal government, through the whole system, both of the natural and moral world, is according to certain uniform rules eternally established by unerring wisdom."

Ver. 19-21. *Wherefore my sentence is, &c.*] This passage, on which the critics have so much differed in sentiment, and written so much, may, I think, be thus paraphrased : "Wherefore I cannot but determine in my own mind, and I doubt not but you will readily concur with me, that we ought not to disquiet those who from among the Gentiles are converted by divine grace to the knowledge and worship of the true God, and to obedience to the gospel, with such observances as those now in question ; but only to write to them, that they abstain from things grossly scandalous, and such as would give the greatest offence to their brethren of the circumcision ; particularly from the abominable pollutions of things sacrificed to idols, and fornication, and from eating that which is strangled, and from blood. And though the latter of these have no moral and universal evil in them, yet it is necessary to join the prohibition of them to that of the former ; for we know that Moses hath had from ancient generations, and still continues to have, those who preach him and his institutions in every city, being read in all the Jewish synagogues every sabbath-day ; and these

" things are so expressly forbidden in his law, that while the Gentile Christians indulge themselves in any of them, it will be impossible there should be that communion and harmony between them and the Jewish converts, which the honour and edification of the church require." In short, though neither things sacrificed to idols, nor the flesh of strangled animals, nor blood, have, or can have, any moral evil in them, which should make the eating of them absolutely and universally unlawful ; (compare 1 Cor. viii. 1. 8, 9. Rom. xiv. 14, &c. 1 Tim. iv. 4. Matth. xv. 11.) yet they were here forbidden to the Gentile converts, because the Jews had such an aversion to them, that they could not converse freely with any that used them. This is plainly the reason which St. James assigns in ver. 21. and it is abundantly sufficient. And were we in like circumstances with those converted Gentiles, Christian charity would surely require us to lay ourselves under the same restraints. As to fornication, as the infamy of it was not so great among the Gentiles, as the nature of the crime deserved, it has been generally thought, that the church at Jerusalem chose to add this prohibition, though it might be a kind of digression from the immediate design of their letter.

Ver. 22. *Judas surnamed Barfabas,*] Some have thought that this is the same with *Joseph called Barfabas*, (ch. i. 23.) candidate with Matthias for the apostleship, the son of Alpheus or Cleophas, and brother to at least two of the apostles, *James* now present, and *Jude* ; than whom there was not any one person, not an apostle, of greater note in the church at this time. Others, however, suppose that he was the brother of this person. Silas, the other, seems to have been the person elsewhere called *Sylvanus*, the most intimate friend and beloved companion of St. Paul, and, as it appears also, a citizen of Rome. See ch. xvi. 37.

Ver. 24. *Subverting your souls,*] *Unsettling your minds.* The word ἀναστροφέω is primarily and properly applied to the removing a vessel from one place to another. In a secondary sense, it implies the moving of the mind from one object

must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no *such* commandment:

25. It seemed good unto us, being assembled ^a with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved ^b Barnabas and Paul,

26 Men that have ^c hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and ^d Silas, who shall also tell *you* the same things by mouth.

28 For it seemed good ^e to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

29 ^f That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:

31 *Which* when they had read, they rejoiced

for the ^g consolation.

32 And Judas and Silas, being ^h prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and ⁱ confirmed *them*.

33 And after they had tarried *there* a space, they were ^j let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

35 Paul also and Barnabas ^k continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 ¶ And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, ^l Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they do.

37 And Barnabas determined to take with them ^m John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, ⁿ who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And ^o the contention was so sharp be-

^m Ch. 2. 46. & 4. 32. Rom. 15. 6. 1 Cor. 1. 10. ⁿ Ver. 2, 35. Gal. 2. 9. ^o Ch. 13. 50. & 14. 19. Judges, 5. 18. ^p Ch. 16. 25. & 17. 4, 15. 1 Thess. 1. 1. 2 Thess. 1. 1. ^q 1 Cor. 7. 25, 40. John, 16. 13. ^r Ch. 16. 4. & 21. 25. Ver. 20. 1 Cor. viii. x. Exod. 34. 15. Lev. 3. 17. & 17. 14. & 19. 26. Deut. 12. 16, 23. & 15. 23. 1 Sam. 14. 32. Rom. 1. 24, 26. 1 Cor. 5. 1, 9, 11. & 7. 2. Heb. 13. 4. ^s Or *exhortation*. ^t Ch. 13. 1. 1 Cor. 12. 28. Ch. 13. 22. ^u Ver. 41. Ch. 14. 22. & 18. 23. Eph. 4. 12, 13. ^v Gen. 26. 29. Exod. 4. 18. 1 Cor. 16. 11. Heb. 11. 31. ^w Ch. 5. 42. & 13. 1. & 11. 19, 26. ^x Ch. 13. 4, 13. & 14. 1, 21, 23. Rom. 1. 11. 2 Cor. 11. 28. ^y Ch. 12. 12, 25. & 13. 5. Col. 4. 10. 2 Tim. 4. 11. Phil. 24. 1 Pet. 5. 13. ^z Ch. 13. 13. & 14. 26. ^{aa} Ch. 14. 15. James, 5. 17. Pl. 8. 4. & 39. 5. Rom. 7. 14, 23.

object to another, or unsettling it. When the apostles positively declare that they *gave no such commandment* to the persons who had troubled the converts, this was directly fixing the lie upon them, if they had pretended to use the apostles' name in imposing their tenets; and, as the matter of fact was known, would be a proper means of weakening their credit, and so render them less capable of doing mischief.

Ver. 26. Men that have hazarded their lives] Such a testimony to the reputation of Paul and Barnabas, was far from being a mere compliment, but exceedingly prudent, as it might be the means of removing the prejudices conceived against them by the Jewish converts or teachers; several of whom, as it appears from many passages of the epistles, endeavoured as much as possible to lessen the character of these apostles. It would also be an useful expression of the harmony between them and those of the circumcision.

Ver. 28. It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us,] Though this may include the decision which the Spirit had given by his descent upon Cornelius and his friends, yet it seems more directly to express the consciousness which this assembly had, of being guided by his influences on their minds in their present determination. When the apostles call these things necessary, they mean, by a common mode

of speaking, necessary for those times and circumstances. They were undoubtedly necessary, in order to promote a free converse between the Jewish and Gentile Christians, and especially to secure communion at the table of the Lord; where we cannot imagine that Jews would have eaten and drunk with persons whom they thought in so polluted a state as those who indulged themselves in the things here prohibited. On the other hand, it seems that the Jews on these conditions gave up any further debate about other forbidden meats, as well as circumcision, &c.

Ver. 29. From which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well.] That is, "You may hope it will end well." This gentle manner of concluding was worthy the apostolical wisdom and goodness. Too soon did succeeding councils of inferior authority change it for the stile of *anathemas*; forms, which have doubtless proved an occasion of consecrating some of the worst passions of the human mind under sacred names; and which, like some ill-adjusted weapons of war, are most likely to hurt the hand from which they are thrown.

Ver. 32. Being prophets] See on 1 Cor. xii. 28.

Ver. 39. The contention] Παροξυσμός, a paroxysm, is a medical term, and signifies here a *sharp fit of anger*.—*And there was a sharp contention,—so that,* &c. However, we find not only that Paul and Barnabas were afterwards thoroughly

tween them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;

40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed,

being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

^c Ch. 4. 36. & 11. 15. & 13. 4. & 27. 4.

^d Ch. 14. 26. & 13. 3. & 20. 32. 1 Cor. 3. 6, 7.

^e Ch. 16. 4. Gal. 1. 2r.

thoroughly reconciled, (compare 1 Cor. ix. 6. Gal. ii. 9.) but also that St. Mark was taken into St. Paul's favour again, and admitted by him as a companion in his labour. Compare Col. iv. 10. Philem. ver. 24. 2 Tim. iv. 11. Some have thought that, notwithstanding this contention, these two excellent men parted in as friendly a manner as Abraham and Lot did after their contention, Gen. xiii. 7, &c. But, suppose they parted with dislike and resentment, there is nothing wonderful in it; for though they were inspired with the whole scheme of the Christian doctrine, and so far under the guidance of an unerring Spirit; yet no Christian supposes they were inspired in their ordinary conduct, or divested of all human infirmities; and it would be ridiculous to make such things any objection to the truth of the Christian religion. On the contrary, it ought to be looked upon as a proof of the great fairness and impartiality in the sacred writers, that they frankly owned, and without reserve published, the foibles and imperfections of their fellow-Christians, and even of the apostles and first planters of the glorious gospel. But whatever human infirmity there was in this contention, God, in his good providence, made this separation of the two apostles turn to the greater and more extensive welfare of mankind; Christianity by this means being more generally and widely spread.

Ver. 40. *Being recommended by the brethren*] St. Luke designing here to drop the history of Barnabas, and pursue that of St. Paul alone, says nothing of the former's being recommended to the grace of God; but there can be no doubt that as the church of Antioch wished them both success, so they recommended both of them, together with their assistants, unto God for his blessing, before they set out upon so great an undertaking.

Ver. 41. *Confirming the churches*.] Mr. Cradock and many others think, that St. Paul sailed from Cilicia to Crete at this time, and, returning to the Asiatic continent quickly after, left Titus to perfect the settlement of the church there, Tit. i. 5.

Inferences.—How early did the spirit of bigotry and imposition begin to work in the Christian church!—that fatal humour of imposing a yoke on the neck of Christ's disciples, by making indifferent things necessary!—that unmanly and antichristian disposition, which has almost ever since been rending the church to pieces, and clamorously throwing the blame on those, who have been desirous, on principles truly evangelical, to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ, their divine Master, hath made them free! How foolish and how mischievous the error, of making terms of communion which Christ never made! and how presumptuous the arrogance of invading his throne, to pronounce from thence damnatory sentences on those who will not, who dare not, submit to our uncommissioned and usurped authority!

Prudent, undoubtedly, was the part which the Antiochian Christians acted upon this occasion, in sending messengers to the apostles for their determination; and it will be our prudence, now we can no longer in person consult those ambassadors of Christ, to make their writings our counsellors, and the standard both of our faith and worship; appealing to the tribunal of Christ, our Master, and our Judge, from those uncharitable censures which we may sometimes incur, even from his faithful, though mistaken servants, for retaining the simplicity of that religion, which these authorized interpreters of his will taught.

Great joy was occasioned to the churches through which Paul and Barnabas passed, when they recounted the conversion of the Heathen. And may such joy also be renewed to us, by the success of all, who, with a truly apostolical self-denial and zeal, go forth at any time to the vast multitudes of the Gentiles, who yet remain on this uncultivated earth of ours, so great a part of which is yet, in a spiritual sense, a wilderness! Whatever success they may have in one part of our Lord's vineyard, or we in another, let us all remember that it is in consequence of what God does by us, and by them; and let the ministers of the gospel adore the riches of divine grace, to which they owe it that they are called to carry the knowledge and power of his gospel to others.

May our hearts be purified by a vital, and not merely enlightened by a notional faith! May that God, who knoweth all hearts, bear witness to us, by giving us his Holy Spirit; that so being, under the influence of this Sacred Agent, animated to adorn in the most amiable manner our profession, when we have done all, we may humbly repose ourselves upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; as knowing that it is only by the rich and unmerited display of it, that, after all our labour, obedience, and care, we can expect salvation!

With what gratitude should we adore the infinite condescension of God, in looking with pity upon the Gentiles. We are a part of those Gentiles. Let it then be our concern, that as his name is named upon us, we render it becoming honours, and remember what an obligation it lays upon us to depart from iniquity: and may the fallen tabernacle of David also be raised up, and all its ruins repaired; that so, when God's antient people are called to embrace the gospel, the residue of men may seek after the Lord under our high dispensation, and the fulness of the Gentiles may be brought in. The God of infinite love will accomplish this also: and, in the mean time, we ought gratefully to acknowledge what he has already done.

While we are peculiarly thankful that we are freed from the burdens of the Mosaic institution, and called to a law of liberty, let us take due heed not to abuse it to licentiousness. Gal. v. 13. From the tenor of this apostolic decree we may learn tenderly to regard even the prejudices of our Christian brethren, and to be careful that we do nothing violently.

CHAP. XVI.

Paul, having circumcised Timothy, and being called by the Spirit from one country to another, converteth Lydia, and casteth out a spirit of divination. For which cause he and Silas are whipped and imprisoned. The prison doors are opened. The jailor is converted, and they are delivered.

[Anno Domini 53.]

THEN came he to ^a Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there,

^a Ch. 14. 6.

^b Rom. 16. 21. Phil. 2. 19.

¹ Theff. 3. 2. ² Tim. 1. 5. & 3. 10, 14. Ch. 17. 14. & 19. 22. & 20. 4.

^c Ch. 6. 3. ² Tim.

3. 15.

^d 2 Cor. 9. 20, 21. with Gal. 2. 3. He did this to render Timothy more acceptable to the Jews.

violently; but rather, that so far as conscience will allow, we become all things to all men, and be willing, in some respects, to deny ourselves, that we may not give unnecessary offence to others.

Most prudently did the apostles determine the controversy, under the influence of the Divine Spirit; and therefore whatever hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them, let us treat with all becoming reverence and regard. The messengers from Antioch by whom they returned the decree, thought themselves, no doubt, exceedingly happy in the success of this negociation, as also in the society of those pious brethren of the circumcision, who accompanied them on their return with this letter. May the blessed time come, when the ministers of Christ, of all denominations, laying aside their mutual animosities, shall agree to study the things which make for peace, and wherewith one may edify another! Rom. xiv. 19. Then will liberty and truth have a more easy and universal triumph; while love melts and cements those souls, whom rigorous severity has only served to harden, to disunite, and to alienate.

How happy an office had these good men, to go about from one place to another, comforting and confirming the souls of their brethren, wherever they came! They had their present reward in the pleasure of it, and are now also reaping, in the heavenly world, the fruits of their labour of love. Deliver us, O Father of mercies, from lording it over thine heritage, and overbearing the consciences and liberties of our brethren, with whatever secular advantages it might be attended; and give us to taste something at least of the generous pleasure of these faithful messengers, though it should be with all their labours and persecutions!

While we endeavour to comfort, may we be also ready to exhort and quicken one another. Christians should animate each other at every opportunity, in the work and warfare to which they are called; and ministers should especially remember, how great a part of their work consists in practical addresses, to which, like Judas and Silas in the instance recorded, ver. 32. they should choose to digress, rather than entirely omit them.

Who can wonder that Paul and Barnabas were desirous to visit the churches which they had planted? It is natural for those who have been spiritual fathers, to have a peculiar affection for their offspring: it is equally natural for the children which God hath given them, to honour and love those, who, as the apostle expresses it, have begotten them in Christ Jesus. 1 Cor. iv. 15. Happy is it indeed when the visits

^b named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

² Which was ^c well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

³ Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and ^d circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

of ministers are animated by such a spirit, are improved to the blessed purposes of advancing the work which divine grace has already begun, and of addressing cautions as well as encouragements, with such affection, wisdom, and zeal, that it may finally appear they have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain.

It is with sensible regret that we read of any difference, much more of a sharp contention, arising between Paul and Barnabas, so dear as they were to each other in the bonds of human and Christian friendship. But, so frail is man, that we see it arose to some degree of severity, in consequence of a remainder of imperfection in the temper of the one or the other. They therefore separated; but it plainly appears that they did not become enemies. They preached the same gospel, though in different companies, each taking his proper circuit: and thus the work of the Lord was performed with greater dispatch, and perhaps with greater success; while Mark (who afterwards appears, as well as Barnabas, to have been restored to the intimate friendship of Paul,) was on the one hand endeavouring to shew that Barnabas had not chosen an unworthy associate; and, on the other hand, Silas, the fellow-labourer and fellow-sufferer of St. Paul, would take care to behave in such a manner, that this great apostle might have no reason to repent of the preference which had been given to him.

To conclude. We see that both Paul and Barnabas go to their native country, ver. 39—41. Some peculiar affection to it, when it is not injurious to the general good of mankind, is natural and allowable: and it is certain that we cannot shew our love to it in any nobler and more important instance, than by endeavouring to promote the progress and success of the gospel in it.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The peace of that happy society at Antioch, which was the envy of the devil, begins to be interrupted by some, who sowed the seeds of controversy, the bane of the Christian church.

1. Certain men came down from Judea, not sent by the apostles, but intigated by their own pride and prejudices, and taught the Gentile brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved; as if their faith in Christ and adherence to the gospel was insufficient, unless they also submitted to this distinguishing ordinance. The Jewish Christians, it seems, themselves were zealous for the law, (Acts, xxi. 20, &c.) and were permitted to observe the Jewish ritual as a thing in its nature

4 And as they went through the cities, that were ordained of the apostles and elders they delivered them the decrees for to keep, which were at Jerusalem.

^c Ch. 15. 2, 6, 20, 24, 29.

ture indifferent, and from which, after the destruction of the temple, and the dissolution of the Jewish polity, they would be entirely emancipated: but not satisfied with being themselves indulged in this practice, they wanted to enslave the consciences of the Gentile converts under the same yoke, and that on peril of their damnation if they rejected it. *Note*; Men are strangely disposed to make their own opinions and practice the standard for others, and to enforce their fancies and inventions as of essential consequence, liberally denouncing their anathemas, and consigning to the pit of destruction all who will not conform to their mode of thinking and worship, and submit their consciences to their yoke: but when we are making God's word our rule, and, according to our best light, following his will, we need little regard these rash denunciations.

2. Paul and Barnabas boldly withstood these Judaizing teachers, and disputed against them as the corrupters of genuine Christianity; and when a growing dissention seemed to threaten this flourishing church, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question, that the matter being discussed in a full assembly of all the chief ministers of the church, the pretensions of these corrupters might be confounded, and the liberty of the Gentiles confirmed.

3. The two great apostles of the Gentiles hereupon departed, being respectfully attended part of the way by some chief brethren of the church; and, as they passed through Phenice and Samaria, they caused great joy unto all the brethren, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles; for to genuine believers nothing is matter of more pure unfeigned delight, than to hear that others are made partakers of the same grace which they themselves have tasted.

4. The church of Jerusalem, and the apostles Cephas, James, and John, and the elders, received these distinguished messengers with high respect, and expressed their full approbation of their conduct, when they heard what they had done, and their success among the Gentiles: but certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and made profession of faith in him, still retained many of their former tenets, and were bigoted to the ceremonial law; they rose up therefore, insisting, that it was needful for them not only to believe in Jesus, but also to be circumcised, and keep the law, in order to obtain acceptance with God; thus most highly derogating from the free grace of God, and the great doctrine of justification by faith alone.

2dly, The first general council that had yet sat to decide on the unhappy disputes which were beginning to arise in the church, is now with great seriousness assembled, to hear, consider, and determine. After much disputation on the subject, we have,

1. St. Peter's speech on the occasion. He had heard what had been said on both sides of the argument, and

therefore, as one of the most respectable personages in that assembly, rises to deliver his opinion.

He reminds them how God had sent him, several years before, to preach the gospel to Cornelius and the Gentiles who were with him, and had thereby led them by faith to Jesus Christ for life and salvation. The same gifts had been bestowed on them as on the Jewish converts, and God had himself herein testified his acceptance and approbation of them; making no difference between them, purifying their hearts by faith, as justified and sanctified by the blood and grace of Jesus, without the least need of circumcision and the ceremonial observances. Since therefore God had so evidently decided the matter, it was the highest presumption, and no better than tempting God, arraignment his wisdom and authority, to pretend a right to counteract what he had done, and repeal what he had determined: and it was a great injury to the Gentile brethren, to put that yoke of ceremonial institutions upon their neck, which had been so burdensome to themselves and their fathers, and which was now absolutely useless, since the salvation by Jesus Christ was alike free to Jew and Gentile, and both were to be saved by grace through faith, without the least respect to circumcision, or any legal institutions: We therefore, says St. Peter, expect to be saved even as they, and they as freely as we. *Note*; (1.) They who have the real faith of the gospel, will certainly evidence its purifying efficacy upon their hearts. (2.) All, who hold the head Christ, and walk in holiness as Christ also walked, however in some sentiments they may differ from us, are cordially to be embraced by us as brethren.

2. Paul and Barnabas, instead of ten thousand arguments, related simply the miracles and wonders which God had wrought among the Gentiles by them, whilst all the multitude kept a profound silence, listening attentively to so wonderful and pleasing a narrative; wherein it evidently appeared, both by the miracles which God enabled them to work, and by the success which he gave them in the conversion of the Gentiles, that he approved their labours, and bore testimony to the acceptance of these Gentile converts. What need then could there be, that they should be burdened with the works of the law, who had received the Holy Ghost by the hearing of faith? See Gal. iii. 2.

3. On their closing their discourse, the apostle James, the last speaker in this council, sums up the debate, and delivers his opinion.

[1.] After a respectful address to them, as men of reason and consideration, and brethren in the Lord, he reminds them of what Peter had said, by whose preaching first God did visit the Gentiles with the knowledge of his gospel and the gifts of his grace, to take out of them a people for his name, to be to the praise of his glory, even all who would perseveringly believe in the Son of his love.

[2.] He observes, that God herein exactly fulfilled his own word in the mouth of his prophets, which had so long ago foretold this great event, as it is written, (Amos, ix.

5^f And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were

[Gal. 5. 1. Col. 1. 23. & 2. 2. Jude, 20. 21. Ch. 4. 4. & 5. 14. & 6. 7. & 15. 41. & 9. 31. & 11. 21. & 12. 24. & 13. 48, 49. & 15. 20.

11.) *After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, in and by the divine Messiah, who, when the house of David was reduced to the lowest state of want and contempt, should arise to set up that spiritual and everlasting kingdom, of which David's house and kingdom were the figures: and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up, great and glorious, that the residue of men, on the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles in the latter days, might seek after the Lord, submitting to the Messiah's sceptre, and becoming obedient to the gospel-word; and all the Gentiles, whether profelytes or idolaters, who have been or will be converted to the faith of Christ, upon whom my name is called, faith the Lord who doeth all these things, whose word is faithful, whose power alone could effect this wondrous conversion in the heathen world, and who, in so doing, testified his acceptance of the Gentile converts.*

[3.] He resolves the matter: this the Lord foretold by his infinite prescience; for, *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world; the past, present, and what is to come, even the most perfect contingencies, have ever lain open before him; and they might be fully assured, all his counsels were holy, just, and good, and therefore to be acquiesced in by them without a moment's hesitation.*

[4.] He delivers his opinion concerning what he judges proper to be done on the present occasion. *My sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God, by the imposition of the unnecessary yoke of legal observances on their consciences; but that, to avoid all offence to the believing brethren among the Jews, and to remove whatever would prevent their communion with the Gentile converts, we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols; from eating or drinking any thing offered to idols; and from fornication, condemned in other parts of scripture, in the clearest terms, as perfectly immoral; and from things strangled, and from blood; for as fornication, though so common and allowed among the Gentiles, must be abstained from as a moral evil; other things, though indifferent in themselves, were then needful to be observed, in order to promote mutual love and communion between the Jewish and Gentile brethren. For as the writings of Moses, in which these things are forbidden, had been of old read every sabbath-day, and the Jewish converts still retained a high veneration for the law, they owed them this indulgence to their long-received usage in these indifferent matters. Note; Great allowances are to be made for the prejudices of education; and therefore in indifferent matters we should show to each other a spirit of mutual charity and forbearance, desiring to please every man his neighbour for his good to edification.*

3dly, The matter being now brought to a conclusion, and the assembly concurring in their approbation of the opinion which St. James had delivered, we have,

1. The choice of two persons from the brethren at

† 3

Jerusalem, eminent for their gifts and graces, Barsabas and Silas, to accompany Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, with letters containing the decree of the council, both as a testimony of respect towards their Gentile fellow-Christians, and that they might be helpers to establish the work begun among them.

2. The letters themselves contained,

[1.] A most respectful address. *The apostles, and elders, and brethren, send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia: they assume no authoritative stile, nor founding titles; but stretch out the hand of fellowship, giving them the result of their consultations.*

[2.] They recite the cause on which their council was held, marking with just disapprobation the disturbers of the church's peace. *We have heard, that certain which went out from us, have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment: they pretended that they acted under the apostolic commission and authority; but this is here utterly disclaimed. Note; (1.) Nothing more fatally subverts the soul, than the insisting upon any thing as necessary to our acceptance and justification before God, besides faith alone. (2.) Many pretend a mission from God and his church, whose pretensions, when examined, are found utterly false and delusive.*

[3.] They make honourable mention of the bearers of their epistle, whom they with one accord agreed to send. *It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, for whom they expressed their highest regard, and of whose conduct they testified the most entire approbation; men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; a noble evidence of their approved fidelity. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who, lest any cavil should be raised about the meaning or intention of the contents of our letters, shall also tell you the same things by mouth.*

[4.] They plainly determine concerning the disputed point. *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, according to his word in the prophets, and the intimations of his will in the conversions already wrought among the Gentiles by his power; and to us, assembled in his name, and under his influence, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. The avoiding of fornication is necessary for us at all times; the other things were not of moral and perpetual obligation, but were necessary in order to prevent offence, and remove all cause of disunion between them and their Jewish brethren.*

[5.] They bid them a kind farewell, wishing them all prosperity in body and soul, and recommending them to submit to their decisions; not with proud anathemas if they disobeyed, but with the more apostolic language of kind entreaty and affectionate persuasion: *If ye keep yourselves*

forbidden ^a of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in ^b Asia,

7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia : but the Spirit suf-

^a Ver. 7. Mat. 9. 38. Ch. 20. 28. & 23. 2. Il. 30. 21.

^b Rev. 1. 4. 11. 2 Tim. 1. 15. 1 Pet. 1. 1. Ch. 19. 10.

elves from these things, ye shall do well; it will be to the glory of God, the peace of the church, and the furtherance of the gospel.

3. The bearers no sooner arrived than they assembled the multitude, and delivered the epistle to them, who read with pleasure the determination of the controversy so much to the satisfaction of the Gentile brethren: and Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, endued with eminent gifts of wisdom and knowledge, exhorted the brethren with many words to persevere in the faith and obedience of the gospel, and confirmed them in the doctrines of truth which they had embraced. Where the gospel is truly and powerfully preached, the assistance of new ministers is highly advantageous, and serves to help forward the work of God.

4. After some considerable stay, the messengers from the apostles were let go in peace, with the thanks of the church for all their kind and useful labours; and had the satisfaction to see peace perfectly re-established, which could not but be glad news to the brethren at Jerusalem. Silas however chose still to continue at Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas, and many others, with great success, taught and preached the word of the Lord. Note; Where God opens a great door of usefulness, there a double obligation lies upon his ministers to improve the opportunity, and to labour more abundantly in the blessed work.

4thly, The best of men are but men at the best, and liable to the same passions as others. The sacred historians generously record their own faults, that we should not think of them more highly than we ought to think.

1. The zealous Paul proposes to his faithful associate Barnabas, a second expedition among the Gentiles; particularly with a view to visit their brethren in all the places where they had preached the word, to see how they stood, to communicate a second blessing to them, and to exhort, encourage, rebuke, and quicken them according to their several needs. Note; Those lie specially near a minister's heart, to whom, under God, he has been a spiritual father: and if Providence removes him for a while from them, he cannot but be anxiously concerned for their welfare, and long for their establishment.

2. A disagreement unhappily arose between Paul and Barnabas on this occasion. Barnabas readily consented to the proposal, but determined to take his nephew John Mark, partial probably to him on account of his relationship. Paul warmly opposed it, and would by no means consent, thinking him unworthy of that honour, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work, intimidated by the danger, or weary of the fatigue, or diverted by some worldly or improper motive from the service of the gospel. They who have proved themselves unfaithful, should be tried, ere they are again trusted.

3. The issue of the contention was so sharp, that they parted. Both were heated with the dispute, and whichever was in the right on the subject of the contention,

VOL. I.

both were perhaps wrong in the hasty unyielding spirit with which it was managed. Note; (1.) Though we may see good men upon a time unhappily betrayed into a temporary fit of passion, which must for the present bring guilt upon their own souls, we must beware not to make their evil a plea in our own excuse. (2.) Truly wise and good men may differ in some opinions, sentiments, and views; and, if they do not sufficiently watch unto prayer, contend too warmly for their own. Let us not be offended thereat; it is the infirmity of this mortal state. It is reserved for the felicity of the heavenly state, and perhaps of the great millennium, to be entirely of one mind.

4. Though they disputed about a circumstance of little importance perhaps, (and such has often bred the sharpest contentions,) yet both heartily persisted in their former gracious purpose; and even their separation was over-ruled for the furtherance of the gospel. Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God; which perhaps may intimate, that they thought Paul in the right in refusing Mark, and favoured him with a particular mark of their approbation. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches, and establishing them in the faith and practice of the gospel.

Whatever just cause of displeasure St. Paul might now have against Mark, we find with pleasure, that afterwards he shewed him the most cordial regard, and professed the highest opinion of him, (2 Tim. iv. 11. Col. iv. 10.) We should learn therefore to judge with much temper and candour, even of those who may have taken a wrong step, lest their future conduct should make us grieve for the severity with which we treated them: and though they have justly deserved sharp rebuke—when they again approve their fidelity, and testify their genuine repentance, we should entirely forgive all that is past, and give them the right hand of fellowship.

C H A P. XVI.

Ver. 1. A certain disciple—named Timotheus] See the passages in the margin, and the preface to the first epistle to Timothy.

Ver. 3. And circumcised him] In order to do justice to St. Paul's conduct in this affair, we must recollect, that he always openly avowed that the Gentiles were free from the yoke of the Mosaic ceremonies, and that the Jews were not to expect salvation by them; and he also taught that they were not in conscience obliged to observe them at all, except in cases where the omission of them would give offence: but because his enemies represented him as teaching people to despise the law of Moses, and even as blaspheming it; he therefore took some opportunities of conforming to it publicly himself, to shew how far he was from condemning it as evil. This is the true key to his conduct here, and in ch. xxi. 21, &c. And though, when the Jewish zealots would have imposed it upon him to compel Titus, who was a Greek and Gentile, and of

ferred them not.

8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

9 ¶ And ^k a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, 'Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10 And after he had seen the vision, ^m immediately we endeavoured to go into Mace-

donia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12 And from thence to ⁿ Philippi, which is ^{*} the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a ^o colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

¹ Ver. 11. Ch. 20. 5. 2 Cor. 2. 12. 2 Tim. 4. 13. ^k Ch. 2. 17. & 10. 3, 10—17, 30. If. 30. 21. Numb. 12. 6. ¹ Ch. 8. 26. & 10. 13.
^m Ch. 10. 29. & 26. 19. Eccl. 9. 10. Pf. 119. 60. Rom. 12. 11. 2 Cor. 2. 13. ⁿ Ch. 20. 6. 1 Thess. 2. 2. Phil. 1. 1. ^{*} Or the first.
^o Chiefly inhabited by Romans. Ver. 21.

Gentile parents, to be circumcised, even while he was at Jerusalem, he resolutely refused, Gal. ii. 3—5. Yet here he voluntarily persuaded Timothy to submit to that rite; knowing that the omission of it in him, who was a Jew by the mother's side, would have given offence: besides, he was the more desirous to obviate any prejudices against this excellent youth, whose early acquaintance with the Scriptures of the Old Testament (2 Tim. iii. 15.) might render him peculiarly capable of preaching in the synagogues with advantage; which, had he been uncircumcised, would not have been permitted. Timothy had most probably been baptized when he first embraced Christianity; but it does not appear that he then received any spiritual gifts, or miraculous powers, very probably because of his unripe age: but as he had, since his baptism, approved himself in a distinguishing manner, and much beyond his age, and was now pointed out for an evangelist by the Spirit of prophecy, (1 Tim. i. 18. iv. 14.) the apostle laid his hands upon him, and imparted unto him the Holy Spirit, 2 Tim. i. 6. that is, to qualify him for the great work, whereunto God, by the mouth of his prophets, had appointed and called him.

Ver. 4. The decrees,] Namely, those which were determined as a rule for their direction, by the apostles and elders in full council at Jerusalem. See the preceding chapter, ver. 22, &c. The word *Δογματα*, rendered *decrees*, says L'Enfant, always signifies something temporary and ceremonial, and not laws of perpetual and universal obligation. Compare Ephes. ii. 15. Col. ii. 14.

Ver. 6. To preach the word in Asia,] That is, in Asia Proper, or Proconsular Asia, as all the places mentioned in the former verses lay in Asia Minor. It is also apparent that flourishing churches were afterwards planted there; particularly at Colosse, Laodicea, Sardis, Thyatira, and Philadelphia; so that it seems to have been the determination of Providence, that, instead of going through this region now, by such a leisurely progress as that in which they proceeded in their former journey through Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, &c. they should hasten to Europe directly, and preach the gospel first in Philippi, which was a Roman colony, and then in the neighbouring parts; while, in the mean time, the Asiatic provinces now passed over, might hear some report of it from their neighbours, and so be prepared to receive with greater advantage the labours of the apostles, when they should return to them, as St. Paul afterwards did: ch. xviii. 23, &c. By this

means the spread of the gospel would, in any given time, be wider than (other circumstances being equal) it would have been, had they taken all the interjacent places in their way.

Ver. 7. The Spirit] Many manuscripts and versions of undoubted authority read here, *The Spirit of Jesus*.

Ver. 9. There stood a man of Macedonia,] Some think St. Paul knew his country by his dress, or language; but there was no need of his attending to such particularities, as the vision itself mentions the country: it has also been thought, by some, to have been a particular person with whom St. Paul was acquainted in Macedonia, and therefore they would render the Greek literally *a certain Macedonian*. Grotius has suggested that it was the guardian angel of Macedonia, who appeared in human form. See his note on the place.

Ver. 10. Immediately we endeavoured] This is the first place in which St. Luke intimates his attending on the apostle; and it is remarkable, that here he does it in a very oblique manner; nor does he indeed throughout the whole history once mention his own name, or relate one thing which he said or did for the service of Christianity; though St. Paul speaks of him in the most honourable terms, Col. iv. 14. 2 Tim. iv. 11. and probably 2 Cor. viii. 18. as *the brother, whose praise in the gospel went through all the churches*. The same remark may be made on the like amiable modesty; and what is admired so much in a *Cæsar*, surely should not pass unapplauded in the *inspired penmen*. We may observe, that when St. Paul speaks of his own services, it is by no means in an ostentatious way, but in his own necessary vindication, appealing to his enemies for the known truth of them: by which means Providence has so ordered it, that the memory of many important facts, which would otherwise have been lost, is preserved, and preserved in such a manner as to carry the strongest evidence along with it. Such instances of the Divine wisdom occurring in the Scripture, are worthy our attentive observation, and thankful acknowledgment.

Ver. 11, 12. Samothracia, &c.] An island in the Ægean sea, near the Hellespont: *Neapolis* was a city of Macedonia. Sailing from thence up the river *Strymon*, they came to Philippi, which was a city or town of the *first division* of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. It had more anciently gone by the name of *Crenides*, probably from the springs or fountains which arose there. It had afterwards

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

14 ¶ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come

into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

16 ¶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit,

Ch. 13. 42. & 18. 4. Ch. 21. 5. & 20. 36. Ver. 16. Mark, 16. 15. Mat. 28. 10. Col. 1. 23. Rev. 1. 11. & 2. 18.
 Ch. 10. 2. Eph. 1. 17. Luke, 24. 45. John, 6. 44, 45. Ver. 33. Ch. 10. 48. 1 Cor. 1. 16. Ch. 8. 12. Eph. 1. 1. Col. 1. 2.
 Gal. 6. 10. Gen. 19. 3. & 33. 11. Judges, 19. 21. Luke, 24. 29. Mat. 10. 11. Heb. 13. 2. 1 Sam. 28. 7. Ch. 19. 24, 25. Deut.
 18. 10. 1f. 8. 19. Or, of Pytho. 1f. 12. 2. & 55. 21. Ch. 8. 18, 19. Mark, 1. 24. & 5. 7. Luke, 4. 41. She cried thus, to make
 people think Paul and Silas devilish diviners as well as herself. Mark, 1. 25, 34. & 16. 17. Col. 2. 15. Ch. 3. 6. & 9. 34.

the name of *Datus*, because of the gold mines which were near it; and, lastly, it was called *Philippi*, from Philip king of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, who very much improved the town, and increased the number of its inhabitants. St. Luke calls it a *colony*; and, as he makes use of the Latin word *colonia*, instead of the usual Greek term *αποικια*, it is most likely he designed to intimate, that it was made a colony by the Romans; which is further confirmed in ver. 21. where he represents the Philippians as calling themselves *Romans*. From some ancient coins and inscriptions it appears, that a colony was planted there by Julius Cæsar, and afterwards much augmented by Augustus. Livy informs us, (lib. xlv. ch. 29.) that Paulus Æmilius, who conquered Macedonia, and brought it into subjection to the Romans, ordered it to be divided into four parts or regions; and that one of these, and the first part, was all that lay between the rivers *Strymon* and *Nessus*. In that first part, and between those two rivers, stood *Philippi*.

Ver. 13. *And on the sabbath we went out, &c.*] It should seem that there were but few Jews settled in this city, and those chiefly women, who could not afford to have a synagogue; but where they could not have a synagogue, they used to have an *oratory*, or a *proseucha*; that is, "an open court of prayer," commonly built upon the sea-side, or on the banks of a river, which they probably preferred, as being more retired. Some of the Latin poets make mention of *proseuchas*: (see *Juven. Sat. iii. l. 215.*) and into one of them our Saviour is supposed to have gone; Luke, vi. 12. Some render the Greek here, *where, as usual, there was an oratory*. These *proseuchas* differed from the *synagogues* in several particulars: For, first, in the *synagogues* the prayers were offered up in public forms, in common for the whole congregation; but in the *proseuchas* they prayed, as in the courts of the temple, every one apart. Secondly, the *synagogues* were covered houses; but the *proseuchas* were open courts, like the *forums*, which were inclosures open at the top, or like the *court of the women* before the temple of Jerusalem. Thirdly, *synagogues* were generally built within the cities to which they belonged; whereas the *proseuchas* were commonly out of the city, either by a river, or by the

sea-side, and often upon a hill or mountain. One of these being near *Philippi*, St. Paul and his assistants, well knowing that it was the custom of the Jews to assemble there for their devotion on the sabbath-days, attended there on the first sabbath after their arrival; and though the *proseuchas* were commonly used only for private prayers, and there was no reading of the law or the prophets in them, nor any discourses usually made there, yet they sat down, after the manner of the Jewish doctors, and discoursed concerning the gospel doctrine to the women who assembled there, and who were partly *Jews*, and partly *profelytes of the gate*; for it was the custom of the great apostle of the Gentiles every where to begin with such, and first to offer the gospel to them.

Ver. 14. *Thyatira,*] Was a city bordering both on *Asia* and *Lydia*; and this woman seems to have derived her name from the latter on that account. She was a *profelyte of the gate*; that is, one who worshipped the true God, though she did not conform to the Jewish law in all its rites and ceremonies. She heard St. Paul with serious attention; and, through the goodness and grace of God, her heart was affected, and her mind convinced of the truth and excellence of the Christian religion, which she immediately embraced with the heart unto righteoufness, and was baptized with her whole family.

Ver. 16. *As we went to prayer,*] Or, *To the oratory*. The manner in which St. Luke relates this history, plainly implies that he considered it as a real possession, and that St. Paul himself considered it in that view: nor can we account either for the woman's behaviour, for St. Paul's, or for that of her master's afterwards, without allowing this to be the case. A *spirit of divination*, is in the original, a *spirit of Pytho*, or of *Apollo*; concerning which see the notes on *Lev. xix. 31.* and *Deut. xviii. 11.*

Ver. 18. *But Paul, being grieved,*] He might imagine that if the Gentiles believed the testimony of the woman, it might invalidate his doctrine and miracles; and by leading them to suppose that there was a confederacy between them and the evil spirit, it might make the one to be esteemed the effect of magic, and the other no better than the *doctrine of devils*. He could not but be persuaded, that

I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

19 ¶ And when her masters saw that^c the hope of their gains was gone, ^d they caught Paul and Silas, and drew *them* into the * market-place unto the rulers,

20 ^e And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 And teach customs which are not law-

ful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

22 ^f And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*.

23 ^g And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the ^h stocks.

^a 1 Tim. 6. 10. Ch. 19. 25, 26. Phil. 3. 19. & 2. 21. ^b 2 Cor. 6. 5. Mat. 10. 17. & 24. 9. ^c Or court. ^d Ch. 17. 6. & 18. 12, 13. ^e Kings, 18. 17. Esth. 3. 8. with Rom. 12. 2. James, 4. 4. John, 15. 18, 20. ^f 2 Cor. 11. 25. ^g Theff. 2. 2. Phil. 2. 15. Ver. 23. Mark, 13. 9. Mat. 10. 17, 18. ^h Luke, 21. 12. & 10. 30. Rev. 2. 10. 2 Cor. 11. 23. Eph. 3. 1, 13. ⁱ Pf. 105. 18. Jer. 20. 2.

that if the Jews heard of this testimony, it might have a bad influence upon their minds, and make them entertain a suspicion of St. Paul and his associates, for having the approbation and praise of the prince of darkness. The dispossession of the damsel wholly obviated all those inconveniences.

Ver. 19, 20. Unto the rulers,] The word *παρῶνοι*, made use of in the 20th verse, denotes with the Greeks Roman prætors; and if it was applied to the *Duumviri*, who were the governors of colonies, it was by way of compliment. At the first appearance of the Christian religion, some of the Gentiles considered the Christians as no other than a particular set of Jews, because at that time those who professed it, were descended from the same stock, born in the same country, and received the same scriptures: and this was certainly enough to denominate them Jews, (as we find them called here,) among those who were strangers to both religions.

Ver. 21. And teach customs which are not lawful, &c.] Tertullian and Eusebius assert, that the Romans had an ancient law, which forbade the worship of new deities without the permission of the senate; and it is plain from Livy, that, as often as it was violated, it was publicly vindicated by the authority of the state. It is remarkable, that Tully, in his "Book of Laws," gives us the very law in question: The sense of it is to this effect: "No man shall worship the gods clandestinely, or have them separately to himself; nor shall any new and foreign god be worshipped by individuals, till such god hath been legally approved of, and tolerated by the magistrates." If the plea of these Gentiles be founded upon this law, as undoubtedly it was, the inferences they drew from it were generally acknowledged. The comment which the great author just quoted has given us on this law, not only supports this assertion, but seems to be the same: "For each man to have his gods (says he) in peculiar, whether new or stranger-gods, without public allowance, tends to defeat and confound religion: and what was that, but the same as the miserable plea of their troubling the city exceedingly? But the letter of Mæcenas to Augustus, in Dion Cassius, sets this matter in a stronger light. According to him, "The introducing a new religion, or a new god, if indulged, would indifferently pose men toward the magistrate, and make them less fond of the civil and religious constitutions of their

country; from whence factions and confederacies against the state would arise." The apostle's enemies seem to lay great stress upon their being Romans; and the reason of their doing so, appears, from what we have observed, that the Romans were remarkable for not introducing into their public or established worship any new rites, though the Grecians did. This difference was founded on the different genius and origin of the two people; for Rome rising on her own foundation, independent on, and unrelated to any other state, and highly possessed with the enthusiasm of distinction and empire, would naturally esteem her tutelary idol gods as her own peculiar deities, and therefore would reject all foreign mixtures. On the contrary, the Grecian states, related to, and dependent on each other, would more easily admit of an association of their national idol deities; yet we must not hence conclude, that the introduction of a new public worship was allowed even in the Grecian states: it was permitted, but not without the licence of the civil magistrates. Plato has recorded the same law as we quoted from Cicero; and it is further remarkable, that the crime for which Socrates was brought to his trial, and capitally condemned, was the introducing of new deities. But the apostles went further; they carried the pretensions of the Christian religion so high, that they claimed the title of the *only true one* for it; and, not stopping here, they urged a necessity for all men to forsake their national religions, and embrace the gospel. What true fortitude did they display through grace! and how exactly similar is the plea of persecutors in all ages! A Socrates must die on this ground in the Heathen world; and an infinitely greater than Socrates must be crucified as a slave on the same plea! Let the faithful confessors of Christ glory when honoured with the same treatment on the same plea, whether from Heathens, Papists, or Protestants.

Ver. 22. The magistrates rent off their clothes,] This was the Roman method of proceeding in such cases, and it was also practised among the Jews. The latter part of this verse might be rendered more clearly thus: *And the officers tearing off their garments, that is, of Paul and Silas, commanded them to be beaten with rods, by the hands of the lictors, or public beadle, to whom that office belonged.*

Ver. 24. Made their feet fast in the stocks.] It is generally supposed that these were the *cippi*, or large pieces of wood

25 ¶ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

26 * And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison-doors

open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, ^m Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 And brought them out, and said, ⁿ Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

¹ Pl. 119. 62. Ch. 5. 47. Mat. 5. 10, 11. Col. 1. 24. 2 Tim. 1. 8.

² Sam. 17. 23. Mat. 27. 5.

^m Exod. 20. 13. 1 John, 3. 15.

^k Ch. 4. 31. & 5. 19. & 12. 7. Mat. 28. 2.

¹ 1 Sam. 31. 4, 5.

ⁿ Ch. 2. 37. & 9. 6. Luke, 3. 10.

used among the Romans, which not only loaded the legs of prisoners, but sometimes distended them in a very painful manner. So that the situation of Paul and Silas must have been very affecting, especially if they lay with their bare backs, so lately scourged, on the ground, as it is very probable they did. This circumstance renders their songs of praise the more remarkable. Beza explains the original word of the *numella*, or pieces of wood containing five holes, in which the neck, hands, and feet were confined in the most uneasy posture that can well be imagined.

Ver. 25, 26. And at midnight Paul and Silas, &c.] These blessed apostles were as little daunted at suffering, as elevated when they were caressed and about to be adored for their miraculous cures. This was true fortitude; a composure and firmness of mind arising, through divine grace, from a sense of having done their duty, and being accepted by their great Lord and Master. From this consciousness of their integrity, and this sense of the divine favour, Paul and Silas, at midnight, when such wounds and torments as they endured give the greatest uneasiness, instead of uttering sighs and groans, prayed and sang hymns of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God so loudly and so cheerfully, that all the prisoners heard them, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ. While they were at this extatic devotion, they had a miraculous and extraordinary token of the divine acceptance, as remarkable as the sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices of old; for on a sudden there was a great earthquake, all the prison-doors were opened, and all the prisoners' bonds were loosed.

Ver. 27. He drew out his sword, &c.] By the Roman law, if a prisoner escaped, the gaoler was to suffer what the prisoner was to have suffered. When therefore this man apprehended that all the prisoners were fled, and remembered what strict orders he had received the day before concerning Paul and Silas, he was afraid of the most rigorous treatment from the magistrates, for having executed their orders no better; and, on this account, in his hurry and consternation, was about to have killed himself. Though it be true that some of the philosophers condemned self-murder, yet it was not only justified by many others of them, but had, in fact, prevailed much among the Romans, especially about that time; and had, in the memory of some then living, been dignified, as it were, in Phi-

lippi, by the examples of those great men, Brutus and Cassius, who fell on their own swords there. Such is the religion of nature, so called by the infidels, in its most polished state!

Ver. 28. But Paul cried with a loud voice,] St. Paul, like a true Christian, a benevolent and brave man through the grace of God, was tender and solicitous about the life of one, who, but a few hours before, had treated him with such rigour. As they were all at present in the dark, it is not easy to say how St. Paul knew of the gaoler's purpose, unless it were by hearing some desperate words that declared it, or by some immediate suggestion from God; which, amid such a scene of wonders, is by no means improbable.

Ver. 29, 30. Then he called for a light,] As *Φῶρα, lights*, is plural, it seems to imply, that, on this alarm, several of his attendants came with torches, and were present at the inquiry which immediately followed; nor did he in the least scruple to throw himself down before his domestics at the feet of these his holy prisoners, who had been so evidently honoured by the God of nature. Grotius thinks, that in his inquiry *what he should do to be saved*, the gaoler went upon the natural principles of the immortality of the soul. Whitby, with much greater propriety, supposes that he spoke thus, as referring to the testimony of the Pythoness, which had been so often and so publicly repeated: (*ver. 17, 18.*) but the sense of what he utters seems to be more extensive. Probably, a vast multitude of ideas rushed into his mind at once. He saw, by the earthquake, the power and displeasure of God; and, together with this, the sweetness and joy of Paul and Silas in their bonds:—their willing continuance in prison, when they might so easily have escaped; their generous solicitude for the life of one who had used them so ill, were also circumstances fitted to strike powerfully on a mind so passionate as his seems to have been; and might concur towards convincing him, that these men were indeed divine messengers, and that the divine displeasure was falling on the city, and particularly on himself, for persecuting them. Perhaps some kind and pious words, which Paul and Silas, who took all opportunities of doing good, may have uttered while he was fastening their feet in the stocks, might throw farther light on his mind, when recollected amid such extremity of danger: and no doubt the Spirit of God added conviction and energy to all.

Ver.

31 And they said, ° Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 P And they spake unto him the word of

the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and ° was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

° John, 3. 16, 26. & 6. 40, 47. 1 John, 5. 10. Mark, 16. 16. Gen. 17. 7. If. 45. 22. x. 28.

1 Ch. 8. 37, 38. Luke, 19. 9. Ver. 15. Ch. 10. 48. 1 Cor. 1. 16.

P Mark, 16. 15. Eph. 3. 8. 1 John, 1. 1—3. Col.

Ver. 31, 32. And they said, Believe, &c.] “Humbly trust in, and fully commit thyself to the protection of that great and only Saviour whom we preach, and *thou and thine house* will be brought into the sure way to eternal salvation.” The meaning cannot be; that the eternal salvation of his family could be secured by his faith, but that his believing in Christ would be the best security of his family from present danger; and that if they also themselves believed, they would be entitled to the same spiritual and everlasting blessings with himself; which St. Paul might the rather add, as it is probable that many, if not all of them, under this terrible alarm, might have attended the master of the family in the dungeon. When St. Paul exhorts the gaoler, as the way to salvation, *to believe in Christ*, and commit himself to him, it obviously and immediately implies a submission to the further instructions of these his special ambassadors and authorized messengers, concerning the whole wonderful scheme of this salvation, the full import whereof Paul and Silas would not fail to open to their new convert as soon as possible; and accordingly it is added by the sacred writer, that *they spake unto him the word of the Lord*. They taught him and all his family the Christian doctrine, laying before them the proofs, evidences, and nature of it, as far as the time and circumstances would permit; the result of all which was, that the gaoler was convinced, embraced Christianity, and was converted.

Ver. 33. And he took them the same hour; &c.] It appears from this circumstance of the gaoler’s washing their stripes, that the apostles had not a power of working miraculous cures whenever they pleased, either on their own bodies, or those of their dearest friends. Had they possessed such a power, it would have been their duty to have used it, unless they had a discovery of the divine will; that in such and such instances the use of it should be waved. The continual use of such a power would certainly have frustrated many of those noble purposes in providence, which their sufferings answered, and would have introduced many inconveniencies. The gaoler, in proof of his altered sentiments and genuine sincerity, not only washed the stripes, and took care of the apostles, but was baptized, he and his house, immediately, as the converts to Christianity commonly were in the apostolic age; for that had been the way by which the Jews used to receive whole families of the Heathens, when they became full proselytes to the Jewish religion; and our Saviour had appointed it as the way of initiating persons into the Christian church. The Jews would naturally have inquired of John the Baptist what the meaning of baptism was, and not why he baptized, though he professed he was not the Messiah, if it had not been a rite which they themselves made use of when they received proselytes into the church; and our Saviour, in like manner, would not have commanded his apostles, *Go, and baptize all nations*, without explaining

what he meant by *baptizing* them, unless it had been a thing well known, and which they had no need to have explained to them. It is very remarkable, that we have two instances in this one chapter of *whole households* being in this manner, and at once, received into the Christian church; and such expressions as *Lydia’s being baptized and her house*, and the *gaoler and all his family*, cannot be understood with their proper emphasis, unless we suppose them to be allusions to such a remarkable and well-known custom. We may just observe, that the practice of Abraham, with respect to the initiating rite of circumcision, was agreeable to this. See Gen. xvii. 26, 27.

But I feel myself obliged in duty to consider further the argument which this passage affords us in favour of infant baptism. There is no room to doubt, considering Abraham’s character, but that when God first made his covenant with him and his seed, and ordered every male in his house to be circumcised, all the adult males of his family were instructed in the knowledge of God, and of his covenant, in order to their having the token of it applied to them, as well as to the children and himself, according to God’s appointment: (Gen. xvii. 7—14. xviii. 19.) And the same may be said in respect to the Jewish proselytes and their families; since, as to this point, there was one law to the Israelites and the strangers: (Exod. xii. 48, 49.) and therefore its being said, that Paul and Silas spoke the word of the Lord to the gaoler and all that were in his house, ver. 32. when the gospel seal of the covenant was to be applied to him and all his, is no more an argument against his having children baptized, than it is that there were no male infants in Abraham’s family to be circumcised, nor any infants in the families of proselytes to be baptized as well as circumcised; because the adult persons in both were to be instructed, before either of those rites was to be applied to them; as the adult persons in the gaoler’s house were first to be taught, that they might be baptized upon their own personal profession of faith, and by their own consent. And if any suppose that there were no children in his house, nor in Lydia’s, ver. 15. they take that for granted, which it is impossible to prove: but it is certain, that the terms *household* and *a man’s house*, all along in the Old Testament, generally include the children of the family: and if, as it is asserted by many great writers, it was a well-known and long-continued custom among the Jews, to admit proselytes into the church of Israel, by baptizing them and their whole families, inclusive of their infants, (see Lightfoot’s Harm. on John, i. 25.) there is a plain reference to that custom, when in this chapter it is said, that *Lydia and her house*, and the *gaoler and all his*, were baptized: and it is very remarkable, in my judgment, that in this history of the acts of the apostles, God’s covenant with *his people and their seed*, and the application of the New Testament seal of it to *children* as well as adult persons, is strongly intimated,

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

35 ¶ And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Ro-

mans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

40 And they went out of the prison, and

¹ Luke, 5. 29. & 19. 6. ² Ch. 8. 39. ³ If. 61. 10. ⁴ Rom. 5. 2, 10. ⁵ Phil. 3. 3. ⁶ Pf. 30. 5. ⁷ 2 Cor. 4. 8, 9. ⁸ Deut. 32. 30. ⁹ Gen. 28. 14. ¹⁰ Exod. 4. 18. ¹¹ Judges, 18. 6. ¹² 1 Sam. 1. 17. & 20. 42. & 25. 35. & 29. 7. ¹³ 2 Kings, 5. 19. ¹⁴ Mark, 5. 34. ¹⁵ Ch. 15. 33. ¹⁶ Ch. 22. 25—28. ¹⁷ Mat. 10. 16, 17. ¹⁸ Eph. 5. 25. ¹⁹ Micah, 7. 9, 10. ²⁰ Pf. 37. 6. ²¹ Ch. 22. 29. ²² John, 11. 48. & 19. 8. ²³ Mat. 14. 5. & 21. 46. & 26. 5. ²⁴ If. 45. 14. ²⁵ Dan. 3. 26, 27. & 6. 23. ²⁶ Mat. 8. 34. ²⁷ Ver. 14. ²⁸ Ch. 4. 23. & 12. 12, 17. ²⁹ 1 Thess. 3. 2, 3.

timated, first with respect to the converted Jews, afterwards to the *Profelytes of the gate*, and then again to the *idolatrous Gentiles*, in some of the first openings of the gospel dispensation among them respectively. As to the *Jews*, St. Peter called them to repent and be baptized, because the promise was to them and to their children, and ran in the like strain to such as should be called from among the *Gentiles*: Acts, ii. 38, 39. As to the *Profelytes of the gate*, Lydia and her household, ver. 15. or, as the *Syriac* has it, the children of her house, were baptized; which shews at least, that, in those early times, children were deemed such parts of the household as were baptized. As to *idolatrous Gentiles*, the gaoler and all his were baptized. And it seems highly improbable, that the gaoler and his house were baptized by immersion; since, as far as appears, that ordinance was all on a sudden administered to them severally, while they were in the prison; and since the mangled condition of Paul and Silas's bodies, by means of their being severely scourged the day before, made it very improper, not to say unsafe, for them to go at midnight into the water so deep, as that mode of baptizing would oblige them to do.

Ver. 35. *The magistrates sent*] The magistrates who had ordered Paul and Silas to be scourged and imprisoned without a legal trial, or any crime proved against them, seem to have had a more disturbed night than their innocent prisoners. Very probably they had since reflected in a more cool manner upon their miraculously curing the Pythoness; and, according to the reading of two ancient manuscripts, had felt the earthquake, and were terrified thereby: but whether that reading be genuine or not, before the next morning they appear to have been very sensible that they had gone beyond their commission; and that they were in danger of being called to an account by their superiors for their illegal and rash proceedings: for the Jews were generally, throughout the whole Roman empire, allowed the free exercise of their religion, and to make as many profelytes as they could by fair and legal methods; and the Christians were thus far looked upon as a sect of the Jews, and had the same privileges.

Ver. 37. *They have beaten us, &c.*] The magistrates, in

their treatment of Paul and Silas, had violated no less than three laws: First, in punishing them without a trial, which was not only an infringement of the Roman law, but of the law of nations. They had likewise violated the Valerian law, which forbade that a Roman citizen should be bound: and, thirdly, the Sempronian, or Porcian law, which forbade any man to punish a Roman citizen with rods. If it be asked, Why Paul and Silas did not plead their privilege before? We answer, That the hurry and noise of the execution prevented it; and perhaps, amid such a tumult, it might be apprehended that the people would have murdered them, if they had not been in some measure appeased by their sufferings; not to say how possible it is, that the plea, if made, might not be regarded, amid so riotous a mob. The circumstances of St. Paul, when he pleaded it, ch. xxii. 25. were very different. If it be further asked, Why it was now so soon believed? It may be replied, not only that it was extremely hazardous to make such a claim falsely, (for Claudius punished it with death,) but also that there was a certain dignity in the manner in which St. Paul made this plea, which added a sensible credibility to it; especially as they had now no further sufferings to apprehend, and as the earthquake, which might perhaps affect the whole city, seemed to have referred so evidently to their case.

Ver. 38. *And the serjeants, &c.*] St. Paul seems, in his own conduct here, to have had a regard to the honour and interests of Christianity in this place, as well as to their own civil rights as men and Romans; for such a token of public respect from the magistrates, as the *serjeants* or *lictors* were commissioned to require, would undoubtedly encourage the new converts, and remove a stumbling-block out of the way of others, who might not have discerned the true lustre of the characters of Paul and Silas amid so much infamy as they had before suffered.

Ver. 39. *And besought them*] The word Παρηγάλεσαν, here rendered *besought*, is in the very next verse, as well as in many other places, rendered *comforted*; and so it should have been rendered here, as it gives us the idea of a more respectful treatment. Some manuscripts have an addition here, importing that the magistrates, in a respectful manner, conducted

entered into *the house of Lydia*: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

conducted them out of the prison, and humbly begged of them to leave the city.

Ver. 40. They comforted them and departed.] Such an extraordinary interposition of God for his suffering servants, and such an addition made to their church, had a natural tendency both to cheer their hearts, and to invigorate their pious resolutions. Accordingly, it appears from St. Paul's Epistle to this church, that there were many excellent Christians among them, who expressed an affection for him, and a zeal for their holy religion, in a considerable degree correspondent to such encouragements and obligations. See Philip. i. 5—7, 29, 30. iv. 10, 14—18. Though many circumstances might now have invited their stay at Philippi, they wisely complied with the request of the magistrates, that they might not seem to express any degree of obstinacy or revenge, and might give no suspicion of any design to stir up the people to sedition.

Inferences.—From the chapter before us, we see by what various methods divine grace operates upon different persons. As for Lydia, she was touched by a *gentle influence* descending upon her like *dew* from heaven. Her heart was melted under the word, as snow by the sun; and by the soft, yet powerful hand of our blessed Saviour, was made willing and obedient.—But when the Lord came to subdue the *stubborn heart* of the savage gaoler, who seems to have taken a barbarous pleasure in afflicting his pious prisoners, he comes in *the whirlwind, the tempest, and the fire.* 1 Kings, xix. 11, 12. His soul, as well as his house, was *shaken with an earthquake*, and the foundations, as it were, laid bare. A sudden transport of astonishment convinces him of his extreme danger. His *hand* is mercifully stopped in that terrible moment, in which he was rushing on to seek a refuge in hell from the seeming dangers of earth; and being touched by a secret grace which he had not as yet been instructed to seek, he falls down before Paul and Silas, and honours *them* as among the first of mankind, whom he had just before treated, not only as slaves, but as the worst of miscreants. He is now ready to receive the law and the gospel from their mouth; seeking the way of salvation from them, and declaring his readiness to submit to whatever they shall tell him.

In this man we have a striking example of true *conversion*, which seems to afford very useful matter for serious consideration. Though the scriptures continually insist upon the absolute necessity of conversion, there are multitudes of nominal Christians so wholly unacquainted with that necessity, and with the nature of true conversion, as to imagine the very idea absurd.

Conversion, in the direct meaning of the word, is a *turning from*, and particularly a turning from the service of sin and Satan, to the service of God and holiness. And in this sense it is used by God himself to the children of Israel, who, like the visible Christian church now, were then his *professing people*: and if they were called upon to turn, or be converted, surely there is the same reason for the same proceedings now. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no plea-*

sure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked should turn from his way, and live: Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Conversion, therefore, it plainly follows, is absolutely necessary for all those, whatever name they bear, who walk in their own ways, if they *would live*, if they *would save their souls alive*. The true nature and full meaning of conversion is shewn us by the history of the gaoler; and we there learn, that three things are required to a real conversion; namely, 1. a *conviction* of sin: 2. a firm and applicatory belief in the divine propitiation for sin in Christ Jesus: 3. a change of heart and life.

First, a miracle highly alarming *convinced* the gaoler, and laid him prostrate at the apostles' feet, desiring to know *what he should do to be saved*. Fears for his soul's eternal welfare now first filled his heart; and a sense of his own sinfulness, and the divine greatness and justice, awakened in his bosom the most dreadful apprehensions. There were the same reasons for these apprehensions and fears before, as now; but his danger had never been so great, his views of eternity never so near. And the same is the case with all the unawakened: there is at all times, while in an unconverted state, the same reason to be alarmed; for death may come in a moment;—in a moment we, poor, perishing mortals, may be disabled from making the inquiry!

Now by whatever means this important inquiry is first raised in the heart; by whatever means the soul is led to see the danger, and guilt, and condemnation of sin, and stirred up to seek after *salvation*,—this is the *beginning of conversion*; this is the happy preparation for the spiritual, heavenly life, and, if properly pursued by agonizing prayer and active faith, will assuredly lead the penitent to a thorough conversion, and a genuine revelation of Jesus Christ in his soul.

But, 2dly, *faith* in Jesus Christ; a faith founded on the apostolic testimony, as recorded ver. 31. provides such a convicted sinner with a full and perfect answer to the great question urged, ver. 30. and with full and perfect peace for his conscience. There, in the grand atonement on the cross, he sees how God was just in punishing sin; there he sees how God may be merciful, consistently with his justice, in pardoning *him* a miserable sinner: and thus, finding experimentally in his belief of this glorious truth, what is quite sufficient for his guilty soul, he lays hold upon Christ by faith; he knows that all his sins are forgiven; he becomes a thankful disciple of the suffering Jesus; and, by the power of the blessed Spirit, he walks in his steps,—is renewed in heart and life.

This is the grand test of conversion, the indisputable proof of his sincerity, both to the sinner and to others. This was one of the grand touchstones which the fathers and first preachers of the gospel always applied to the conviction and conversion of their hearers, by the word of faith which they preached. "What great command the divine precepts of the gospel (say they,) have upon the minds of men, daily experience shews. Give us a man that is passionate, and we will, through divine grace, make

C H A P. XVII.

Paul preacheth at Thessalonica; where some believe, and others persecute him: he is sent to Berea, and preacheth there: being persecuted at Thessalonica, he cometh to Athens, and disputeth, and preacheth the living God to them unknown, whereby many are converted unto Christ.

[Anno Domini 54.]

NOW when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came

to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

3 Opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

¹ Ch. 20. 4. ¹ Thess. 1. 1. ² Thess. 1. 1. Phil. 4. 16. ² Tim. 4. 10. & 18. 4. 19. & 19. 8. ³ Luke, 24. 26, 27, 44, 46. ¹ Cor. 15. 3, 4. ⁴ Ch. 7. 26. & 13. 14, 46. Luke, 4. 16. Ver. 10, 17. Ch. 14. 7. ⁵ Pl. xxii. ix. lxix. lxxii. If. iv. xl. xlii. xlix. l. lii. liii. Ch. 18. 28. ⁶ Said he. Ch. 15. 5.

“make him mild, if he will but believe; covetous, and we will make him liberal; lustful, and we will make him temperate; cruel, and we will make him merciful; unjust and vicious, and we will make him just and blameable. Hast thou an unchaste wife? bring her to religion; it will make her continent: hast thou an undutiful child? bring him to religion, it will make him obedient: hast thou an unfaithful servant? it will teach him fidelity. We warrant our faith, not by working of wonders, but by converting of sinners; by changing filthiness into holiness; by turning incarnate devils into mortal angels.”

Just such was the mighty operation wrought upon the gaoler in the instance before us: his works immediately witnessed his sincerity. Those servants of the most high God, whom ere now he had thrust into the lowest dungeon, he brings out, and the same hour of the night washes their stripes, sets meat before them, and rejoices, believing in God. He witnesses his repentance and faith by a real reformation in his nature; and not content to hear Paul preach, to believe and be baptized; he shews, moreover, the power of his conversion in his private personal calling and profession. He becomes a good gaoler, full of pity and compassion toward his prisoners; he becomes a good father, and a good master: all his house must be taught and baptized, as well as himself.

And certainly the truth of conversion will evidence itself in the ordering and reforming of our personal calling. Religion is not a matter merely of public and common profession; is not to be found only in churches and meeting-houses; but it will enter into our private houses, and bid itself home to us as Christ did to Zaccheus, Come, “I must lodge in thine house:” it will have access and sway in all our employments; it will shew itself in all our dealings one with another; and make a man no less careful to discharge his duty to his neighbour and his brother, than to his God and Father.

True conversion will moreover manifest itself in commiserating the poor servants of God, and shewing mercy to them; in making all possible amends to those whom we have by any means injured; and in shewing all thankfulness to those whom God has been pleased to make the instruments of conveying to us his salvation. A proof of all these,—of love to his neighbour, of pity to the afflicted servants of God, of reparation for injuries, and thankfulness to the ministers of salvation,—was that act of the

gaoler’s, namely, his washing the stripes of Paul and Silas. And thus we see that true conversion consists in real repentance for sin; a cordial belief in that great Atonement wrought out by Christ Jesus; and in a thorough change of the dispositions and the life,—in short, a change of nature and actions; such a change as fills the heart with love to God, and to every brother, and to all mankind; and draws it forth in real acts of kindness and regard.

The only question then with us all, should be, whether or not we are in this saving state? It is in vain, and a self-delusion, to reply, “Doubtless we are; for we have been baptized; we frequent the church or meeting-house, and the other means of grace.” Alas, how many perish under this specious deceit! It is not to bear a name, or to perform the mere outward services of religion, which will bless us with God’s favour, or preserve us from death eternal. A true and anxious desire for our soul’s salvation; an experimental knowledge of the guilt and danger of sin; a faith unfeigned in the merit and intercession of Christ, producing in us a consciousness of our adoption into the family of God; and a life of obedience and love; these alone can truly stile us children of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Whatever may be the delusions with which men labour to sooth and satisfy their consciences, these are marks wherein no man can easily deceive himself: and surely in a matter of so great moment, as that of acceptance with God, no man would wish to deceive himself. The scriptures are plain and explicit, that without this conversion,—this repentance for sin, this living faith, and this life of obedience, we can never see God. Be it then our care, as we tender our eternal salvation, to see that those marks by God’s grace be found in us, as they were in the gaoler before us; ever bearing in mind, that it is the most unreasonable folly, to pray constantly for these things, as nominal Christians do, and not to exert one endeavour towards the obtaining of them. May God enable us to be wise for ourselves in time; and thus to avoid a conduct so scandalous to our profession, and so ruinous to our immortal souls!

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have an account of St. Paul’s travels, and his acquaintance with Timothy, who, under his tuition, afterwards grew so eminent.

1. St. Paul’s first visit was to Derbe and Lystra, where the Lord had provided for him an assistant and companion in his travels, a certain disciple, a young man named Timothy,

4 ° And some of them believed, and converted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

° Ch. 14. 1. & 23. 24. & 4. 23. Pl. 119. 63.

† Profelytes. Ch. 13. 43. & 16. 14. Ver. 17.

mothy, whose mother was a Jewess, his father a Gentile. His exemplary conduct and excellent parts had gained him a great character among the brethren at Lystra and Iconium; St. Paul therefore was desirous to engage him to go with him; and the zealous youth readily consenting, *he took and circumcised him*; not as necessary to salvation, or as an obligation on him to observe the ceremonial law, that point having been settled by the apostolic decree; but as a matter in itself indifferent, and because he knew the prejudices which the unbelieving Jews would entertain against him, because they knew his mother was a Jewess; and that unless he were circumcised, they never would admit him to preach in any of their synagogues, or converse with him, which might greatly obstruct the usefulness of his ministry. In condescension therefore to the prejudices of his countrymen, he took this step, and to the Jews became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; a proof of his warm affection toward his kinsmen after the flesh, though persecuted by them as their inveterate enemy.

2. *As they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.* Though he had for a particular reason circumcised Timothy, he meant not to lay any stumbling-block in the way of the Gentile converts thereby, but asserted their entire liberty from all the legal institutions, according to the copies of the apostolic decree which he delivered to them. *And so were the churches established in the faith*; particularly, in the great doctrine of justification by faith alone, and of acceptance with God through Jesus Christ without any respect to circumcision or the Mosaic ordinances; *and increased in number daily*, the Lord, by the ministrations of St. Paul and his young assistant, adding to the church numbers of souls, which, under his grace, were the fruit of their labours. And that is the supreme joy of the faithful ministers of Christ, and a fresh bond to quicken their zeal and diligence, when Christ is pleased to make them see this travail of their souls.

2dly, We have,

1. St. Paul's travels continued through Phrygia and Galatia. He had purposed to go on through the proconsular Asia; but by a secret impulse of the Holy Ghost, he was forbid, other work being provided for him. His next remove was to Mysia, to a people despicable to a proverb; but the grace of Jesus knows no respect of persons: all may come to him, if they will. Thence they had designed to go into Bithynia, another province of lesser Asia: *but the Spirit suffered them not*, under whose guidance they directed all their motions. Therefore passing by Mysia, without making any stay, they came to Troas, near the place where the ancient city of Troy had stood; and here, it is supposed, St. Luke, the writer of this history, joined St. Paul and his company, as henceforward he usually says *we*, as one of those who travelled with the apostle.

2. At Troas, the Lord in a vision directed St. Paul which way to bend his course. A man of Macedonia, or,

more probably, an angel, in the garb of a Macedonian, stood by him, and entreated him to come over into Macedonia, and help them by his prayers and preaching. Hereupon, assuredly concluding that this was a divine call to preach the gospel unto them, he and his fellow-travellers immediately prepared for their voyage, and came to Samothracia, a little island lying in the Archipelago, or Ægean sea; and the next day they arrived at Neapolis a port on the confines of Macedonia; and continuing their course, they reached Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a Roman colony, governed by the Roman laws and magistrates. *Note*; (1.) When we see an evident call of God to a place, we may go to our work with confidence. (2.) They who are sent on God's work, must run at his bidding, and make no delay. (3.) Chief cities often afford the greatest field of usefulness, and the gospel sent thither becomes a more general blessing.

3. The first days of their arrival seemed to promise but little success: they abode there *certain days*, perhaps unnoticed, and unable to find a door of utterance. There seems to have been no synagogue of the Jews in this place; but some devout women, whether Jews or profelytes, resorted to an oratory without the city, near the river-side, where they used to meet for prayer on the sabbath-day: thither the apostle and his fellow-travellers went, and joined their devotions, taking an opportunity to preach to them the gospel, and lead them to the knowledge of the great salvation which is in Jesus Christ.

4. A blessing attended their labours. *A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple*, either of silk or cloth, or the purple dye, a native of Thyatira, a city of Asia, but who was now settled at Philippi, and *worshipped God*, as a profelyte of the gate, *heard us with great seriousness*; *whose heart the Lord opened* by the powerful efficacy of his grace, *that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul*, and received the truth in the light and love of it. And as she made immediate profession of her faith, she was *baptized, and her household*; whereupon she besought St. Paul and his friends, saying, *If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, seeing you have received me into your number, shew me the confidence you place in me, and come into my house, and abide there*; so desirous was she of testifying her gratitude to those from whom she had received so great spiritual blessings, and solicitous to enjoy as much as possible of their conversation, that she might grow more established in the truth; *and she constrained us*. Unwilling to be burdensome, they were at first backward to accept her invitation; but at last, overcome with her importunity, they consented. *Note*; (1.) One soul turned to God, is a great acquisition, and well worthy to be recorded. (2.) Providence sometimes brings us far from our native home, with views we little thought of; and so orders the place of our abode as to be greatly subservient to the salvation of our souls. (3.) Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; they who sit under a preached gospel, are in the Lord's way. (4.) They who have received a blessing from God's

5 ¶ But the Jews which believed not, lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a moved with envy, took unto them certain company, and set all the city on an uproar,

Ver. 13. Ch. 13. 45, 50. & 14. 2, 19. & 18. 12. & 19. 24. Judges, 9. 4.

God's ministers, and owe to them, under God, their souls, think they can never sufficiently shew their gratitude to them for their labours of love. (5.) We cannot but desire the approbation of those who are eminently good, and wish so to act as that they may judge us *faithful to the Lord*.

3dly, A singular occurrence soon made these great preachers of the gospel more taken notice of.

1. There was a damsel possessed with a *spirit of divination*; for in these times of ignorance and idolatry, the devil used many such deluding instruments. And as she was paid when consulted, and was reputed of extraordinary skill, she brought her masters much gain by her *soothsaying*. And when St. Paul and his companions went out of the city to their oratory, this damsel for several days followed them, crying, *These men are the servants of the most high God; which shew unto us the way of salvation*; by which means the devil designed to prejudice the cause of Christ, as if these preachers were promoting the same interests, and were influenced by the same spirit as this soothsayer. Note; (1.) It is the honour of ministers, that they are the servants of the most high God. (2.) There is no way of salvation, but that which the gospel points out to us; without it we must for ever lie down in ignorance, guilt, and misery.

2. Grieved at her continual clamours, and justly apprehensive, lest there should seem to be a confederacy between them and her; and sorry that Satan, by her means, should deceive and delude the people of Philippi, Paul turned and said to the spirit, *I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her*, and instantly Satan's power was broken, and he came out the same hour.

3. Her masters, highly exasperated to find all their gains gone, and her soothsaying at an end, caught Paul and Silas, the two most active persons; and dragging them violently along to the forum, where the magistrates sat to administer justice, preferred a heavy complaint against them, covering their private revenge with the pretence of zeal for the public welfare, saying, *These men being Jews, the refuse of the earth, and the pests of society, do exceedingly trouble our city, fomenting riots and disturbances, and interrupting the peace of the people; and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans; their doctrines and practices being utterly opposite to, and subversive of the worship of our gods, the manners of our country, and the laws of the empire*. Note; (1.) The love of money is the root of all evil. (2.) Revenge and malice often wear the cloak of religious zeal, to conceal their malignity. (3.) They who are the preachers of the gospel of peace, have often thus been branded as the disturbers of society, and as the firebrands of discord.

4. The giddy multitude, inflamed by a charge so inviolous, rose up in a popular tumult, ready to tear them in pieces; and the magistrates, without form of trial, swimming with the stream, rent off their clothes, and commanded the lictors, their officers, to scourge them severely

with rods, as the most infamous malefactors, 1 Theff. ii. 2. And, not content with this cruel treatment, after the many and deep stripes they had laid on them, they committed them to the town prison, strictly charging the jailor to keep them safely, that they might not escape; while they consulted what farther to do with them. And he failed not to execute the charge with abundant severity, thrusting them into the inner prison, the place allotted to the vilest criminals; and, to prevent all possibility of escape, made their feet fast in the stocks. Note; Christ's servants must prepare for sufferings, and not stagger at any reproach which, for his sake, they may be called to bear.

4thly, The misery, pain, and wretched condition in which these two innocent prisoners might be supposed to lie, would lead us to expect many a doleful groan; but wonderful to tell! we find them happier in their filthy prison, than their persecutors on beds of down.

1. At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, committing themselves cheerfully to God, looking up to him for strength to bear whatever more might be laid upon them; remembering, no doubt, their persecutors, and begging God to forgive them, not forgetting their cruel jailor; and they not only prayed, but sang praises unto God, rejoicing in their bonds, that they were counted worthy to suffer for their Master's name; and were filled with such divine consolations as made them forget all the horrors of a prison, and brought down to that dreary mansion a taste of heavenly felicity; and the prisoners heard them; so loud, so hearty were their praises, being not ashamed of their Master's service. Note; (1.) Prayer is an ease to the heart in every affliction, and joint sufferers should unite their supplications. (2.) Our trials should never untune our hearts for praise; in the midst of all, we have much, very much, for which we should be thankful. (3.) The singing of psalms or hymns is a blessed gospel ordinance, and we should never be ashamed of being heard in our families, though foolish and wicked men may ridicule the service.

2. God miraculously gives a token of his presence with them, and of his acceptance of their prayers and praises. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, a testimony of God's displeasure against their persecutors, and of his appearance on the behalf of his suffering ministers, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed; an intimation to the prisoners, that the gospel which these faithful preachers declared, was designed to deliver their souls from the more grievous bondage of guilt and corruption.

3. The jailor himself becomes a convert.

[1.] Awaked by the terrible shock, and starting from his bed, he saw, with astonishment, the prison-doors wide open; and supposing all the prisoners fled, for whose escape his own life must pay, he drew his sword in the first transports of despair, to put an end to his life, in order to prevent a more dreaded public execution.

[2.] St. Paul, who probably by divine revelation knew the

and assaulted the house of Jason, and fought to bring them out to the people.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers

the fatal resolution the jailor was about to take, stays with a loud voice his uplifted arm, saying, *Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.* Paul and Silas thought not of escaping, and the rest were held by an invisible power. *Note;* The gospel word is, *Do thyself no harm;* all God's warnings, rebukes, and calls, are purely to rescue us from the ruin into which we were running, and to save us from sin, the cause of all our miseries.

[3.] The jailor, whose conscience the convictions of sin had now shook more terribly, than the earthquake the prison's foundations, *called for a light and sprang in eagerly; and came trembling,* under the most fearful sense of his dreadful guilt, *and fell down before Paul and Silas,* with deepest respect and veneration, *and brought them out of the horrid dungeon where they were, and said, Sirs, What must I do to be saved?* He now felt all the wickedness of his past conduct, particularly his cruel behaviour to these messengers of God; and, confounded at his provocations, he eagerly begs their forgiveness, and direction how he may obtain pardon at the hands of God. *Note;* (1.) God's Spirit works in different ways on different persons; some, like Lydia, are gently led to Christ; others pass first through the most dreadful terrors, sometimes brought to the gates of despair, and even tempted to self-murder; and yet even this, if they continue penitent, works together for their good, in order to make Christ more precious to their souls. (2.) They who have before despised and ill used God's ministers, will, when seized by convictions of sin, entertain very different apprehensions of them, and address them with very different language. (3.) To a soul convinced of sin, all other considerations are swallowed up in that one great concern, *What must I do to be saved?*

[4.] Paul and Silas have an immediate answer ready for his question: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house;* the salvation which they preached being free for him, though an idolatrous Gentile and bitter persecutor; and his family also would be permitted to share his blessing. *And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house, who were assembled on this joyful occasion.* *Note;* (1.) The gospel proposes a free salvation in Jesus Christ to the chief of sinners. (2.) Nothing but faith in a Redeemer can bring true peace to a guilty conscience, or obtain the salvation which a sinner needs. (3.) Masters of families, who know the Lord themselves, cannot but be desirous that all under their roof may share their blessings; and be brought with them to the knowledge of the truth.

[5.] Filled now with gratitude and love, the jailor, deeply affected with the blessed truths which he heard, *took them and washed their stripes,* to supple and ease the wounds which their severe scourging had made in their backs, *and was baptised, he and all his, straightway,* desirous to come under the bonds of the covenant with his family, and to make public profession of Christianity: which done, he brought Paul and Silas into his house, and *set meat before them,* to refresh them, after the fatigues and fasting which they had endured; *and rejoiced, believing in God with*

all his house, who rejoiced with him in the salvation which they had now embraced. *Note;* (1.) Believing in Christ is called *believing in God,* for he is very God; and on his being so, our everlasting hopes depend. (2.) Joy is the happy fruit of faith; they who see a reconciled God blotting out all their transgressions, cannot but rejoice in his salvation.

5thly, We have,

1. The message of the magistrates to these prisoners. In the morning, when their passion was cooled, they probably reflected upon the illegality of their proceedings; and, if they felt the earthquake, this might still more alarm their fears. Therefore they sent their serjeants to the jailor, with orders to dismiss the prisoners, willing to hush up the matter, without farther animadversion.

2. The jailor, glad to convey this message to his guests now, rather than his prisoners, informed them that they were at liberty to depart, and advised them to haste away, lest perhaps the present mind of these magistrates should change; and he wishes that all blessings and happiness may attend them.

3. St. Paul appears in no haste to go. His own innocence required vindication; and, for the sake of the disciples, he meant to assert his civil rights and privileges, and therefore bade the serjeants carry back this message to their masters, *They have beaten us openly, cruelly and ignominiously, though uncondemned, without even a form of trial, being Romans, whose privileges, as citizens, are not thus insolently to be trampled upon; and have cast us into prison, as if we were the vilest slaves and criminals; and now do they thrust us out privily?* as if we wanted a clandestine escape, and had broke from prison? *nay verily, we will accept of our liberty on no such terms; but let them come themselves and fetch us out,* acknowledging our innocence publicly, removing the reproach they have cast upon our characters, and taking shame to themselves for their illegal and tyrannical procedure, that they may act more gently for the future. Our civil rights are thus often a barrier against the fury of persecutors: the fear of the law often restrains those, who are withheld from injuring us by no fear of the Lord.

4. The magistrates, justly apprehensive of the consequence, if St. Paul should cite them before the tribunal of their superiors for their illegal proceedings, *came very submissively, and besought them not to take advantage of the law against them, but to forgive the injuries they had received; and brought them out of the prison, publicly acknowledging hereby their innocence, and desired them to depart out of the city,* that there might be no farther disturbance. Thus has the violence of persecutors often involved them in proceedings which they were unable to vindicate, and which have at last brought shame and confusion upon their own heads.

5. Being thus honourably discharged, *they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia, their former hostels; and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, with an account of God's wondrous appearance for them,*

of the city, crying, ^b These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also ;

7 Whom Jason hath received : and ⁱ these all do contrary to the decrees of Cesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

8 And ^k they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

10 ¶ ^l And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea : who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 These were ^m more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that ⁿ they received the word

^a 1 Kings, 18. 17. Ch. 16. 20. & 24. 5. Luke, 23. 2. ¹ Ch. 24. 5. John, 19. 12. Luke, 23. 2. Ezra, 4. 13, 15. Eth. 3. 8. Dan. 3. 12. & 6. 13. ^k Mat. 2. 3. John, 11. 48. Ch. 5. 17, 24. ^l Ch. 9. 25. & 23. 23, 24. Joth. 2. 15, 16. Ver. 14. Mat. 10. 23. ^m Dan. 5. 12, 14. Pf. 16. 3. Prov. 11. 26. & 17. 27. ⁿ Ch. 11. 1. & 2. 41. ¹ Tim. 1. 5. & 2. 15. & 5. 21. ¹ John, 4. 1. If. 8. 20. & 34. 16. Luke, 16. 29. John, 5. 39. & 7. 17.

them, and the success of the gospel even in their prison ; encouraging them therefore to stand fast in the confidence of support under all their trials ; and hereupon they departed, to spread the gospel through the other provinces of Greece ; leaving behind them a very flourishing church, which, from these small beginnings, rose to singular eminence.

C H A P. XVII.

Ver. 1. *Amphipolis and Apollonia*] Were two cities of Macedonia ; the first was built by Cimon the Athenian, who sent 10,000 Athenians as a colony thither. It stood in an island of the river Strymon, and had the name of *Amphipolis*, from the river's running on both sides of the city. The latter was a colony of Corinthians and Corcyreans, near the sea side. St. Luke seems to have gone no further than Philippi with the apostle at this time ; but Silas and Timothy still accompanied him ; and passing through these two cities, they came to Thessalonica, another celebrated city, and the metropolis of that part of Macedonia ; very famous for its origin, situation, and amplitude : it was a maritime town remarkable for its trade and commerce, in which many Jews had settled. It stood upon the Thermaian bay, and was anciently called *Therma* ; but being rebuilt and enlarged by Philip the father of Alexander the Great, upon his victory over the Thessalians, it was in memory of the fact called *Thessalonica*, which signifies, "The victory of Thessalia." It is now, by a corrupt pronounciation, called *Saloniki*, and is a maritime trading town in the possession of the Turks. *Where was a synagogue of the Jews*, might perhaps be rendered more properly, *where was the synagogue of the Jews* ; the only synagogue, possibly, which they had in Macedonia.

Ver. 2. *Three sabbath days reasoned with them, &c.*] It has been hence concluded, that St. Paul continued but three weeks at Thessalonica : but as it evidently appears, that while he was in this city he not only wrought with his own hands to procure subsistence, (1 Theff. ii. 9. 2. Theff. iii. 8.) but also received supplies more than once from Philippi, (comp. Phil. iv. 16.) it seems much more probable, that after the Jews appeared so obstinate in their infidelity, as most of them did, he desisted from disputing or teaching in their synagogue after the third sabbath ; and then preached for some time among the Gentiles, before the assault mentioned, ver. 5. which drove him from this city. It appears that, during his stay here, great numbers

of Gentile idolaters received the gospel with remarkable zeal and affection : 1 Theff. i. 9, 10. so that in the midst of their persecutions a church was founded which became famous in all Macedonia and Achaia ; (1 Theff. i. 5—8.) and though the apostle after having treated the new converts with extraordinary tenderness during his abode with them, was quickly forced to leave them, (1 Theff. ii. 7, &c.) and they about the same time lost some Christian brethren by death, who were dear to them, and might have been remarkably useful ; (1 Theff. iv. 13, &c.) yet they continued to behave so well, that St. Paul received a comfortable account of them by Timothy, and they afterwards advanced in faith, love, and courage, amid their growing trials. See 2 Theff. i. 3, 4.

Ver. 3. *Alledging,] Evidently shewing.* The proper import of the word *παρά-βημεν* is, "laying a thing open before the eyes of spectators." Grotius and Elfner think, that the last words of the preceding verse should be joined to the beginning of this ; thus, *opening and evincing from the scriptures, &c.*

Ver. 5. *Jason,]* It seems from Rom. xvi. 21. that Jason was a relation of St. Paul's, and probably an Hellenistic Jew. Instead of *certain lewd fellows of the baser sort*, Doddridge and others render it well, *some mean and profligate fellows.*

Ver. 6. *That have turned the world upside down]* "Have caused great confusion and disturbance in every place through which they have passed."

Ver. 7. *Contrary to the decrees of Cesar, &c.]* Though the Roman emperor did not pretend to be the only king or monarch, yet, in the conquered provinces or dependant states, there could be no king established without his consent ; and it is not improbable that the title of *Lord*, so frequently and so justly given by Christians to their great Master, might be used as a handle of accusation on such an occasion as this.

Ver. 10, 11. *Berea]* Was another city of Macedonia, not far from Pella, the birth-place of Alexander the Great. There is a peculiar spirit and propriety in the expression, *These were more noble, &c.* As the Jews boasted that they were free and noble by virtue of their descent from Abraham and the other patriarchs, these Bereans, imitating the rational faith of their great progenitor, were *ευγενεστέροι*, his more genuine offspring. The word literally signifies more nobly born ; and in a secondary sense implies *candour, impartiality, good disposition, and elevated ideas, or noble conceptions,*

with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

12 ° Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

13 ¶ But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, ^p they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

14 ¹ And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto * Athens: and receiving a commandment ^r unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 ¶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, ^s his spirit was stirred in him, when

° Ch. 2. 41. & 4. 4. & 5. 14. & 6. 7. & 9. 42. & 12. 24. & 13. 48, 50. & 14. 1. & 18. 10. & 19. 17.
 ¶ See ver. 10. Mat. 10. 23. Ch. 14. 6. & 18. 1. * The chief city of Greece, famed for learning.
 2 Thess. 1. 1. ^a 2 Pet. 2. 8. Exod. 32. 19. Ps. 119. 158.

^p Ch. 14. 2. & 13. 50. ^r Th. II. 2. 15, 16.
^s Ch. 18. 5. Ver. 4. 10. 1 Thess. 1. 1.

tions, when applied to the mind. The word *προθυμίας*, rendered *readiness*, signifies *avidity* or *alacrity*; and the original of the next clause implies, "a careful, anxious, and minute examination or research into the scriptures." They did not this from any suspicion of the veracity of Paul and Silas, but that, by comparing their assertions with the scriptures, they might build their faith on rational grounds, and, at the same time that they convinced themselves under the blessing and grace of God, might be enabled also to convince others.

Ver. 13. And stirred up the people.] The word *σαλευόντες*, rendered *stirred up*, signifies primarily *raising a storm*. It expresses a violent agitation of the sea, and admirably illustrates the rage and fury of a seditious multitude. Comp. Ps. xc. 3, 4. Isai. xvii. 12, 13. Jer. xli. 7, 8.

Ver. 14. To go as it were to the sea.] Grotius supposes that St. Paul was brought down to the sea-coast, as one about to sail, and that the rumour thereof was spread; but that in reality he hastened by land to Athens. However, Raphelius has clearly and abundantly proved, that the proper translation is, *to go towards or unto the sea*; and as there is nothing said of his going by land, the propriety of Grotius's interpretation seems more than doubtful.

Ver. 15. Athens.] This celebrated city, whether we consider the antiquity, valour, power, or learning of its inhabitants, has had few to rival it. It is situated in the middle of a large plain, on the gulph of the Ægean sea, which comes up to the isthmus of the Peloponnese or Morea. It is about twenty-five miles distant from Thebes to the south-east; twenty-eight from Negro-point to the south; thirty-five from the Isthmus of Corinth to the east; and about as many south-west, from Cape Raphti, the most eastern land of Achaia. It was and is still the capital of Attica. The people of Athens, proud of their antiquity, owned no original but the earth they dwelt upon, and pretended that they were coeval with the sun. They planted no less than forty colonies, to which they gave names and laws: they were masters of the Ægean sea, and the greater part of the isles in it; and carrying their conquests as far as the borders of Egypt, they had no less than 1000 cities subject to them. This city was, in its most flourishing state, a day's journey, or something more than twenty two Roman miles in circumference. Its buildings were finished with the highest elegance, of which the temples of Jupiter-Olympus, and Minerva, which is now

called *Parthenion*, are a standing proof to this very day. It might justly be stiled "the university of the whole world." Royal personages resorted hither for education from all parts of the world; and it was celebrated no less for the inviolable fidelity of its citizens, than for being the nursery of the greatest scholars, orators, and philosophers, and for having produced the greatest number of heroes of all the other cities in the world. It has suffered great vicissitudes, and is now in the possession of the Turks, who have made a mosque of the Parthenion, which was very much damaged in the Venetian wars. The number of its inhabitants is said to be about 1000, of which three parts are Christians, who have a great number of churches and oratories, and a Greek bishop residing among them, who is a metropolitan: the other inhabitants are Turks, who have five mosques. Few cities in Turkey have preserved themselves so well as this, or enjoy greater privileges under the Turkish tyranny. Their misfortunes have not been able to deprive them of their subtilty and wit, which has been ascribed to the serenity and goodness of the air. It is peculiarly remarkable, that when the plague rages round about it, it seldom reaches there. St. Paul, expecting perhaps that some considerable success would attend his labours in this city, ordered Silas and Timothy to attend him there, as desirous to engage their assistance. Nevertheless, God did not see fit to answer those expectations; and though they came to him as he had ordered, or at least one of them, (that is to say, Timothy,) he was quickly obliged to send him away, especially as he was so solicitous about his friends at Thessalonica. See 1 Thess. iii. 1, 2.

Ver. 16. His Spirit was stirred in him.] The word *παροξυνέω* signifies that a *sharp edge* was as it were set upon his spirit, and that he was wrought up to a great eagerness of zeal. Yet it is observable, that it did not throw him into any sallies of rage, either in words or actions; but only engaged him courageously to attempt stopping the torrent of popular superstition, by the most serious and affectionate, yet at the same time manly and rational remonstrances. The character of being *wholly enslaved to idolatry*, [*κατείδωται, full of idols*], is supported by the whole current of antiquity. Athens was therefore called by Ælian "the altar of Greece;" and Xenophon observes that it had twice as many sacred festivals as any other city. Pausanias tells us, it had more images than all the rest of Greece;

he saw the city * wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with † them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the ‡ Epi-

cureans, and of the || Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this § bab- bler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he * preached unto them Jesus and the resurrec- tion.

* Or full of idols. † See ver. 2—4, 10. Mark, 16. 15. ‡ Tim. 2. 7. † Heathens. ‡ Who taught, that God neither made nor governs the world, and that pleasure is the chief good. || Who taught, that men ought never to be distressed at any thing. § Or base fellow. ¶ 1 Cor. 2. 2. & 15. 1—4. Ver. 3. Ch. 22. 15. & 26. 23.

Greece; and Petronius humorously says, "It is easier to find a god than a man there." The full inscription of the altar, ver. 23. was, "To the gods of Asia, Europe, and Lybia: to the unknown and stranger God." Whence Theophylact concludes, that they received all the strange idol gods of the world,—of Asia, Europe, and Africa; and moreover one, whom they knew not who or where he was. Mr. Biscoe mentions, that a fool had been capitally condemned at Athens for killing one of Esculapius's sparrows; and that a little child, accidentally taking up a piece of gold which fell from Diana's crown, was put to death for sacrilege. The prevalence of such a variety of senseless superstitions in this most learned and polite city, which all its neighbours beheld with so much veneration, gives us a most lively and affecting idea of the need we have, in the most improved state of human reason, to be taught by a divine revelation. If the admirers of Grecian wisdom would seriously consider this, they would find almost every one of their classics an advocate for the gospel.

Ver. 17. *The market*] *The forum.* Heylin.

Ver. 18. *The Epicureans and—Stoicks,*] *The Epicureans,* whose sect was founded by *Epicurus*, are said to have ascribed neither creation nor providence to God; but held that the world was made by a conflux of atoms: that the gods, if there were any, were of human shape, who lived in voluptuous ease and indolence in heaven, entirely un- concerned about human affairs. They likewise held, that, in the present state, pleasure is the chief good; that man's existence was limited to the present being; and that conse- quently no resurrection from the dead, nor any future state of rewards and punishments, was to be expected. The founder of the *Stoic* sect was *Zeno*; but the name of it was derived from the place in which they assembled, the *Stoa*, *Stoa*, or famous *portico* at Athens, which was adorned with the designs of the greatest masters in Greece. They held, that there were two general substances in nature, God and matter; and that both were eternal. Some of them indeed maintained, that God was a corporeal sub- stance; that either God was the world, or the world itself God. They looked upon all things, even the Deity him- self, as subject to an irresistible fatality; and as they held that the gods could neither be angry, nor hurt any one, they took away one main prop of the rewards and punish- ments of a future state: and as a further weakening of this necessary superstructure, they held a conflagration and renovation, by which the present system would be period- ically and alternately destroyed and renewed; so that the same persons would be brought on earth again, to do and

suffer the same things as the former generations had done; or other persons like them, who would bear the same names, be placed in similar circumstances, and perform similar actions. But what heightened the malignity of their opinions was this, that they held the soul to be ori- ginally a discerped part of God; and that immediately after death it was reunited again to the Deity, by which it was exempted from all sense of misery, and lost its per- sonal identity. As the souls of the bad, as well as the good, were held to undergo this reunion or refusion, and as all personal identity was lost, it is evident that a future state of rewards and punishments must be excluded from their creed. Their morality, though so highly cried up, was of a piece with their metaphysics, and led to the very same conclusion; for they held that all crimes were equal: and so far were they from any proper ideas of re- ligious, that they denied that their wife man was any way inferior to the supreme Deity; that he was not at all in- debted to him for his wisdom; that the supreme Deity could not be more than a wife man; that virtue in this life was its own and sufficient reward: and to conclude these outlines of their character, they denied, in common with the other sects, the resurrection of the body. From this sketch of the opinions of these two sects, the reader may see how opposite the genius of each of them was to the pure and humble spirit of Christianity; and how hap- pily the apostle points his discourse at some of the most distinguishing and important errors of each; while, with- out expressly attacking either, he seems only intent upon giving a plain summary of his own religious principles; in which he appears an excellent model of the true way of teaching and reforming mankind. It cannot be won- dered that such men as the *Epicureans* and *Stoics* should give St. Paul the contemptuous appellation of *Σπερμιολόγος*, *babbler*: the word literally signifies "a contemptible crea- ture, which picks up scattered seeds in the market; or "elsewhere." It might be rendered *a retailer of scraps*, "A trifling fellow, who has somewhere or other picked up some scattered notions, with which he is vain enough to think he may make a figure here." The word strongly expresses the contempt they had for an unknown foreigner, who pretended to teach all the several profes- sors of their learned and illustrious body of philosophers. Chrysostom, whom Dr. Hammond and several other learned interpreters follow, supposes that the Athenians understood St. Paul, as setting forth the *Ἀνστασις*, or *resurrection*, as a goddess. Stupid as this mistake seems, it is the less to be wondered at, since the *resurrection* might as well be counted a deity among the Athenians, as modesty, fame, desire;

19 And they took him, and brought him unto ^x Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new

thing.)

22 ¶ Then Paul stood in the midst of ^y Mars hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are ^z too superstitious.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your ^a devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO ^b THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

^x Or *Mars-hill*. It was the highest court in Athens. Ver. 22. ^y Or *the court of the Areopagus*. Ver. 19. ^z Jer. 50. 38. 16. 57. 5. ^a Or *gods that ye worship*. 2 Theff. 2. 4. ^b The God of the Jews. Eph. 2. 12. Pl. 147. 20. 1 Tim. 1. 17.

desire; or as the fever, and some other things too scandalous here to name, were among the Romans. In deference, however, to such great names, I cannot help thinking that the Athenians must have understood the meaning of the word *Ἀνάστασις* too well, to have taken it for a goddess: and indeed it appears to me evident from ver. 32. that they did understand the word as we commonly do, of men's rising from the dead.

Ver. 19. *They brought him unto Areopagus,*] The original word is the same with that rendered *Mars-hill*, ver. 22. The name of this senate was taken from the place in which it was assembled, being a hill not far distant from the city; for the word *πάγος*, *pagos*, in composition, signifies a *rock*, *hill*, or *eminence*. With respect to the first part of the name, authors are not so well agreed: some derive it from the Greek word *Ἄρης*, which signifies *Mars*, because he is supposed to have been the first person who was arraigned in this court. But others, with more probability, derive it from the same name, as Mars was the god of war and bloodshed, and as all wilful murders fell under the cognizance of this court; and the word *Ἄρης* itself is used to signify *murders*. When this court was first instituted, is uncertain, some making it as ancient as Cecrops, and others bringing it down as low as Solon. It has indeed been objected to the latter opinion, that one of Solon's laws makes mention of the Areopagus as already existing. The difficulty is how to reconcile these accounts. The case might have been this: Solon, we know, was employed by the Athenians to new-model their commonwealth, by reforming the ill constitutions, and supplying such as were defective; so that, in the number of his regulations, was that against the admission of foreign gods without a licence from the Areopagus: and having thus enlarged its jurisdiction, he was afterwards regarded as the founder. The number of persons that composed this assembly, is variously represented. By some it is restrained to nine, by others enlarged to thirty-one, by others to fifty-one; but when Socrates was condemned by this court, there were no less than two hundred and eighty one giving their votes against him. Aristides observes, that this court was the most sacred and venerable tribunal in all Greece: so impartial and exact were their proceedings in all matters of law, that, as Demosthenes informs us, there never had been in his time, so much as one of their determinations, which either plaintiff or defendant had reason to complain

of. They had three meetings in the Areopagus every month. They sat in the open air, which was customary in such courts as took cognizance of murder; that the judges might not contract any pollution from conversing with men so profane: and they heard all causes at night, and in the dark, that they might not be influenced by seeing either the plaintiff or defendant. There are some remains of the place wherein this assembly met, still visible in the foundations, which form a semicircle, built with square stones of a prodigious size. See on ver. 34.

Ver. 21. *(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, &c.)*] *Who sojourn there.* It is well known that the young nobility and gentry of Italy, and most of the neighbouring countries, generally studied some time at Athens; where there were the most celebrated professors in all the liberal arts and sciences. It appears from the testimony of many ancient writers of the first credit, that the Athenians were most remarkable for their love of novelty, agreeable to the character here given of them by St. Luke.

Ver. 22. *Ye are too superstitious.*] Dr. Doddridge renders the original, *Ye are exceedingly addicted to the worship of invisible powers*; which, he observes, is very agreeable to the etymology of the word *δαιμονιασμοί*, and has, what a version of scripture in such a case should always have, if possible, the ambiguity of the original; which learned writers have proved to be capable of a good as well as a bad sense: (Comp. ch. xxv. 19.) whereas neither *superstitious* nor *religious* has that ambiguity. This sense too seems preferable to that in our version on another account; as the giving the original the worst signification of which it is capable, does not well suit the peculiar delicacy with which St. Paul addresses himself to the assembly throughout the whole of his speech; whereas, on this interpretation, his discourse opens not only in an inoffensive but in a very obliging manner. See the note on ver. 34.

Ver. 23. *And beheld your devotions,*] *σεβασματα*;—the objects, and instruments of your worship. This is the proper signification of the original, which has no English word exactly corresponding to it. (Comp. 2 Theff. ii. 4.) Diogenes Laertius, in his life of Epimenides, gives us the following account of the inscription. He tells us, “that in the time of that philosopher, about 600 years before Christ, there was a terrible pestilence at Athens; and when none of the deities to whom they sacrificed, appeared able or willing to avert it, Epimenides advised them

24 ' God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands ;

25 ' Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all

things ;

26 ' And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation ;

27 ' That they should seek the Lord, if

Gen. 1. 1. Exod. 20. 11. Ch. 4. 24. & 14. 15. Pf. 33. 6. & 24. 1. & civ. cxlviii. Ch. 7. 48. 1 Kings, 8. 27. John, 4. 23. If. 66. 1. Pf. 50. 8. & 16. 2. Job, 22. 3. & 35. 6. Gen. 2. 7. Num. 16. 22. & 27. 16. Job, 12. 10. & 27. 3. & 33. 4. Prov. 24. 12. If. 42. 5. & 57. 16. Dan. 4. 35. Zech. 12. 1. Rom. 11. 36. Gen. 3. 20. Rom. 5. 12. 1 Cor. 15. 22, 47. Deut. 32. 8. & 30. 20. Job, 14. 5. Ch. 15. 18. Rom. 1. 20. & 2. 4. Ch. 14. 17. Pf. 19. 1-6.

“ them to bring some sheep to the Arcopagus, and, letting them loose from thence, to follow them till they lay down ; and then to sacrifice them to the god, near whose temple or altar they then were.” Now it might have happened that, Athens not being then so full of these monuments of superstition and idolatry as afterwards, these sheep lay down in places where none of them were erected, and so occasioned the rearing what the historian calls *anonymous altars*, or altars each of which had the inscription, “ To the unknown God ;” meaning thereby, the god that had sent the plague, whoever he were ; one of which altars, at least, however it might have been repaired, remained till St. Paul’s time, and long after. Now, as the God whom St. Paul preached was indeed the Deity who sent and removed this pestilence, the apostle might, on supposition of the truth of the above account, with great propriety tell the Athenians, *He declared to them Him, whom, without knowing him, they worshipped* ; as the latter clause of this verse should be read. It may be proper just to observe, that Witsius, with Heinsius, &c. understands this inscription of *Jehovah*, whose name not being pronounced by the Jews themselves, might, they think, give occasion to this appellation ; and to this sense Biscoe inclines. Dr. Wellwood, in the introduction to his translation of “ The Banquet of Xenophon,” observes, “ I know there are different opinions about this altar, and upon what occasion it came to be erected ; but it is very probable, and I have several ancient historians and divines for vouchers, that it was done by Socrates. It seems, instead of raising an altar, as was the custom, to any of the fictitious gods of Greece, he took this way, as the safest, to express his devotion to the one true God ; of whom the Athenians had no notion, and whose incomprehensible being, he insinuated by this inscription, was far beyond the reach of their, or of his own understanding : and it is very reasonable to think, that it was owing to the veneration they had for the memory of its founder, that it came to be preserved so many ages after, though they understood not the sense of the inscription.” To these observations we may add, that though the heathens held Jupiter to be the one supreme god, yet their Jupiter was not the true God, but a being whom they supposed to be attended with many imperfections, and to whom they ascribed several enormities ; and whether that altar was erected by Socrates, or by whatever other person, or upon whatever occasion, it appears highly probable that it was designed in honour of

the true God ; that is to say, the God of the Jews. For as the Jews neither erected any image to the true God, nor were willing to discover his name to strangers, he had therefore neither image nor name at Athens ; though there was an altar dedicated to him, at once to express the Athenians’ reverence for, and ignorance of him.

Ver. 25. Neither is worshipped with men’s hands,] Neither is served θεραμεύεται. This refers to the foolish notion among the heathens, that the gods fed on the fumes of sacrifices. Their votaries also clothed their images with splendid garments, and waited upon them in other services, ill becoming the majesty and purity essential to the Divine Nature.

Ver. 26. And hath made of one blood all nations, &c.] Πάντων ἑθνῶν ἀνθρώπων, the whole generation of men. By this expression the apostle shewed them, in the most unaffected manner, that though he was a Jew, he was not enslaved to any narrow views, but looked on all mankind in one sense as his brethren. This and the two following verses may be thus paraphrased : “ And he hath made of one blood, and caused to descend from one original pair, the immediate work of his own almighty power and goodness, the whole nation and species of men, now by his providential care so propagated, as to inhabit and cover all the face of the earth, having marked or ordained all the seasons as they roll, to change and return according to fixed laws for the regulation of their time, and appointed the several boundaries of their different habitations—all things in the disposition of his providence centring in this one great end, that they might be excited to seek after the Lord their maker ; and that, amidst all the darkness which their own degeneracy and prejudice have brought upon their minds, they might feel after him, and be so happy as to find him out, in the knowledge of whom their supreme happiness consists ; who indeed, though he be so little known and regarded by the generality of mankind, yet is not far from every one of us : for in him we perpetually live, and are moved, and do exist ; the continuance of all our active powers, and even of our being, is ever owing to his steady and uninterrupted agency upon us, according to those stated laws of operation which he hath wisely been pleased to lay down for himself ; as some also of your own poets have in effect said, ‘ For we his offspring are.’”

Ver. 27. That they should seek the Lord,] Dr. Heylin renders this verse, That they should seek God so as to feel and find

haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not ^k far from every one of us:

28 For ^l in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own ^m poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, ⁿ we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

30 ^o And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now ^p commandeth all men every where to repent:

31 Because ^q he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath ^r given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

32 ¶ And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some ^s mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

33 ^t So Paul departed from among them.

34 ^u Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which *was* Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

^k Jer. 23. 23, 24. 1 Kings, 8. 27. Pf. 139. 1—13. ^l Col. 1. 17. Rom. 11. 36. Heb. 1. 3. ^m Tit. 1. 12. ⁿ If. 40. 18. Rom. 1. 20, 23, 25. Pf. 100. 20. ^o Ch. 14. 16. Pf. 81. 12. ^p Rom. 13. 11. Eph. 3. 5, 6. Tit. 2. 11. 1 Pet. 1. 14. & 4. 3. Luke, 24. 47. ^q Ch. 10. 41. Rom. 2. 16. John, 5. 22. Mat. 24. 36. & 25. 31—46. Rom. 14. 9, 10. 2 Cor. 5. 10. 2 Tim. 4. 1. ^r Or offered faith. 1 Cor. xv. Rom. 8. 9. Ch. 2. 24. ^s Ch. 2. 13. Gen. 19. 14. 2 Chr. 36. 16. ^t Hof. 4. 17. Rev. 22. 11. ^u Rom. 11. 5. Ch. 13. 48. Mat. 20. 16. Luke, 12. 32.

find him: who is indeed already not far from any of us. The word *ἔτι*, here, says he, is the same as the word *ἔτι*. See ch. xxvi. 8. The word *Ἐκλαφίσειαν*, imports, *actually feeling*. So it is rendered *handle me*, Luke, xxiv. 39. The same word is used Judges, xvi. 26. where Samson says, *suffer me that I may feel the pillars*. I have been particular, says Dr. Heylin, in my remarks upon this verse, because I am very desirous to draw the reader's attention to it.

Ver. 28. For in him we live, and move, &c.] No words can better express that continued and necessary dependance of all derived beings, in their existence, and all their operations, on their first and almighty Cause, which the truest philosophy as well as theology teaches. The thought, in words just like these is found in an old Greek poet:—but St. Paul not mentioning it as a quotation, the reader perhaps may be inclined to think with Le Clerc, that the poet borrowed it from this passage. The last words, *for we are also his offspring*, are well known to be found in Aratus, a poet of Cilicia, St. Paul's own country, who lived almost 300 years before this time. They are also to be found in the hymn of Cleanthes, which is one of the purest and finest pieces of natural religion, of its length, extant in the whole world of Pagan antiquity. As these words are found in two different poets, this possibly may be the reason why St. Paul speaks in the plural number, *certain of your own poets have said*; though some have thought this refers to the first clause.

Ver. 29. We ought not to think, &c.] For the observations proposed on this verse, and referred to chap. xiv. 15. See the *Inferences* at the end of this chapter.

Ver. 30. The times of this ignorance God winked at;] The original *ἄπειραν*, signifies *overlooked*; that is, he did not appear to take notice of them, by sending express messages to them, as he did to the Jews, and now also to the Gentiles;—as it follows, *but now commandeth*: and the reader will easily perceive that there is a dignity in this

latter expression, becoming one who was conscious to himself that he was indeed an *ambassador* from the king of heaven. This universal demand of repentance, declared in the strongest terms universal guilt, and admirably confronted the pride of the haughtiest *Stoic* of them all; and at the same time it bore down all the idle plea of fatality: for who could repent of doing what he apprehended he could not but have done.

Ver. 32. When they heard of the resurrection] St. Paul, from the article of the one true God in a general point of view, was sliding gently into the other grand article of the Christian faith, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth in particular, was the Lord, Saviour, and Judge of all; one principal proof whereof was his resurrection from the dead. But the vain and conceited auditory would hear no more. *Upon the mention of the resurrection from the dead, some mocked, and laughed out—very probably the Epicureans, who believed no resurrection, nor any future state, or judgment to come; while others said, We shall be glad to hear you again upon this subject.* Most likely these were the Stoics, who had some notions of a judgment to come, and of the conflagration and renovation of the world, as well as of a future state of rewards and punishments; though with respect to the doctrine of the *resurrection of the body*, every sect of philosophers was no less ignorant of it, than highly contemptuous respecting it, when revealed to them. See ver. 18.

Ver. 34. Dionysius the Areopagite,] As the court of *Areopagus* consisted of those who had borne the office of *archon*, and such of the nobility as were eminent for their virtue and riches; as the most rigid manners were required of its members; and even their countenances, words, and actions, were required to be serious and grave, to a degree beyond what was expected from any other, even the most virtuous men, the acquisition of such a convert as *Dionysius* must, under the blessing of God, have done singular service to the Christian cause, and shewn it in a respectable light.

Inferences.

C H A P. XVIII.

Paul laboureth with his hands, and preacheth at Corinth to the Gentiles: the Lord encourageth him in a vision: he is accused before Gallio the deputy, but is dismissed: afterwards passing from city to city, he strengtheneth the disciples. Apollus being more perfectly instructed by Aquila and Priscilla, preacheth Christ with great efficacy.

[Anno Domini 56.]

AFTER these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to ^a Corinth;

^a The richest city of Greece. 1 Cor. 1. 2. 2 Cor. 1. 1. 2 Tim. 4. 20. account of their feditious temper. ^b Ch. 20. 34. 1 Cor. 4. 12. 2 Cor. 11. 9. & 12. 13. 1 Thess. 2. 9. 2 Thess. 3. 8. ^c Ch. 3. 26. & 13. 5. Luke, 4. 16.

2 And found a certain Jew named ^b Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews ^{*} to depart from Rome :) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and ^c wrought: for by their occupation they were tent-makers.

4 ^d And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and

^b Ver. 18. 26. Rom. 16. 3. 2 Tim. 4. 17. 1 Cor. 16. 19. ^{*} On 1 Thess. 2. 9. 2 Thess. 3. 8. ^d Ch. 3. 26. & 13. 5.

Inferences.—Nothing can be more striking than the conduct of St. Paul at Athens; more particularly if it be contrasted with the behaviour of the philosophers and wise men of the heathen world. He himself has asserted, that even those of them who knew God, did not glorify him as God. To prove the truth of this assertion, by an induction of particulars, would carry us beyond the limits of a work like this: but yet the point is too material to be passed over in silence. Let us then consider the case of one only; but of one, who among the good men in the heathen world was the best, and among the wise ones the wisest; I mean Socrates, the great philosopher of Athens. And were the wise men of antiquity to plead their cause in common, they could not put their defence into better hands.

We have an account of the speculative opinions of many of the wise men of Greece, preserved to us in authors of great credit; but of their practice and personal behaviour in life, little is said: which makes it hard to judge how far their own practice and conduct were influenced by their opinions, or how consistent they were in pursuing the consequences of their own doctrines. The case might have been the same with Socrates, had not a very particular circumstance put him under a necessity of explaining his conduct with respect to the religion of his country.

He had talked so freely of the heathen deities, and the ridiculous stories told of them, that he fell under a suspicion of despising the gods of his country, and of teaching the youth of Athens to despise their altars and their worship. Upon this accusation, he is summoned before the great court of the Areopagites, and happily the apology he made for himself is preserved to us by two of the ablest of his scholars, and the best writers of antiquity, Plato and Xenophon; and from both their accounts it appears, that Socrates maintained and asserted before his judges, that he worshipped the gods of his country, and that he sacrificed in private and in public upon the allowed altars, and according to the rites and customs of the city. After this public confession, so authentically reported by two so able hands, there can be no doubt of his case. He was an idolater, and had not, by his great knowledge and ability in reasoning, delivered himself from the practice of the superstition of his country. We see how far the wisdom

of the world could go; let us now observe what the foolishness of preaching could do in the very same case.

St. Paul was in the same situation, as related in the chapter before us. He was accused in the same city of Athens of the same crime—that he was a setter forth of strange gods; and before the same great court of Areopagites, he made his apology. We have then the greatest and the ablest among the wise men of Greece, and an apostle of Christ, in the same circumstances; we have heard the *Philosopher's* defence that he worshipped the gods of his country, and as his country worshipped them. Let us now take a view of the *apostle's* “Ye men of Athens, &c.” ver. 22—31.—a defence, which he closes with calling upon them, in the name of that great God whom he describes, to repent of their superstition and idolatry, which God would no longer bear, *because he hath appointed a day, &c.*

Which now of these two was a preacher of true religion? Let those who value human reason at the highest rate, determine the point.

The manner in which Socrates died, was one of the calmest and the bravest in the world, and excludes all pretence to say that he dissembled his opinion and practice before his judges out of any fear or meanness of spirit—vices, with which he was never taxed.

Consider we then,—Was it possible for any man, upon the authority of *Socrates*, to open his mouth against the idolatry of the heathen world, or to make use of his name for that purpose, who had so solemnly, in the face of his country, and before the greatest judicature of Greece, borne testimony to the gods of his country, and the worship paid them?

The city of Athens soon grew sensible of the injury done to the best and wisest of their citizens, and of their own great mistake in putting Socrates to death. His accusers and his judges became infamous; and the people grew extravagant in doing honours to the memory of the innocent sufferer. They erected a statue, nay, a temple to his memory; and his name was had in honour and reverence. His doctrines upon the subjects of divinity and morality were introduced into the world, with all the advantage that the ablest and politest pens could give; and they became the study and entertainment of all the considerable men of Greece and Rome who lived after him.

the Greeks.

5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the

spirit, and testified to the Jews *that Jesus was Christ.*

6 And when they opposed themselves, and

^c Ch. 17. 14, 15. Job, 32. 18. Ch. 17. 16 & 20. 22. Rom. 1. 9.
^e Ch. 13. 45. 1 Peter, 4. 4. 1 Theff. 2. 14—16.

^f John, 15. 27. Ch. 1. 8. & 2. 36. & 13. 38, 39. & 17. 3. 1 Peter, 5. 12.

It is also well worth observing, that from the death of Socrates to the birth of Christ, were about 400 years; a time sufficient to make the experiment, how far the wisdom of Socrates, attended with all the advantages before mentioned, could go in reforming the world. And what was the effect of all this? Can we name the *place* where religion was reformed? Can we name the *man* who was so far reformed, as to renounce the superstition of his country? None such are to be found: and how should there? since the greater the credit and reputation of Socrates, the more strongly did they draw men to imitate his example, and to worship as their country worshipped.

Let us consider, on the other side, what was the consequence of *preaching the gospel*. St. Paul entertained the Athenians with no fine speculations; but he laid before them, in the plainest dress, the great and momentous truths of religion: he openly rebuked their idolatry, and condemned their superstition. The gospel was published in the same manner every where. The first preachers of it were enabled to support it by miracles, and most of them shed their blood in defence of its truth.

By these means *they* came likewise to have credit and authority in the world: but in these two cases there was this great difference: the corrupt *example* of Socrates was a dead weight upon the purity of his *doctrine*, and tended to perpetuate superstition in the world. The authority and example of St. Paul and the other apostles went hand in hand, and, under the grace of God, united their force to root out idolatry. There was likewise this farther difference: The doctrine of Socrates could go only among the learned: the doctrines of the gospel were artless and plain, and suited to every man's capacity.

For near 400 years the disciples of Socrates had the world to themselves, to reform it, if they could. In all which time there is no evidence remaining, that the religion of the world was the better for their wisdom. But in much less time the *gospel* prevailed in most parts of the known world: wherever it came, superstition and idolatry fled before it; and in little more than three centuries the Roman empire became visibly Christian, which completed the victory over the Heathen deities. And if we may judge by this comparison, between the wisest of men, and an apostle of Christ, the words of that *apostle* will appear fully verified, where he declares that *the world by wisdom knew not God*, and that *by the foolishness of preaching God has provided salvation for them who believe.* 1 Cor. 1. 21.

If then it appears from history, and the experience of the world before us, that men for ages together lived in ignorance of the true God, and of true religion; and that *reason* was not at all able to contend against inveterate errors and superstitions; let us not be so vain as to imagine that *we* could have done more in the same circumstances than all or any who lived in the many ages of idolatry. If we consider to what height arts and sciences were carried in

those days, and the politeness of Greece and Rome in all parts of learning, we shall have little reason to imagine that men have grown wiser in worldly wisdom, as the world has grown older. If we have more light in matters of religion, (and undoubtedly we have more,) it should lead us to consider to whom we are indebted for the happy change; and to give all the praise to him, to whom alone we are indebted for it.

If then the means made use of to introduce the gospel into the world, were such as were infinitely proper and necessary to subdue vice, and error, and prejudice; if the great truths of Christianity have been propagated from age to age by methods which from experience have been found effectual to the salvation of all that truly and perseveringly believe:—if we discover these marks in the gospel, surely we see enough to convince us, that the gospel is *the power of God, and the wisdom of God, unto salvation.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As the style of this and the following chapter changes from *we* to *they*, it has been conjectured that St. Luke staid at Philippi till St. Paul returned thither, ch. xx. 5, 6. His farther travels are here recorded.

1. He, with his companions, Silas and Timothy, passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia; whether he preached in either of these places, is not said; his route was directed probably under a divine impulse to Thessalonica. Not discouraged by his ill usage at Philippi, he was bold in his God, to speak the gospel unto them also, 1 Theff. ii. 2. and, as his manner was, having found there a synagogue of Jews; he went in unto them, to make them the first tender of the gospel word. Three sabbath-days successively *he reasoned with them out of the scriptures*; and as they admitted the sacred authority of Moses and the prophets, he appealed to their writings in proof of the doctrines which he advanced, *opening* their scope and intention; and particularly by the texts which related to the Messiah, *alleging* from them, *that Christ*, far from being that temporal king and earthly conqueror which they expected, *must needs have suffered*, in order to obtain spiritual and eternal redemption for his faithful saints, *and must have risen again from the dead*, in proof of his having completed the great work of atonement which he had undertaken; evidently proving from the scriptures, that these things must be accomplished in the Messiah; *and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you, is Christ*, in whom all the prophecies concerning the Messiah were fulfilled, and in no other; and that therefore this must be he that should come, nor must they look for another.

2. His preaching was powerful and convincing, and the Spirit of truth set it home to the consciences of many of his hearers. *Some of them, who were Jews, believed, and made immediate profession of the truth which they had embraced*; they *conferred with Paul and Silas*, as casting in their lot with them, and ready to share their weal and woe; *and*

blasphemed, ^b he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: ^c from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

^a Ch. 13. 57. Mat. 10. 14. & 27. 25. Neh. 5. 13. Lev. 10. 12. 2 Sam. 1. 16. Ezek. 3. 18, 19. & 33. 4, 9. Ch. 20. 26. ^b Ch. 13. 46, 47. & 18. 28. Mat. 21. 43. & 8. 11. Deut. 32. 21, 46.

and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. Thus the foundations were laid of a most flourishing church; multitudes of Gentiles, as well as profelytes, being converted by the great apostle's labours, 1 Theff. i. 9.

3. No where could they find rest from the malice of their inveterate enemies. *The Jews which believed not, moved with envy at the success of St. Paul's preaching, and the respect paid to him by the Gentiles, as well as by many of their own synagogue, took unto them certain lewd fellows, of the baser sort, and gathered a company, a profligate mob, the scum of the earth; and by these they set all the city on an uproar, raising a riot against the preachers of the gospel; and assaulted the house of Jason, where St. Paul and his companions lodged; and sought to bring them out to the people, that they might expose them to the exasperated populace. And when they found them not, they having prudently withdrawn for their security, they drew Jason, and certain brethren who were at his house, unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also, spreading their pestilential errors, to the destruction of all peace and good neighbourhood, and sowing the seeds of discord and sedition to the ruin of the state; whom Jason hath received into his house, countenanced, and abetted. And these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, and evidently shew their disaffection and disloyalty to his government, saying, that there is another king, one Jesus, who is universal Lord of all, to whom every knee must bow, in opposition to Cæsar our only Lord and emperor. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things, lest some rebellion was really in meditation, or lest the jealous emperor Claudius should entertain suspicions of their negligence, however innocent they knew the apostles to be, and however satisfied they were of the injustice of the accusation.* Note; (1.) They who are the enemies and disturbers of the people of God, are usually the vilest of mankind, abandoned profligates, lost to all sense of justice and virtue. (2.) If men offend, the magistrates are to judge; but to make the rabble judges and executioners, is to place madness on the seat of justice. (3.) It has been a common accusation, that the gospel turns the world upside down, and creates all disturbances; but they who bring the charge, will not see that they themselves are the troublers, and that their own passions and perverseness occasion the very evils of which they complain. (4.) The kingdom of Jesus is far from interfering with the civil government; nay, it is one essential part of it to be submissive to the powers that are; so malicious is the accusation of those, who would insinuate its dangerous tendency to the peace of kingdoms.

4. The magistrates, on inquiry, finding no ground for the accusation, discharged Jason and his friends, on security taken for their appearance, if required. And thus ended this threatening affair, through the moderation of the rulers, without any farther ill consequence.

2dly, Though, to avoid the present storm, St. Paul and his companions judged it most prudent to fly from Thessalonica, the Lord had work for them to do elsewhere.

1. *The brethren sent them away by night unto Berea, to conceal them from the fury of their persecutors; and no sooner were they arrived, than they took the first opportunity of going into the synagogue of the Jews, to preach the gospel to them, evil-entreated as they had so lately been by them at Philippi and Thessalonica. True charity is never weary of well-doing, nor tired out with repeated provocations.*

2. *These Jews of Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, free from prejudices, more candid inquirers after truth, of more enlarged sentiments, and ready to give a fair hearing to those who differed from them in opinion; and therefore they received the word with all readiness of mind, embracing it most cheerfully, as soon as they were convinced of the truth; and, not taking the matter upon trust, they searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so; comparing diligently St. Paul's preaching with the scriptures to which he appealed, and examining carefully the passages which he explained, that they might comprehend their genuine meaning.* Note; (1.) The doctrines of the gospel fear no scrutiny; we wish for nothing more, than that our hearers would seriously examine whether these things be so. (2.) Searching the scriptures should be our daily business and delight; and their minds will be filled with noble and exalted sentiments and principles, who follow in simplicity these sacred oracles.

3. *Great was the effect of St. Paul's preaching, on minds so disposed to examine candidly into what they heard. Many of the Jews believed: also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.*

4. *The inveterate malice of the Jews will not suffer the apostle to rest in peace in any place. Hearing of the success of the word of God at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people, using every calumny to incense the mob against them.*

5. *The brethren at Berea, knowing that against St. Paul the malice of the Jews was principally levelled, sent him away, to go as it were to the sea, to prevent farther search. But Silas and Timotheus abode still at Berea, to confirm the disciples, and carry on the work of God.*

6. *St. Paul, with those who accompanied him, took the road to Athens, where was the most renowned university of Greece; and, when the brethren returned, he sent orders to Silas and Timothy to follow him speedily.*

3dly, While St. Paul waited at Athens for the arrival of his fellow-labourers, we are told,

1. *With what grief and indignation he beheld the idolatry of the inhabitants, and what zeal burned in his bosom on seeing their abominations. Unable, therefore, to restrain himself any longer, he entered the synagogue; beginning, as usual, with the Jews and devout profelytes, disputing*

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain *man's* house, named Justus, * *one* that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

* A profelyte.

disputing mildly with them, and answering all their objections against that Messiah whom he preached unto them: and not resting there, he daily talked with those whom he met in the places of public concourse, remonstrating against their absurd idolatry, and seeking to turn them from those stocks and stones which they worshipped, to the service of the living God. *Note*; When we have Christ's cause at heart, we shall be ready to speak a word for him in all companies, and have his interests constantly uppermost.

2. The philosophers, with whom this feat of Grecian literature abounded, could not silently pass by, unnoticed, this zealous disputant; and therefore some of the Stoics and Epicureans, their two most famed sects, though in opinions utterly opposite, united their forces against him. Some of them with great contempt said, *What will this babler say? prating at this strange rate? Others, with indignation at his attempt to introduce what they thought new deities, said, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods, or foreign demons, because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.*

3. In order to hear at large what he had to say for himself, they brought him to Areopagus, a hill dedicated to Mars, where the supreme court of the judges sat, who determined all matters, civil or religious; and, a number of philosophers being assembled, they said, *May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.* Among all the volumes which crowded their libraries, the writings of Moses and the prophets, probably, were unknown to them: and since their professed research was after truth, they desired to hear a full account of the doctrine which he maintained and inculcated. And, in this matter, curiosity seems to have prompted them more than any real desire of being informed; it being the character of the Athenians in general, that they, and the strangers who resorted thither, *spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.* *Note*; It is a miserable abuse of precious time, thus to spend it in gaping after news and novelty; and, instead of real wisdom, can only produce superficial talkativeness.

4thly, Never was discourse more admirably suited to the auditory, than this of St. Paul's. Having now to do, not with Jews who admitted revelation, but with idolatrous philosophers, who, amid their innumerable deities, were without God in the world, the apostle sets himself to lead them to the knowledge of him, whom they ignorantly worshipped.

1. In the midst of a numerous audience of senators, philosophers, and others, who desired to hear what he had to say, he begins with a general remark, which he had made during his abode among them; *Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious, more addicted to the worship of gods, or demons, than other people; which he mentions, not perhaps with a view immediately to upbraid them with it as their crime, but to engage their*

attention to his discourse, as persons of more than ordinary professed devotion.

2. He informs them, that he had particularly observed on one of their altars this inscription, *To THE UNKNOWN GOD, which, though a confession of their ignorance, intimated a desire to know and worship him; and many have thought that this altar was dedicated to the God of Israel, whose name Jehovah, the Jews never pronounced.*

3. He tells them that this God whom they ignorantly worshipped, him declared he unto them; not as a setter forth of *strange* gods, to add to their number other deities, nor of *new* gods; but to bring them to the knowledge of him, who was the only living and true God, and to direct them how he was acceptably to be served; whom they with blind devotion adored, though unknown. So prudently and persuasively does he introduce and urge the glorious truths he had to deliver, even from the idolatry which he condemned.

4. He describes the God that he preached, as the great Creator, Governor, and Lord of all; the author of life and being to every creature, and who filleth heaven and earth with his presence. *He made the world, and all things therein, which sprung not from a fortuitous concourse of atoms, nor subsisted from eternity, as the different sects of philosophers taught, but was the work of the Almighty, and spoken into being at his word; who, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, the author and owner of all, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor can his immensity be circumscribed by these narrow bounds: neither is worshipped, or served with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, images, shrines, temples, or offerings, to increase his felicity; who is in himself infinitely blessed and glorious, and incapable of receiving any addition to his self-sufficient happiness; seeing all that the creature possesses, comes from him; for he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; their being, with all the supports and comforts of it, they receive from him, but can add nothing to him: and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, who are originally descended from the same pair, which should stain the pride of pedigree, and teach us to love as brethren; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, has ordained the regular seasons of the year, (see Gen. i. 14.—viii. 22.) and has fixed the limits of the habitations of the different nations of the earth. See the Annotations. And in all the dispensations of his providence, the end that he proposes is, that they should seek the Lord, engaged by all the kindness and bounties of his providential hand, if haply, amid the darkness, blindness, and ignorance of their fallen minds, they might feel after him, and find him, groping as the blind, through the creatures, and rising from the consideration of the visible objects around them, to the knowledge of his eternal power and Godhead: though he be not far from every one of us, filling heaven and earth with his presence, and exerting in every place his perpetual agency; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; brought into being by*

8 * And Crispus, the chief ruler of the syna- and many of the Corinthians ¹ hearing be-
gogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; lieved, and were baptized.

* 1 Cor. i. 14. Ch. 16. 14, 15. ¹ Rom. 10. 17. II. 55. 3. Mat. 28. 19. Mark, 16. 15.

by his power, supported by his providence, and preserved by his care; as certain also of your own poets have said, particularly Aratus, *For we are also his offspring.* Note; (1.) He who gave us our being, has a full right to dispose of us according to the good pleasure of his will: to murmur at our lot, is to rebel against his providence. (2.) We can never be thankful enough for that blessed book of God, which teaches more substantial wisdom in one page, yea, in one line, than is contained in all the volumes of poets and philosophers.

5. As the consequence of the doctrine which he advanced, he infers the absurdity of idolatry, and exhorts them to turn unto the living God. *Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, created by him, and in his image, we ought not to put so gross an affront upon him, as to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art or man's device, however rich the materials, or exquisite the workmanship. And the times of this ignorance God winked at, with wondrous patience and long-suffering bearing with these abominations; but now, in the superabundant riches of his grace, overlooking all that is past, he is pleased to make a revelation of himself and his designs to the world in general; and commandeth all men everywhere to repent, engaging them thereunto by the most encouraging promises of pardon and acceptance through a Redeemer, and warning them by all the awful judgments which will descend on the heads of those who persist in their impenitence and idolatry; because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. The day will arrive; the judgment will be impartial and strict, from the fullest knowledge of the characters of men; the person is appointed to whom all judgment is committed; his resurrection from the dead gives the fullest assurance to all who will inquire into the evidence of the fact, with its connections of God's approbation of him, and his appointment to this high office: and as there can be no exception to his sentence, there lies no appeal from his bar, an awful scene, which we cannot too often place before us, and under which our daily conduct should be influenced, that we may be found of him in peace at that day.*

5thly, We have an account of the effects of St. Paul's preaching to this philosophic audience.

1. Some ridiculed his strange notions, and, on the mention of *the resurrection of the dead*, so contrary to the maxims of their philosophy, they mocked at the absurdity of such an assertion; whilst others, deferring to determine upon the matter for the present, promised to give it a second hearing at their leisure. Note; (1.) We are not to think the worse of the sacred truths of God, because profane philosophers or wits ridicule, and make a jest of them. (2.) They who put off the concerns of their souls, which demand present attention, to some future day, usually find something else constantly to engage them, till it is too late.

2. The apostle's words were not however wholly ineffectual. Though the generality persisted in their scientific ignorance and philosophic pride, yet when St. Paul departed, and the assembly broke up, *certain men clave unto him*, immediately commencing a connection with him; and believed that gospel which he preached unto them; among the which was *Dionysius the Areopagite*, a member of the supreme court of judicature before which St. Paul appeared; and a woman of note and distinction, named *Damaris*; and others with them, who, under the power of divine grace, were turned from idols to serve the living and true God.

CHAP. XVIII.

Ver. 1, 2. *To Corinth;*] Achaia Propria was a part of Greece, and Corinth the metropolis of Achaia Propria. It was a famous mart town; for, by standing in the middle of the isthmus, it had the trade of both the eastern and western seas, that is, through Asia and Europe. It was at first called *Ephyre*; but it had the name of Corinth from one Corinthus, who took and rebuilt it; and it had now gone by that name for several years. Cenchrea was its port or haven for the east or Ægean sea; as Iochœum or Lechœum was for the west or Adriatic sea. Corinth and Carthage had been destroyed by the Romans in one and the same year; a hundred years after which, Julius Cæsar ordered them both to be rebuilt, and in a little time sent Roman colonies to them. From the colony which he sent to Corinth, were descended the Gentiles of that city, to whom the apostle now went and preached the gospel. Corinth was almost as famous as Athens for philosophers and orators, and made very great pretences to learning and wisdom; and being a place of such great trade and resort, it was a rich and luxurious city, even to a proverb. In this city St. Paul found *Aquila*, who was a Jew by nation, but by religion a Christian. See particularly ver. 26. He had lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because the Roman emperor Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome. Dio says that Claudius did not banish the Jews from Rome, but only prohibited their assemblies; but though that was in effect to banish all the most zealous and conscientious persons among them, Suetonius, who lived nearer the time, says, that he expelled the Jews from Rome, who were continually making tumults; *Chrestus* inciting them, or being the occasion of their disturbances. It is indeed a matter of dispute among learned men, whether by *Chrestus* Suetonius meant the Lord Jesus Christ or not: it is likely enough he might mean so; for he has in other places shewn himself peculiarly virulent against the Christians. But if he meant to say that Christ incited the Jews to make tumults at Rome, he could not possibly, I think, charge our Lord with doing it in person. One cannot suppose that Suetonius should so far mistake both in point of time and place, as to think that the Lord Jesus Christ was at Rome in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, and that there he incited the Jews to tumults and seditions: he could there-

9 ¶^m Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace :

10ⁿ For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee : for ° I have much people in this city.

^m Ch. 16. 9. & 23. 11. Jer. 1. 9, 17—19. Ezek. 2. 6. If. 58. 1. & 62. 1. 41. 10, 14.

° 2 Tim. 2. 19. John, 10. 16. Ch. 6. 7.

ⁿ Mat. 28. 20. Eph. 6. 19, 20. Jer. 1. 9, 18. Rom. 8. 31. If.

therefore intend only to charge it upon Christ's doctrine and followers. That the Jews should make tumults, when Christianity began to spread in Rome, is not wonderful, if we consider their behaviour towards St. Stephen, towards the other apostles, and towards St. Paul himself: and when tumults were made, Claudius's timorous and suspicious temper would very naturally lead him to punish both the guilty and the suspected. However, neither Christ himself, nor Christianity, were in the least to be charged with being the criminal causes of those tumults, supposing they were the innocent occasion of them. If bigots and persecutors will abuse the holy, the virtuous, and the modest, for speaking the truth, and supporting it with proper evidence, such zealots are criminal, and not the innocent persons whom they persecute. This banishment of the Jews from Rome was not ordered by a decree of the senate, but of the emperor only; and therefore it died with him at the farthest: but as the Christians were then looked upon by the Romans to be only a sect of the Jews, it affected them no less than the Jews, while it continued. Josephus has nowhere particularly mentioned this edict; as it was enforced for so short a time only, he might partly for that reason omit it: but a more prevailing reason was, probably, that it reflected dishonour upon the Jews, and was therefore disagreeable to a Jewish historian; and if some dispute between the Jews and the followers of the Lord Jesus was really the occasion of this order, as Suetonius seems to affirm, that might be another reason for the silence of Josephus: for he was very reserved about the affairs of the Christians. See Dio, lib. lx. p. 669. Suetonius, in *Vit. Claud.* c. 25. in *Nero*.

Ver. 3. And because he was of the same craft,] Aquila and Priscilla seem to have had a house at Corinth; for they had settled so far in that city, as to enter upon their usual employment, which was to make tents and pavilions of linen or of skins; such as in those hot countries they sometimes lived in during the summer season; such as travellers made use of when they had no houses or caravans to lodge in; and such as soldiers lodged in when encamped in the field. This was not only a gainful, but, according to Josephus, an honourable employment. St. Paul, having been brought up to this occupation in his younger days, went and lodged and worked with them. It has been frequently observed, that such of the Jews as had the most liberal education, and were the most zealous and diligent students of the law, were likewise very frequently trained up to some handicraft business. Hence one of the rabbies is furnished the *butcher*, and another the *baker*; and this custom still prevails among the easterns. St. Paul's case, therefore, was not peculiar, nor his birth and education less liberal on that account. He might indeed, in his apostolic character, and even by the reason of things, have expected that such as partook of his spiritual things, should have ministered to him in temporals. But though it was

† 1

lawful, the apostle would not do it, because it was not always *expedient*: it might have given occasion for his enemies to say, that he compassed sea and land to make a gain of his converts; and that he sought what they had, more than their soul's benefit; and it might likewise have afforded a pretence to the false apostles to have demanded a maintenance; (see 2 Cor. xi. 7—20.) and to the slothful persons who embraced Christianity, to live in idleness, as if diligence and industry in some honest calling was no longer required of them. Whereas, now he could from his own example shew his converts, that such as *would not work*, when they were able, ought not to eat; at the same time that he cut off all occasion from the false apostles for demanding a maintenance under his example. And finally, by despising the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world, he gave mankind the most convincing proofs, among a thousand others, that he most cordially believed Christianity to be true; and that upon such strong evidences, as could leave no room for any reasonable doubt or hesitation. To this diligence and disinterested behaviour of his, he makes frequent appeals in his epistles, and that with the greatest justice and propriety; for what could more effectually have cleared him from all suspicion of carrying on a sinister and worldly design?

Ver. 4. And he reasoned, &c.] Philo informs us, that many Jews inhabited Corinth, and the chief and best parts of Peloponnesus. And St. Luke in this place, as well as St. Paul in his two epistles to the Corinthians, has given plain intimation that there were several Jews in that city; for they had a synagogue there, into which the apostle went, as usual, every sabbath-day, and there he discoursed concerning the Christian doctrine, and laboured to convince — *πείθει*,—both the Jews and devout Gentiles that it was true, and infinitely worthy of their regard. Among them was *Epenetus*, who was the first convert in Achaia, Rom. xvi. 5. as the *household of Stephanus* was the first family converted there. The whole family of Stephanus was baptized by the apostle himself, and he also afterwards baptized Crispus and Caius; but he himself baptized no other of the Corinthians; he left that to his assistants, or to some of the first converts of the place; for the business of an apostle was not to baptize, but to preach the gospel, 1 Cor. i. 14. 17. and to plant churches.

Ver. 5. And when Silas and Timotheus were come, &c.] St. Paul was at Corinth some time before his two assistants came up to him, and so long he frequented the synagogue; but when Timothy was come from Thessalonica, and Silas from Berea, and they had told him what success they had met with in watering the gospel which he had planted in Macedonia, he *was pressed in the spirit*, and grieved that he had hitherto preached to the Jews in Corinth with so little success; for which reason he resolved to push the matter in the synagogue there; and therefore, instead of merely reasoning and persuading in a more cautious manner, he asserted

asserted

11 And he * continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 ¶ And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews † made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat,

13 Saying, † This *fellow* persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

14 And when Paul was now about to open *his* mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, ' If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you :

15 But 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*.

* Gr. *sat.* † Ch. 8. 1. & 6. 12. & 17. 50. & 14. 2, 19. & 16. 20. & 17. 5, 13. & 19. 9. † Ch. 25. 11. & 23. 29. & 25. 18, 19.

† Mat. 27. 4. John, 18. 31. Luke, 12. 14.

asserted in the most bold, pointed, and awakening terms, that Jesus was actually the Messiah; which holy freedom, plainness of spirit, and flaming zeal, presently made the unbelieving Jews discover themselves. See the next verse, and Ezek. xxxiii. 4, 8. 1 Kings, ii. 33. Matth. xxvii. 25. Some explain the phrase, which we render *pressed in spirit*, by " *He was borne away by an unusual impulse in his spirit.*" Compare ver. 25. ch. xix. 21. Rom. xii. 11.

Ver. 6. *From henceforth I will go, &c.*] That is, " From henceforth I will apply myself to the Gentiles only in this city, and no longer fruitlessly attempt the conversion of you Jews."

Ver. 7. *Justus.*] From the account here given of this Justus, he was a devout Gentile, whom St. Paul now converted through divine grace to Christianity at Corinth. The Jews had, in some places, houses *annexed to their synagogues*, for the entertainment of strangers and travellers: the house of Justus was probably of this kind; and it is likely that the apostle preferred the house of Justus to that of Aquila, because it was so nigh the synagogue, that he might give any of the Jews or Greeks an opportunity, if they pleased, to attend upon him more conveniently, or more privately.

Ver. 8—11. *And Crispus.*] St. Paul's labours in the synagogue had not been without some success; for *Crispus, one of the rulers* of the synagogue, embraced Christianity with his whole family; and afterwards many other of the Corinthians, when they heard the Christian doctrine and the evidences of it, embraced the gospel, and were baptized, and were no doubt truly converted to God. His teaching so nigh the synagogue, in the house of an uncircumcised Gentile, and his converting through grace and receiving the uncircumcised Gentiles into a full communion with the Jewish Christians, exasperated the unbelieving Jews, which might perhaps have discouraged even St. Paul himself; and as he had already planted a considerable church in that city, he might possibly begin to think of leaving the place, as having little expectation of bringing in any considerable addition to the number of converts which, under the divine blessing, he had hitherto made there. But to prevent his departure, and to encourage him in his work, the Lord Jesus himself appeared to him in a vision by night. *I have much people in this city*, ver. 10. means all those who would yield to be saved by grace, whatever their tempers and dispositions then were. See 1 Cor. vi. 9. 14.

Ver. 12. *When Gallio was the deputy of Achaia.*] The *proconsul of Achaia*,—*Ἀρχὴν*. This is another instance

of the great accuracy with which St. Luke expresses himself. The provinces of the Roman empire were of two sorts; *Cæsarean*, or such as were subject to the emperor; and *proconsular*, or such as were subject to the people and the senate. Achaia was a proconsular province under Augustus Cæsar. Tiberius, at the request of the Achaians, made it a Cæsarean province. About eight years before the event here mentioned, Claudius restored it to the senate; and from that time a *proconsul* was sent into this country. Gallio was the present proconsul; and, though the country subject to him was all Greece, yet he was by the Romans called *proconsul of Achaia*. This Gallio was *Marcus Anneus Novatus*, elder brother to the famous Lucius Annæus Seneca, the Stoic philosopher, and Nero's tutor; but having been adopted by *Lucius Junius Gallio*, he was denominated after him. It was, most probably, by the interest of his brother Seneca that Gallio was made proconsul of Achaia; for Agrippina, who was wife to the emperor Claudius, and mother to Nero, had such an influence over her husband, that almost all things were managed according to her direction; and her son's preceptor would, it is most probable, be readily gratified in such a request for his brother. Seneca has described Gallio as a man of the most mild disposition, composed in himself, and benign and gentle to mankind in general; and his behaviour upon the following occasion, considering him to be a Heathen, agrees very well with the character that his brother has given him.

Ver. 14. *If it were a matter of wrong, &c.*] *If it were a matter of injustice, or mischievous licentiousness.* Heylin reads the passage, *If your accusation were for some act of injustice, or other immorality, I would hear you patiently, as reason requires I should.*

Ver. 15. *But if it be a question of words*] *But since your dispute is only about words, and names, and your own law, you must decide it yourselves.* The truth is, that religious and civil affairs are of an entirely distinct nature; that the latter come under the cognizance of the magistrate; and that it is not his business to interpose in an affair relating to the former, any further than to keep the peace, and to allow all good subjects openly to profess their own religion, and to worship in their own way. Accordingly, when the apostle was going to speak, Gallio would not give him the trouble of making his apology, because he did not look upon him as a criminal: he told his accusers, that he would have nothing to do with their religious opinions, (the subject of which he had heard, no doubt, from the accusation

16 And he drave them from the judgment-seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took ^u Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat *him* before the judgment-seat. And Gallio ^x cared for none of those things.

18 ¶ And Paul *after this* tarried *there* yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn

his head in Cenchrea: ^y for he had a vow.

19 And he came to ^z Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this ^a feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, ^b if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

^t Rev. 12. 16. Rom. 13. 3, 4. ^u Perhaps not he. 1 Cor. 1. 1. ^x Amos, 6. 6. Phil. 2. 21. ^y Ch. 21. 24. Numb. 6. 18. 1 Cor. 9. 20.
^z The chief city of Lesser Asia. Ch. xix. 1 Cor. 16. 8. Eph. 1. 1. 1 Tim. 1. 3. Rev. 1. 11. ^a Passover. Exod. 12. 6. Deut. 16. 1. & 19. 21. & 20. 16. ^b 1 Cor. 4. 19. Rom. 1. 10. James, 4. 15. Phil. 2. 19, 23, 24. Heb. 6. 3.

which the Jews brought,) and determined not to concern himself with such things as did not come within his proper province. He therefore, not without threatening, ordered them to depart from the tribunal. "Would to God (says Dr. Benson,) that all princes, judges, and magistrates had always been of Gallio's mind, and discouraged such tumults, by protecting the innocent, and discountenancing persecutors, and so had left every one to judge for himself in matters of religion, which concern only God and man's own conscience!"—A commentator remarks, "The names of the Heathen gods were fables and shadows; but the question concerning the name of Jesus is of more importance than all things else under heaven. Yet there is this, among a thousand other singularities in the Christian religion, that mere human reason, curious as it is in all other things, abhors to inquire into it."

Ver. 17. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes,] The Jews did not pay a proper regard to Gallio's orders: they had indeed the power of scourging in their synagogues whom they thought proper, of their own nation and religion: but they were at present so enraged and insolent, as to seize upon Sosthenes, who had been one of the chief rulers of their synagogue, but was now, it is most likely, become a convert to Christianity, and to beat him,—τυπτειν,—even before the tribunal. However, Gallio regarded none of these things; all their insolence could not provoke him to intermeddle, as long as they beat only one of their own people; and though it was not in the synagogue, but before the tribunal, he chose rather to let it pass, as considering, very probably, the mutinous temper of the Jews, which rather increased by opposition.

Ver. 18. Paul after this tarried, &c.] The apostle, thus screened by Gallio, remained at Corinth a good while longer; so that his stay in that city was in all about two years. Considering his unwearied diligence, and that he did not use to stay long in any place, unless he had a prospect of success, we may reasonably suppose that he had gathered a large church there: and from St. Luke's account, and especially from St. Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians, it appears, that most of that church consisted of converts from among the idolatrous Gentiles. Silas and Timothy seem still to have continued at Corinth; but St. Paul, taking leave of the Christian brethren there, set out

for Syria, and along with him Aquila and Priscilla. When they arrived at Cenchrea, the eastern part of the isthmus, St. Paul shaved his head, because he was under the Nazarite's vow (see ch. xxi. 24. Numb. vi. 18.); for to the Jews he became as a Jew, and made all lawful condescensions, in compliance with their prejudices, as we shall see in other instances in the progress of this history. St. Paul seems to have made this vow upon some remarkable deliverance from his enemies; perhaps, upon the account of Gallio's screening him from the fury of the unbelieving Jews; and possibly some of the Jewish Christians at Corinth might also be in danger of throwing off Christianity itself, if St. Paul had not condescended so far in that or some other instances. It is evident that Judaizers did afterwards make a very great disturbance in that church; but whatever was the particular reason, it appears that St. Paul submitted to that Jewish custom. See particularly the next note. We must not, however, fail to observe here, that some very considerable critics think that this latter clause of the verse refers to Aquila. And for this construction's sake Castalio and Grotius observe, that the sacred writer seems to have named the wife before the husband. But it seems much more probable from the construction, that this clause, as well as the beginning of the next verse, must refer to the same person, that is, to St. Paul. And as to Priscilla's being named first, that is done elsewhere, where there could be no such reason inducing to it. See Rom. xvi. 3. 2 Tim. iv. 19. Some have imagined that Mephibosheth's vow during David's exile, 2 Sam. xix. 24. might be something of the same kind with this of St. Paul.

Ver. 19—22. And he came to Ephesus,] For the short time that the apostle now continued at Ephesus, which seems to have been but one sabbath-day, he went into the synagogue, and discoursed with the Jews, and with such Gentiles as usually attended the synagogue service, concerning the Christian doctrine; but when they desired him to stay longer with them, he refused, and took his leave of them, telling them, ver. 21. that he must by all means go up to Jerusalem, upon the account of his being under the Nazarite's vow; for it was a maxim, that if any one had vowed the Nazarite's vow out of the land of Judea, he was bound to go into the land, and there fulfil his vow. The apostle

22 And when he had landed at ^c Cefarea, and gone up, and faluted the church, he went down to ^d Antioch.

23 And after he had ſpent ſome time *there*, he departed, and went over *all* the country of ^e Galatia and Phrygia in order, ^f ſtrengthening all the diſciples.

24 ¶ ^g And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and ^h mighty in the ſcriptures, came to Ephelus.

25 ⁱ This man was inſtructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the ſpirit, he ſpake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, ^k knowing only the baptiſm of

John.

26 And he began to ſpeak ^l boldly in the ſynagogue: whom when ^m Aquila and Prifcilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and ⁿ expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27 And when he was diſpoſed to paſs into Achaia, the brethren ^o wrote, exhorting the diſciples to receive him: who, when he was come, ^p helped them much which had ^q believed through grace:

28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and *that* publicly, ^r ſhewing by the ſcriptures that Jeſus was Chriſt.

^c Ch. 8. 40. & 10. 1. & 12. 19. & 21. 8. & 23. 33. ^d Ch. 11. 19, 26. & 13. 1. ^e Gal. 1. 2. & 4. 14. ^f 1 Cor. 16. 1. Ch. 16. 6.
^g Ch. 14. 22. & 15. 32, 41. ^h 1 Thell. 5. 14. & 3. 2, 13. ⁱ 1 Cor. 1. 12. & 3. 5. & 16. 12. ^j Titus, 3. 13. ^k Ch. 7. 22. Col.
 3. 16. ^l Pf. 119. 11. ^m Mat. 22. 16. ⁿ Rom. 12. 11. ^o Pf. 69. 9. ^p Col. 1. 28, 29. ^q 1 Tim. 5. 17. ^r 2 Tim. 4. 2. ^s Ch. 19. 3. & 8. 16. ^t Mark,
 1. 2—11. ^u Mat. 3. 11. ^v Luke, 3. 19—36. ^w Ch. 14. 3, 29, 31. & 13. 46. ^x Eph. 6. 19, 20. ^y 1f. 58. 1. ^z Ver. 2, 3. ^{aa} Rom. 16. 3.
^{ab} 1 Cor. 12. 21. ^{ac} Col. 3. 16. ^{ad} Ch. 9. 27. ^{ae} 1 Cor. 16. 3. ^{af} 2 Cor. 3. 1. ^{ag} Rom. 16. 1, 2. ^{ah} 1 Cor. 3. 6, 10. & 5. 10. ^{ai} 2 Cor. 1. 24. ^{aj} Eph.
 3. 7. ^{ak} Rom. 12. 3. ^{al} Eph. 2. 8. ^{am} Luke, 24. 27, 44. ^{an} Ch. 17. 3. & 26. 22, 23. ^{ao} 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4. ^{ap} Heb. 1—x.

apostle added, that he chose to be at Jerusalem time enough to keep the approaching festival in that city; and this not from any apprehension that he was obliged in conscience to celebrate the Jewish feasts, but for the reason above given, and because he desired to seize that opportunity of meeting a great number of his countrymen at Jerusalem, to whom he might preach the gospel, or whom, if already converted, he might farther instruct, or might remove the prejudices which were groundlessly imbibed against himself. Departing therefore from Ephesus, he sailed to Cæſarea, from whence he went up to pay his respects to the Christian church at Jerusalem; which, as it was the mother-church, or the first of all the Christian churches, was, by way of eminence, called *the church*. When he had seen the Christians at Jerusalem, affectionately saluted them, and made his offering as a Nazarite in the temple, he left the place, and went down to Antioch in Syria, and there ended his second apostolic journey. Concerning *Ephesus*, see the note on ver. 1. of the next chapter.

Ver. 23. And after he had spent some time there,] After St. Paul had made some stay in Antioch, he set out upon his third apostolic journey, and went through *Galatia and Phrygia, καὶ τὴν, from church to church, in that order in which he had founded them*. As this would take him up a great deal of time, most commentators very reasonably allow four years for this journey; that is, from the year 54 to 58. Coming to Galatia, he gave those directions concerning charitable contributions referred to 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

Ver. 25. And being fervent in the spirit,] The baptism of John, we find, ch. xix. 2. was attended with very imperfect instruction or divine illuminations; yet upon that baptism, and the grace he had received, Apollos, being a man of warmth and eloquence, is said to have preached the gospel *ἀκριβῶς*, that is, with a great deal of accuracy, study, and pains, according to the best of his light. It is very probable, that he returned to live at Alexandria soon after

he had been baptized with John's baptism; and so had no opportunity of being explicitly acquainted with the doctrines of the gospel, as delivered by Christ and his apostles, till he came to Ephesus, and was taught them by these eminent Christians Aquila and Priscilla, who, in all probability, lodged in their own house, that they might the more familiarly and fully converse with him about them. See ver. 26.

Ver. 27. Who—helped, &c.] The best comment on the words is what we are told elsewhere, 1 Cor. iii. 6. *Paul planted, and Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*. It is indeed true, both that the Corinthians had *believed through grace*, and that through grace Apollos *helped them*. The latter strongly implies the former, and the original words may possibly speak either. It appears from many passages in St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians, that several of the Christians there, charmed with the eloquence of Apollos, were ready to set him up as the head of a party, and to make invidious and foolish comparisons between him and the apostle who had been their father in Christ; and who, though he might have less volubility of speech, was, on the most important accounts, far superior to this eloquent and zealous teacher. See 1 Cor. i. 12. iii. 4—8. 21, 22. iv. 6. Yet this occasioned no breach between Paul and Apollos; the latter of whom plainly appears to have come to Ephesus when St. Paul returned thither, and to have declined going to Corinth again, even when St. Paul would have persuaded him to it; probably to avoid any the remotest appearance of desiring to countenance any party which might have been formed in his own favour. See 1 Cor. xvi. 12.

Ver. 28. For he mightily convinced the Jews,] The proper and full meaning of this passage seems to be as follows: "Apollos, with great judgment, earnestness and power, reasoned with the Jews in their public assemblies before all the people, confuting their objections, and plainly demonstrating

CHAP. XIX.

The Holy Ghost is given by Paul's hands: the Jews blaspheme his doctrine, which is confirmed by miracles. The Jewish exorcists are beaten by the man possessed by the evil spirit. Magical books are burnt. Demetrius, for love of gain, raiseth an uproar against Paul, which is appeased by the town clerk.

[Anno Domini 57.]

AND it came to pass, that, while ^a Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed

through ^{*} the upper coasts ^b came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

2 He said unto them, Have ^c ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, ^d We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, ^e Unto

^a Ch. 12. 24—28. 1 Cor. 3. 5—7.

10. 44. & 8. 17. Ver. 6.

^{*} Phrygia, Galatia, Pontus, Bithynia, Lydia, Lycaonia, &c.

^b 1 Sam. 3. 7. Ch. 8. 16.

^c Ch. 18. 25.

Mar. iii. Mark, i. Luke, iii.

^d Ch. 18. 19, 21.

^e John, 7. 39. Ch.

“demonstrating from Old Testament prophecies, which he was familiarly acquainted with (ver. 24.), that Jesus was indeed the promised, the only true Messiah, whom John the Baptist told them of, and they themselves had been expecting.”

Inferences.—The divine wisdom and goodness are very observable from hence—in providing for those who are employed in the work of the gospel *suitable associates* and companions in their labours; and particularly happy are they, to whom God hath been pleased to give, as to the pious *Aquila*, such a *companion* in the nearest relation of life, as may help them forward in the way to heaven, and assist them in the service of religion while they continue upon earth.

God has always, in the treasures of his goodness, proper consolations for those who *suffer*, and who have recourse to him. How great a one is this—to meet with the company of an apostle,—of a *St. Paul*! Happy *bannishment*, which is the occasion that these persons fall under the direction of such a man of God!

Much were the fatigues of *St. Paul's* life softened by the converse of such friends, who, no doubt, rendered the *common business of life* more pleasant, as well as the *work of the Lord* more delightful. We find them, while endeavouring to propagate the gospel, *maintaining themselves* (for reasons peculiar to their situation) *by the labour of their own hands*; and even *Paul* the apostle *wrought with them*: not because he had not a *right* to demand support, (for he strenuously maintains that right at large, in his address to these very Corinthians, 1 Cor. ix. 1—14.) but to shame his mean-spirited enemies, who accused him of acting on *mercenary principles*; and because he thought in his conscience, on some other accounts, that his fidelity to Christ would be so much the more apparent, and his labours, by this means, so much the more successful. And what faithful minister, who in his conscience apprehended that to be the case, would not choose to act as he did!

During this his temporal employment, we find *St. Paul* engaged, as usual, every sabbath-day, in discoursing to the Jews, and in demonstrating to them the truth of the gospel: and it is pleasant and edifying to observe, with what earnestness he applied himself to do it. His unwearied diligence in the ministry, though he received no manner of temporal advantage from it, is a tacit, yet emphatical condemnation of those, who enrich themselves out of the re-

venues of the church, while they do nothing at all in it, or that which is next to nothing: his zeal and charity are patterns which all pastors ought frequently to consider.

How melancholy is it to find the inveterate prejudices of his hearers prevailing over all the cogency of his demonstrations, and all the warmth of his address? Yet let us observe how he gave them up! with what grief mixed with just indignation at their folly and ingratitude! *Shaking his garments, and saying, your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean.* Thus are impenitent unbelievers their own murderers; they bring upon themselves even the blood and destruction of *their own souls*. Grievous it is that it should rest upon them; but absolutely necessary, that they who are messengers of God to them, should take heed, if such must after all bleed by the sword of divine justice, that *themselves* may at last be found pure; for terrible beyond expression must it be, if, through a treacherous or neglectful conduct, the *blood of such persons should be required at their hands*.

The apostle's success among the *Gentiles* raised new opposition, and his infirmities frequently occasioned returning fears. But how graciously did our Lord interpose for his encouragement and support, assuring him of his protection, and promising him yet more abundant success! Blessed *JESUS*, thy *grace was sufficient* even for this thy servant, amidst all the labours of the ministerial and apostolical office, amidst all the *internal* as well as *external difficulties* which he had to encounter in the discharge of it! 2 Cor. xii. 9.

The tumultuous rage of the *Jews* is nothing surprising; for we have been accustomed often to read of it; but the *prudence and moderation of Gallio* are truly exemplary. That wise Roman well knew the extent of his *office*, and was aware that it gave him no title or pretence to dictate in matters of conscience, or to restrain men's religious liberties, so long as they abstained from *injustice* or *mischievous licentiousness*, by which the public peace might be disturbed, and the rights of society invaded. May God give to all magistrates such a spirit! the gospel will then, under the influences of divine grace, become an universal religion, and shew the world how little need it has of being supported by civil penalties; to which those are generally most ready to have recourse, who, like *these Jews*, are contented by fair arguments.

Who can help observing, from the conduct of these bigots, how apt ignorance and passion are to cause that to be looked upon as *contrary to religion*, which is the very

John's baptism.

4 Then said Paul, ' John verily baptized

with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which

' Mat. 3. 11. & 11. 3. Mark, 1. 4, 8. Luke, 3. 16. John, 1. 26. Ch. 1. 5. & 11. 16. & 13. 24, 25.

spirit of it? We easily persuade ourselves, (unless God be of our council,) that what is contrary to *our inclinations*, is *contrary to his law*; and the pretence of *his interests* too often, alas! serves as a veil to cover the malice and obstinacy of *men*.

The whole conduct of the apostle teaches pastors to apply themselves particularly to those whom they have instructed; to cultivate the good planted among them by frequent and exact *visitations*, and to have a constant regard to the *weak*, who stand in need of encouragement from time to time. There are no sorts of labour which the pastoral *charity* does not embrace: behold we this charity in the great St. Paul; it looks upon the toil and fatigues of so many journeys and voyages as nothing,—but as duty and the truest delight.

It was well for the *churches*, that so promising and hopeful a fellow-labourer as *Apollos* was raised up both to St. Paul and to *them*. We see in this instance how profitable it is to study the word of God. To be fervent and courageous in spirit, to be *eloquent and mighty in the scriptures*, are happy talents for such as are *devoted to the ministry*. Would to God all that enter on this work among us may come forth with a *zeal and courage* like this; *noy*, and with a *humility* like that which, in *Apollos*, adorned all the bright talents with which he was endowed! What he *knew*, he zealously *taught*; what he did not know, he was ready thankfully to learn; and that not only from the mouth of an *apostle*, but of a *fellow Christian* in inferior life, from *Aquila*, yea, and from *Priscilla* too. Since that wife and pious woman knew *the way of god* through his grace, by longer experience and to *greater perfection* than *Apollos*, he was willing, amidst all his popularity and applause, to become her as well as her husband's disciple, and to learn from them both in private discourses those *evangelic lessons*, in which they were at present more *skilful* than himself.

From this circumstance we learn, that devout Christians may perform considerable services to the church of God, without being admitted to the sacred ministry, or taking upon them to speak in public. A solicitous concern for the interest of the church, and a constant application to those things which promote the glory of God, are to be found, and may well be exercised, in all states and conditions. Every good man, like *Aquila*, may have the zeal and spirit of the priesthood, though without the character, and may confer with his friends and neighbours to their mutual edification.

It was prudent in *Apollos* to take, as well as just in the brethren to grant, proper *letters of recommendation*, when he was going to the churches in *Achaia*, where he was a stranger; and well did he answer his recommendation, and make himself known among them by his valuable services. *Mighty* as he was in the scriptures of the Old Testament, he might well *demonstrate from them* to the Jews at Corinth that *JESUS was the Messiah*. Happy had it been for the church and synagogue there, had they known no *dis-*

tinguishing name but his. It is a fond and indecent partiality which leads one man to say, *I am of Paul*; and another, *I am of Apollos*: and we may reasonably hope that this zealous *evangelist* expressed the same displeasure which the *apostle* himself did on the like occasion; (1 Cor. iii. 4.) and that he laboured with all his might to impress them with the thought, that neither *he that planted, nor he that watered, was any thing, but God who gave the increase* to both. May this important thought be more deeply impressed on the hearts both of *ministers* and people, that so *all the glory* may be rendered to him, from whom all our gifts and graces, and all our successes, proceed!

REFLECTIONS.—1st, St. Paul seems to have made no long stay at Athens. Probably the pride of philosophy promised little success to the gospel which he preached. He therefore next visited Corinth, a city celebrated through all Greece for its trade and opulence.

1. The apostle, unwilling to be burdensome for a maintenance, highly as he was entitled to the most liberal provision, worked for bread at his trade of tent-making; most of, if not all, the Jewish students being brought up to some handicraft business. *Aquila*, a converted Jew, with his wife *Priscilla*, who were of this occupation, being banished from Rome, with all the other Jews, by the jealous emperor *Claudius*, had settled at Corinth. To them, whom he found excellent people, and deeply versed in the things of God, he applied for work, and disdained not to labour for a subsistence—a noble instance of that disinterested zeal which burned in his bosom, and made him willing to undergo any hardship, to prevent the least prejudice that might arise, however unreasonably, against the gospel which he preached! *Note*; Those who are seeking a service, would do well to settle with persons from whom they are likely to reap good to their souls.

2. While he laboured six days in the week for a maintenance, he visited the synagogue every sabbath, where *he reasoned* with the Jews and Grecian profelytes, proving from the scriptures with unanswerable arguments the doctrines which he preached, and silencing all their objections; and *persuaded* them to embrace the salvation which was in Christ Jesus; and, with respect to many, not without success. And being still more animated by the coming of *Silas* and *Timothy*, who brought him the glad tidings of the establishment and increase of the churches which he had planted, he urged with greater warmth and earnestness the grand truth, that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, and that there was no salvation out of him; grieved to behold the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, and mightily constrained with love towards them, and desire after their conversion. *Note*; a true zeal for Jesus, and love for immortal souls, will give warmth, energy, and spirit to our discourses.

3. When he found all his labours for them rejected with scorn, and returned with reviling; that they opposed with determined obstinacy what they could not answer, and

should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. ^c in the name of the Lord Jesus.
 5 When they heard *this*, they were baptised. 6 ^a And when Paul had laid *his* hands

^c Mat. 28. 19. Rom. 6. 3, 4. Gal. 3. 27. Ch. 8. 16.

^a Ch. 6. 6. & 8. 17. & 2. 4. & 10. 44, 46. & 13. 1. 2 Tim. 1. 6.

and blasphemed that divine Redeemer whom he preached unto them; with just indignation *he shook his raiment, and, abandoning them to their wilful impenitence, said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean,* having given you solemn warning, and laboured to rescue you from that guilt and ruin which you are terribly and surely bringing upon your souls: *from henceforth*, since all my words are ineffectual, and rejected by you, *I will go unto the Gentiles;* not doubting but they will give the gospel word a more welcome reception. *Note;* (1.) They who wilfully oppose the gospel, exasperated, instead of convinced, go on often to add blasphemy to impenitence. (2.) It is a comfort to a faithful minister to be at least conscious that he is free from the blood of all men. (3.) Woe unto those, against whom the very ministers of grace shall rise up in judgment to accuse and condemn them.

2dly, Having solemnly warned the Jews of the danger and ruin which would be the consequence of their impenitence, he departed.

1. From the synagogue he went to the house adjoining, which belonged to one named Justus, a profelyte, whither those who desired to hear him might resort. And though the generality of the Jews rejected his preaching, yet he saw rich fruits of his labours, Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, being converted to the faith, with all his house: and many of the Corinthians, hearing the gospel, believed and were baptised. *Note;* Though some reject the gospel, it is a great comfort to a minister's soul to see others not only hear it with attention, but embrace it with affection.

2. Amidst all St. Paul's discouragements, the Lord is with him to support and comfort him, and by a vision in the night animates him boldly to persevere, saying, *Be not afraid of the opposition and malice of the Jews; but speak, and hold not thy peace;* with all diligence, fidelity, and zeal, declaring the gospel, deterred by no menaces or opposition of the most malignant persecutors: *for I am with thee,* to support, protect, and prosper thee in all thy labours; *and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee,* restrained by a secret over-ruling hand from injuring your person, or silencing your ministry; *for I have much people in this city,* not because of any absolute decree of unconditional election to eternal life, but because Christ saw that they were disposed to believe, and by faith become his people; as elsewhere (John x. 16.) he calls them *sheep*, who would hereafter believe on him. *Note;* (1.) If God be with us and for us, we need not be intimidated by the many or the mighty who may rise up against us. (2.) They who are labouring for Christ, though they be not visited with night visions, shall find internal divine supports ministered to them amidst all their tribulations.

3. Encouraged by this declaration, the apostle continued at Corinth, preaching the gospel with unwearied diligence and fervent zeal, and seeing numbers daily added to the church, though there were many adversaries. (See 1 Cor. xvi. 9.)

3dly, Though God had promised to save the apostle from hurt, he does not engage to exempt him from the malicious efforts of his enemies.

1. The Jews, as they had elsewhere done, raised an insurrection, and in a popular tumult dragged St. Paul before Gallio the proconsul, who was the brother of the famous Seneca, and is said to have been of the most sweet and gentle disposition, and universally beloved. Their accusation against the apostle was, that *this fellow*, so contemptuously do they speak of him, *persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law;* and because they were allowed the exercise of their religion by the edicts of the Roman emperor, they pretend that it was highly criminal for any Jew to worship God any other way than they did.

2. St. Paul was just going to make his defence, and shew the falsehood as well as malignity of the accusation; but Gallio, understanding that it was a merely religious matter, refused to interfere, and dismissed the cause, saying, *If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness,* where any injury had been done, or theft or immorality committed, *O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you,* and do you justice, indecently clamorous as you are: *but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law,* whether Jesus, whom Paul preaches, be your Messiah, and what obligation there lies on him, or those whom he teaches, to worship God after the law of Moses, *look ye to it,* and end such disputes among yourselves; *for I will be no judge of such matters,* it is no concern to me how any man worships God, while he approves himself a good subject, and disturbs not the peace of the state. *And he drave them from the judgment-seat,* expressing his displeasure at their troublesome and impertinent clamours. *Note;* Magistrates are bound to right the injured; but, where the accusation is evidently frivolous or malicious, such causes should be discountenanced and dismissed.

3. Exasperated at their disappointment, the unbelieving Greeks took hold of Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, St. Paul's friend, and afterwards his fellow-labourer, 1 Cor. i. 1. and to vent their resentment, they beat him before the judgment-seat, in the face of the governor. *And Gallio cared for none of those things,* rather choosing to wink at the affront and injustice, than embroil himself with an enraged populace.

4thly, After a long abode at Corinth, and seeing abundant success of his labours, we have,

1. The apostle's departure. Having taken a solemn farewell of the brethren, he set sail for Syria, Priscilla and Aquila accompanying him, *having shorn his head in Cenchrea;* *for he had a vow;* willing, as far as was lawful, to comply with the Jews, that he might gain them the more readily to hear him. *Note;* In all indifferent matters we should become all things to all men, in order, if it please God, that we may by any means gain some to the knowledge of Christ.

2. His arrival at Ephesus, the chief city of the proconsular Asia. There, as his custom was, he entered into

upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them ; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

8 ¶ And he went ¹ into the synagogue,

¹ Ch. 3. 26. & 13. 5, 14, 46. & 14. 1. & 17. 1—3, 11. & 18. 4, 28. & 26. 22, 23. & 28. 23. 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4. & 2. 2. Ch. 13. 14, &c. Eph. 3. 8.

the synagogue of the Jews, and *reasoned* with them concerning the great truths of Christianity. But his stay was very short, as he wished to hasten to Jerusalem : and therefore, leaving Aquila and Priscilla there, though they, and probably the other Jews, desired him to make some longer abode with them, he set off on his journey to Jerusalem ; but with God's permission he engaged to return to them again, and make some longer stay among them, to dispense that gospel which they seemed desirous to hear. *Note ; As all our motions are under the divine Providence, a gracious soul determines nothing absolutely, but adds to all its purposes, if it please the Lord.*

3. Sailing from Ephesus, he arrived at Cæsarea ; where landing, he went to Jerusalem, and saluted the church, inquiring of their welfare, and gladdening them with the tidings that he brought.

4. From Jerusalem he departed for Antioch, the most celebrated Gentile church, whence he had been at first sent forth, and whither now the second time he returned with still more joyful accounts of the progress of the gospel. After some time spent there, he proceeded on a third visitation, going over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples, confirming them in the faith, encouraging them to persevere, and suggesting the strongest motives and arguments to engage them to take up the cross, and patiently in well-doing to approve their fidelity to their blessed Lord and Master.

5thly, While the apostle was on his travels, under a promise of returning to Ephesus, the Lord was raising up in that place an eminently useful minister in the person of Apollos.

1. The account given of him is, that he was a Jew by birth, a native of Alexandria in Egypt, a man of singular abilities, possessed of a fund of solid learning, and endued with a most persuasive faculty of elocution, deeply read in the scriptures, and every way highly qualified for the work of the ministry. *This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and, as far as John's ministry went, had embraced the principles of the doctrine of Christ ; and so far as his knowledge reached, being fervent in the spirit, and impressed with a warm zeal for God's glory, and the salvation of mankind, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, with much study and pains, according to his best light ; knowing only the baptism of John, who spake of the approaching Messiah, and exhorted all men to prepare for his reception. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, with great freedom of speech and intrepidity of mind, fearless of the faces of men—a noble pattern for our imitation ! and happy is it for that people, to whom the Lord is pleased to send such a helper, whose heart, enriched with grace, zealously longs for their salvation ; and whose gifts of wisdom and elocution enable him in the most engaging and powerful manner to urge upon the conscience the truths that he preaches.*

2. Aquila and Priscilla with pleasure heard him, and, observing his simplicity and zeal, they invited him to their

lodging ; and being far more experienced and enlightened Christians, they expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly, which it seems he never had an opportunity of being thus informed of before, having probably lived at Alexandria till now ; and he immediately embraced the whole gospel, as soon as he heard it. Herein we may observe, (1.) The gracious conduct of Aquila and Priscilla. Though far more experienced in the truths of God, they attended the ministry of Apollos, encouraged him in his work, and helped him greatly by their private conversation. Older Christians should thus be ready to assist young ministers with their advice, and to countenance them in their labours. (2.) The great teachableness of Apollos. Though a man so ingenious, learned, and eloquent, he disdained not to sit as a scholar at the feet of a poor tent-maker and his wife, and to learn of them the good ways of God. Thus should young ministers covet the acquaintance of more aged and wiser Christians : and much, very much, may be learned from conversing with many poor old men and women, despicable as they may appear in the eyes of scientific pride. (3.) Whatever our attainments are, we should never think ourselves too wise to learn. They who truly know most, will covet to know more ; and will have their ears open to those who can expound to them the way of God more perfectly.

3. When, after some stay at Ephesus, Apollos was disposed to pass into Achaia, to preach the gospel there, particularly at Corinth, the brethren recommended him by letter to the churches in that country, as an able and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus ; and when he came thither, he helped them much which had believed through grace, establishing their faith, comforting their hearts, and building them up on that foundation which Paul had laid ; for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, in their synagogues and before all the people, shewing by the scriptures, with the most convincing arguments and closest application, that Jesus was Christ, the true, expected Messiah, by faith in whom alone salvation could be obtained. *Note ; (1.) Though we have true faith, yet we need help and quickening, that we may be more confirmed and established in the truth. (2.) They who are put in trust with the gospel, should be able to defend the great truths which they preach, and from the scriptures, with all zeal and meekness, to convince gain-sayers and confirm the faithful.*

CHAP. XIX.

Ver. 1. Paul—came to Ephesus] Ephesus was the metropolis and principal mart not only of Ionia, but even of all the proconsular Asia, situated on the river Cayster, celebrated for its swans, on the side of a hill, which toward the west has the prospect of a lovely plain, watered and beautified with the pleasant circles of the river, turning and winding in so many curious mazes, that some travellers have mistaken it for the Meander, and this the rather, because the Turks have given it the name of Mendres. It was most celebrated for the magnificent temple of Diana, which

and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9^k But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that^l way be-

fore the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

10^m And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in

^k Ch. 13. 45, 46. & 16. 17. 2 Tim. 1. 15. 2 Pet. 2. 2. Ch. 18. 4, 25, 28. & 17. 17. & 28. 23. II. 8. 14. ^l Ch. 9. 2. & 24. 14. Ver. 23. Ch. 28. 22. ^m Ch. 20. 18—21, 31. Pl. 19. 3. Rom. 10. 18. & 15. 19.

which was two hundred and twenty years in building, was reared at the common charge of all Asia Propria, and was accounted one of the seven wonders of the world. It was four hundred and twenty-five feet long, and two hundred and twenty broad, supported by a hundred and twenty-seven marble pillars, each of them sixty feet high; the work of a king, who erected them as a token of his magnificence. It had been twice burned down before this period: the first time was on the very day on which Socrates was poisoned, about four hundred years before Christ's incarnation; and the second was on the night in which Alexander the Great was born. It was then set on fire on purpose by Erostratus, who, being condemned to die for it, confessed, that he had destroyed so exquisite a structure purely that he might be remembered in future ages: upon which they not only put him to death, but made a decree, very fruitless indeed in its effects, that his name should never be mentioned more. It was again rebuilt,—the famous Denocrates, whom Alexander the Great afterwards employed in planning and building the magnificent city of Alexandria, being architect; and it was wonderfully adorned, especially by the Ephesians, the ladies contributing very largely towards it. After this, Nero plundered it of its riches; but in St. Paul's time it retained a great deal of its ancient grandeur. In the days of Gallienus the emperor, the Goths entirely destroyed it. It is at present become a mean and sordid village, with scarcely a single family of Christians dwelling in it: nay, indeed, the place where it stood is so little known, that it affords matter of conjecture to travellers. The only two buildings worth observing, are a strong and lofty castle situated on an eminence, and a beautiful church, honoured with the name of St. John, but now converted into a Turkish mosque; and, according to some travellers, there are a few stately ruins, which they suppose to be the remains of the once magnificent temple.

Ver. 2. *He said unto them, Have ye received, &c.*] St. Paul found at Ephesus twelve disciples, who either had been converted there, or, as is more probable, had come to Ephesus out of some remote country since he had left that city;—for these men, it is most likely, were pious Jews, who, having waited for the kingdom of God, and being many years before baptized by John, or some of his disciples, had, on receiving something of the evidence of Christianity, believed in Jesus; but perhaps coming, as we have observed, out of some distant and obscure country, they had not enjoyed an opportunity before of being instructed in any thing relative to the Holy Spirit, more than might be learnt from the Old Testament. As it was his usual custom to impart the Holy Spirit to all the adult converts wherever he came, if they had not already received

the divine gift, he asked these twelve, whether they had received the Holy Spirit since they believed? To which they answered, "*We have not so much as heard that the Holy Spirit is poured out, or that any person has been favoured with that extraordinary gift, which the prophets foretold, and John the Baptist frequently intimated, would be granted.*" Ainsworth, on Exod. xxviii. 30. has rightly observed, that by the *Holy Spirit* is here meant the gifts of the Spirit, in prophecy, tongues, &c. as it follows, ver. 6. *The Holy Spirit came on them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied;* which gifts having before ceased, were restored by the gospel: an evident proof that Christ was come. See Joel, ii. 28, &c. Acts, ii. 4. 17, 18.

Ver. 5. *When they heard this, &c.*] I think it evident, beyond all dispute, that the baptism of John and of Christ were in their own nature quite different; and that it is plain in fact, that when persons in general were converted to Christianity, they were baptized of course without inquiring whether they had, or had not, received the baptism of John; which we know vast numbers did, (Math. iii. 5, 6.) who probably afterwards received Christian baptism. (Comp. ch. ii. 38—41. iv. 4. vi. 7.) This is evident also from the words of St. Peter to those thousands that heard him, *Be ye baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost:* for since he spake to the men of Jerusalem in general and of Judæa, Acts, ii. 14. and since Jerusalem and all Judæa were baptized of John, says St. Matthew, ch. iii. 6. all, or at least many of those to whom he spake, must already have been baptized with the baptism of John; and yet he makes it necessary for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Whence two things are perfectly evident, and consequent from each other: 1. That St. Peter exhorts those who had been baptized with John's baptism, to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ: 2. That therefore they who were baptized with John's baptism, were not baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; which is also most evident in the words of St. Paul here. We may add, 3. As our Saviour never said openly and expressly to the Jews in general that *he was the Christ*, so he charges his apostles to tell no man that he was so, till his resurrection: but to what end should he do this, if both the Baptist and his disciples had before baptized all into this faith that *he was the Christ*, and so had published this faith to all Judæa? Only here note, that this is no ground for re-baptizing any now, by reason of the great difference between the baptism of John, and the baptism in the name of Jesus after his resurrection.

Ver. 8, 9. *He—spake boldly for the space of three months,*] Lord Barrington supposes, that after St. Paul had been some

10 Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

13 ¶ Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

^a Ch. 16. 6. ¹ Tim. 1. 15. ¹ Pet. 1. 7. ¹ Rev. 1. 4, 11. ^o Mark. 16. 17, 20. ¹ John. 14. 12. ¹ Heb. 2. 4. ¹ Ch. 5. 12, 15. & 14. 3, 10. & 16. 18. ¹ Kings, 4. 29. ¹ M. t. 12. 27. ¹ Mark. 9. 38. ¹ Luke. 9. 49. ¹ Ch. 8. 18, 19. ¹ Mat. 26. 63. ¹ Mark. 5. 7. ¹ Kings, 22. 16. ¹ Josh. 6. 26. ¹ Sam. 14. 24. ¹ M. t. 8. 29. ¹ Ch. 16. 17. ¹ Pf. 7. 15, 16. & 9. 15, 16. & 140. 8—11. ¹ Ch. 5. 5, 11. & 13. 12. ¹ Pf. 64. 9. & 58. 10. ¹ Luke. 7. 16. ¹ Phil. 2. 9—11. ¹ Heb. 2. 8, 9. ¹ Mat. 3. 6. ¹ Josh. 7. 19. ¹ Jer. 3. 13. & 31. 18. ¹ Ezek. 16. 63. & 36. 31. ¹ 2 Chr. 33. 6. ¹ Mat. 3. 8. ¹ Lf. 30. 22. ¹ 156s, or 6000l. sterling. ¹ Ch. 6. 7. & 12. 24. ¹ Lf. 55. 11. ¹ 1 Thess. 1. 5. ¹ 2 Thess. 3. 1. ¹ Ch. 16. 5.

some time at Ephesus, he visited the neighbouring towns of Asia, and then returned to Ephesus again; and it seems not improbable, that the foundation of some others of the seven churches in Asia, so particularly favoured by the epistles of our Lord, might now be laid. Comp. ver. 10. St. Paul frequented the synagogue of the Jews for three months; but, when several of the leading men among them were hardened beyond all conviction, and not only refused to believe themselves, but even cast wicked and injurious reflections upon the Christian religion before the multitude, and did all that they could to deter others from believing;—the apostle left the synagogue, and taking with him the converts whom through divine grace he had made, he went and taught daily in the school of one Tyrannus, or Turnus; who probably was a converted Jew; and his school, perhaps, what the Jews call *Bethmidrash*, or a divinity school; in which they used to handle intricate questions and difficult doctrines: There St. Paul kept his assembly for two years together; and, according to two ancient manuscripts he taught five hours a day; that is to say, from eleven o'clock in the morning to four in the afternoon. By his indefatigable diligence for so long a time, Christianity spread very much; for all the inhabitants of proconsular Asia, whether Jews or Gentiles, had thereby an opportunity to learn the true Christian doctrine, and to see it confirmed by mighty and convincing attestations. See ver. 11.

Ver. 12. Handkerchiefs or aprons,] The words *Συδάρια ἢ ἀμμισθία*, were originally Latin words,—*Sudaria* and *Semicincthia*. The etymology of the first plainly determines it to signify a piece of linen, with which the sweat was wiped from the face; and as the latter, literally rendered,

signifies things girt half round the waist, it is properly enough rendered *aprons*. Some read it *sashes*. It is justly observed by many writers, that these cures wrought upon absent persons, some of them perhaps at a considerable distance from Ephesus, might, under the blessing of God, conduce greatly to the success of the gospel among those, whose faces St. Paul had never seen.

Ver. 13. Vagabond Jews, exorcists,] Several of the Jews about this time pretended to a power of casting out demons, particularly by some arts and charms pretended to be derived from Solomon. Some of these *strolling* exorcists, observing that St. Paul, by invoking the name of Jesus, did real miracles in the casting out of demons, resolved to attempt the same; the consequence of which was, not only the preventing such impostors from abusing the sacred and venerable name of Jesus in future, but the rendering it more aweful.

Ver. 15. And the evil spirit answered] Not to insist on the demonstration arising from the present history, that this demoniac was not merely a lunatic, we may observe that the evil spirit, under whose operation this man was, seems either to have been compelled by a superior power to bear an unwilling testimony to Jesus, or craftily to have intended it, to bring St. Paul under a suspicion, as acting in confederacy with himself; and if the latter of these was the case, God, as in other instances, over-ruled this artifice of Satan to the destruction of his own cause and kingdom.

Ver. 18—20. And many that believed came, &c.]. Exorcisms and incantations had been very much practised at Ephesus: the Gentiles there imagined that Diana, or the moon, presided over their incantations; but upon the dis-

21 ¶ After these things were ended, Paul purposed² in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to³ go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I^b must also see Rome.

22 So^c he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

23^d And the same time there arose no small

stir about that way.

24 For a certain *man* named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made^{*} silver shrines for Diana, brought no small^e gain unto the craftsmen;

25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know^f that by this craft we have our wealth.

26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone^g at Ephesus, but almost throughout all

² Rom. 1. 13. & 15. 25. Ch. 16. 6, 7, 10. & 20. 22. Pl. 143. 10.

15. 25. Gal. 2. 1.

³ Ch. 16. 9, 10, 3. & 18. 5.

⁴ Rom. 16. 23. 2 Tim. 4. 20.

⁵ Ch. 16. 16. 1 Tim. 6. 5, 10. If. 56. 11. 12.

⁶ Ch. 18. 19—26. & 10. 20. & 12. 2.

⁷ Gal. 4. 8. 1 Thess. 1. 9.

⁸ Ch. 18. 21. & 21. 15. & 20. 22.

⁹ Ch. 23. 11. & 28. 16. Rom. 15. 25. Gal. 2. 1.

¹⁰ Ch. 9. 2. & 11. 50. & 14. 4, 5. & 17. 5. Ver. 9.

¹¹ Ch. 16. 19. Rev. 18. 16, 19. 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. Phil. 2. 21. Ver. 24.

after which befel these exorcists, many of them who had lately embraced the Christian religion came to the apostle, acknowledging that they also had formerly been guilty of *forcery* and *exorcisms*, and confessed that they now looked upon such things as highly criminal. Nay, several of them even brought with them their books, which contained Εφεσια γραμματα, *Ephesian letters*, or the *mysteries and institutions of that magic art*; such as the methods of incantation, the words to be made use of, and the proper seasons and places for making use of them;—and they threw those books into the fire, and *burned them publicly*, in the face of the whole city. The value of them being computed, was found to be *fifty thousand pieces of silver*. By a *piece of silver*, ἀργυριον, is meant a Jewish *shekel*: See Matth. xxvii. 15. xxvii. 3—9. Dr. Arbuthnot says, that a shekel was equal to two shillings, three-pence, and three eighths of a penny, of our money. According to that valuation, *fifty thousand shekels* would amount to 5,703l. 2s. 6d. of our English money; and yet, though the books were valued at that large sum, they now cheerfully burned them. So mighty was the divine evidence of the Christian religion, and so great its effects! as appeared particularly in the disinterested piety of these men; for they would not sell those books to others, because the art was in itself unlawful, and ought not to have been practised by any one: and being enlightened by the knowledge of the gospel, and animated with the prospect of a better and more enduring substance, they made no account of that large sum of money, in comparison of an honourable and faithful discharge of their duty.

Ver. 21. *After these things—Paul purposed, &c.*] It is not certain from the original, whether this relates to a determination to which St. Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit, by whom he was directed in his journeys, or to a purpose which he formed in his own mind: but as we find that he delayed the execution of it, and was led by several circumstances to alter his intended course, and to continue longer in his progress than he first designed, it seems more reasonable to refer it to his own spirit; and therefore Beza and Stephens render the original, “He resolved, or determined in himself.” Many events referred to in the epistles happened during this period. It is probable that Philemon, a convert of St. Paul, and Epa-

phras, afterwards a minister of the church of Colosse, were converted about this time. The apostle was also visited by several Christians, from neighbouring parts, during his abode here; and there is great reason to believe, that he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians from hence, and about this time.

Ver. 22. *Timotheus and Erastus:*] Timothy was a person very proper to be employed on this occasion; not only on account of his excellent character, but also as he had formerly been at Macedonia with Sr. Paul, and had assisted in planting the churches there. *Erastus*, who was joined with him, was chamberlain at Corinth; and they were charged with a commission to promote the collection which St. Paul was making, both in the European and Asiatic churches, for the poor Christians in Judea; which is afterwards so largely urged in the second epistle to the Corinthians, ch. viii. and ix.

Ver. 24. *Demetrius—whom he made silver shrines for Diana.*] These *shrines*, it has been generally supposed, were little *models* of the famous *temple of Diana*, with folding-doors; which being opened, the image of the idol goddess was seen placed therein. The votaries of Diana who came to worship at Ephesus, used to purchase them; and it is not unlikely, that upon their return home, they set them up, and consecrated them in their private or domestic heathen chapels. This opinion is rendered probable by a variety of passages in ancient authors. Beza, however, and others conjecture, that the business of Demetrius might possibly be, making a sort of *coins* or *medals*, on the reverse of which the temple was represented: and in Beza’s Greek Testament, we have a print of one of these medals, in which the image itself is exhibited as seen through the open doors of the temple. It is possible that this company of workmen might take, in those who wrought in all these idolatrous commodities; and likewise those who made a kind of *pageants*, intended for public processions, in which Diana was represented in a kind of moveable chapel, resembling her great temple, in a larger proportion than these supposed *shrines* or *models*.

Ver. 26. *That not alone at Ephesus, &c.*] *That this Paul has persuaded great numbers of people, not only of Ephesus, but of almost all the provinces of Asia, as they have occasionally visited us, and has turned them aside from the established*

Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that ^b they be no gods which are made with hands :

27 So that not only this our craft is in danger, to be set at nought, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and ^c the world worshippeth.

28 And when they heard *these sayings*, ^k they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, ^l Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

29 ^m And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught ⁿ Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the ^o theatre.

30 And when Paul would have entered in ^p unto the people, the disciples suffered him not

31 And certain of the chief of ^q Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring *him* that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

32 ^r Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

33 And they drew ^s Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting ^t him forward. And Alexander ^u beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

34 But when ^v they knew that he was a

^a Pl. 115. 4—8. If. 41. 9—20. Jer. 10. 3—5, 9, 14, 15. Ch. 14. 15. & 17. 21. 1 Cor. 8. 4—6. & 20. 20. & 12. 2. Gal. 4. 8. 1 Theff. 1. 9. ^b Rev. 13. 3. & 17. 2. Mat. 7. 13. 1 John, 5. 19. Ch. 14. 16. ^c Job, 5. 2. Prov. 27. 4. 5. Ch. 7. 54. & 5. 17. & 13. 45, 50. & 14. 2. Pf. 2. 2. ^d Jer. 50. 18. Rev. 13. 4. ^e Ch. 16. 19, 20. & 17. 8. & 27. 27. ^f Ch. 20. 1. & 27. 2. 1 Cor. 1. 14. Rom. 16. 23. Col. 4. 10. Philem. 24. 1 Cor. 1. 14. ^g Places where the people met for public sports, where men were devoured by beasts, &c. 1 Cor. 15. 32. ^h To give account of the Christian faith. Ch. 14. 15—18. & 17. 22—31. 1 Cor. 15. 3. 4. ⁱ See ch. 6. 6. Ver. 10. Rev. 1. 11. 1 Pet. 1. 1. ^j Ver. 30. Ch. 21. 34. ^k 1 Tim. 1. 20. 2 Tim. 4. 14. ^l As their advocate to the people. ^m Ch. 12. 17. & 13. 16. & 21. 40. & 24. 10. ⁿ The heathen mob.

blished religion, saying, that they are not true deities, which are made with hands, nor worthy of being at all worshipped or regarded. The last clause of this verse plainly shews, that the contrary opinion generally prevailed; namely, that there was a kind of divinity in the images of their supposed deities; which Elser fully shews that the heathens did think; though some of them, and particularly Maximus, Tyrias, and Julian, had learned to speak of them just as the Papists do now; who indeed seem to have borrowed some of their apologies from these late heathens.

Ver. 27. *Whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.*] As Diana was known under a great variety of titles and characters, as the goddess of hunting, of traveling, of childbirth, of enchantments, &c. as Luna, Hecate, Lucina, Proserpine, and so on,—she had undoubtedly, in one or other of these views, a vast number of votaries. She was one of the objects of the Eleusinian mysteries, which were resorted to from the remotest regions. The Ephesian Diana was of a singular form, being always represented with several tiers or rows of breasts, intimating her to be the mother of mankind: and in this form it appears from a curious manuscript preserved in the British museum, that she was known even to the Druids.

Ver. 28. *Great is Diana, &c.*] This epithet of great, was frequently given by the heathens to Jupiter, Diana, and others of their superior idol deities: the ascription of it to the true God, is in scripture called *magnifying him*.

Ver. 29. *Aristarchus—of Macedonia,*] Aristarchus was afterwards imprisoned with St. Paul, his friend and companion, at Rome, in the cause of the gospel. See Col. iv. 10. The famous games in honour of Diana were cele-

brated in the theatre here mentioned, which was the usual place of concourse at public times.

Ver. 31. *And certain of the chief of Asia,*] It has been conjectured by many from this and the following passage, that the people at Ephesus were then celebrating the public games in honour of Diana: and as it is not likely that in such a tumultuous hour several of the chief of Asia, as they are here termed, should have sent to him at once with such a message, unless they had been in the theatre together, this opinion seems exceedingly probable; though it is certain that the theatres were places in which the Greeks often met for the dispatch of public business, when there were no shows exhibited. Some would render the original word used here, *ἄρχηγοι*, *Archegoi*, or *primates of Asia*, which appears to be a very just translation: and as they were persons of great dignity, and some of them priests too, this civil message from them was at once a proof of their candour, and of the moderation wherewith St. Paul had behaved, which made them thus kindly solicitous for his safety. Dr. Benson thinks they recollected the danger to which St. Paul had been exposed in a combat with wild beasts in this very theatre; to which some have supposed that the apostle refers, 1 Cor. xv. 32.

Ver. 33, 34. *Alexander, &c.*] Many writers suppose that this was Alexander the copper-smith, who was one of the most violent judaizing Christians, consequently one of the greatest enemies of St. Paul, and most in favour with the unbelieving Jews, of any who professed Christianity; and, if so, no wonder that the Jews should be desirous of his making his oration to the people. But when he himself would have spoken, and beckoned with his hand for silence, the people would not hear him; for they knew that he was of the race of the Jews, and consequently an enemy

1 Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, 2 Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

35 And when the * town clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is † a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which † fell down from Jupiter?

36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to

do nothing rashly.

37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, † the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a § lawful assembly.

* An enemy to idols. Rom. 2. 22.
† Gr. the temple keeper.

* Ver. 28. Jer. 50. 38. If. 57. 5. Rev. 13. 4.
† The priests said, as ch. 15. 5. & 17. 3.

* Or clerk of the public sports, who registered the victories, &c.
† Or the courts days are kept.
§ Or ordinary.

enemy to Diana, and to their idolatry. But though Alexander was hereby prevented from speaking in public, he afterwards did the apostle and the Christian interest a great deal of harm by his private treachery, and opposing the liberty of the Gentile converts; that is, their freedom from the Mosaic law. See 1 Tim. i. 20. 2 Tim. iv. 14.

Ver. 35. The town clerk] The word Γραμματεὺς literally signifies a scribe, or secretary; but as this person appears to have been of some authority as well as learning, the word chancellor, or recorder, seems to be very properly used by several learned translators. Mr. Biscoe endeavours to prove that the office referred not to the city of Ephesus, but to the games; and that the person who bore it, represented Apollo, one of the chief of their deities, and the supposed brother of Diana; which, if it were indeed the case, would give great weight to his interpretation. He appears, by this speech, a person of considerable prudence and abilities; for he urged in a few words that there was no need of a public declaration that they were votaries of Diana, since every body knew it; ver. 35, 36. that the persons accused were not guilty of any breach of the law, or any public offence, ver. 37. that if they were, this was not a legal method of prosecuting them, ver. 38, 39. and that they were themselves liable to prosecution for such a tumultuous proceeding, ver. 40. The word Νεωκόπος, here rendered a worshipper, properly signifies a priest or priestess devoted to some particular idol deity; whose business it was to look after the temple, and see that it was not only kept in good repair, but also neat and clean, and beautified in a proper manner. It appears by ancient inscriptions on marbles and coins, and by other authentic testimonies, that there were some particular persons at Ephesus who bore this office. As for the tradition of this image's falling down from Jupiter, there was the like legend concerning several other images among the heathens; as there is likewise concerning some pictures of the Virgin Mary in popish churches. The reader will find many learned quotations on these images in Biscoe, p. 307.

Ver. 37. Men, which are neither robbers of churches, &c.] It is very ungenerous in Orobio to insinuate from hence, that the fear of suffering kept St. Paul from declaring against the established idolatries here; and it is much more so in Lord Shaftesbury, to represent the apostle and his

companions as acquiescing in this defence of the chancellor, and sheltering themselves under it, though it maintained that they allowed the divinity of Diana and her image. Now not to insist on the remark, that nothing said against gods made with hands could affect an image which was supposed to have fallen down from heaven; nor to urge St. Paul's absence, though that puts him quite out of the question as to any reply to this speech,—it is obvious to answer, that the chancellor's assertion is only this, "That the persons in question had not disturbed the public peace by any riotous attempt to plunder or demolish the temple or altar of Diana, nor did they abuse her by scurrilous language." This was much to their honour: but in how serious, strenuous, and courageous a manner the apostles bore an open, though always peaceable testimony against idolatry, the whole series of their history and writings shews.

Ver. 38. The law is open, &c.] "The courts are held, in which they may have justice done them, if they have a charge of any private injury to offer; and there are the proconsuls, (Celer and Ælius, then joint proconsuls,) if they have any crime relating to the state to allege." The word Ἀγορά originally signifies a congregation or assembly of people, and thence it comes to signify likewise the place of assembly,—the forum, whether understood of a market, or a court of judicature. We may just observe, that the word implead is a forensic term, and alludes to the methods practised in the Grecian courts. After the plaintiff had delivered in the name of the person against whom he brought his action, with an account of his offence,—the magistrate finding it to belong to his cognizance, and worthy of a public trial, the plaintiff was allowed to call upon or summon his adversary to appear in court, to answer the complaint: and this summons is what is alluded to by the word ἐγγυλαίτωσαν, here rendered implead. See ver. 40. in the original.

Ver. 39. But if ye inquire, &c.] "But if the cause be not properly either civil or criminal, and you are inquiring any thing concerning other matters relating to the common utility, or to religion, which may seem of a special nature, you need not doubt but it shall be determined, to the general satisfaction, in a lawful assembly of the Asiatic states; who will inquire into it
" impar-

40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this

concourse.

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

* Prov. 15. 1, 2. & 25. 15. Eccl. 9. 17. Judges, 8. 1, 2.

* Pl. 65. 7. & 34. 19. Gen. 22. 14. Deut. 32. 36.

“impartially, and with a diligence proportionable to its importance.”

Ver. 40. For Καὶ γὰρ, And indeed. Raphelius has shewn that the word γὰρ, often signifies *indeed*. Some render it, *for we are in danger of being indicted* [ἐγκαλεῖσθαι] *for a riot on account of this day*. There was a Roman law, which made it capital to raise a riot. Fire, inundations, the sudden invasion of enemies, &c. might have excused and justified a sudden concourse of people rushing together with some violence; but the chancellor, with great propriety, observes, there was no such cause here, nor any other adequate one to be assigned. Dr. Heylin renders the last clause, *there being no justifiable occasion for such a commotion*.

Inferences.—How highly does it behove every Christian to propose to himself the inquiry of St. Paul, *Have I received the Holy Ghost since I believed?* Is my faith a principle working by love? Have I had that seal of the truth of Christ's doctrine in myself?—We are not now to expect any of those extraordinary gifts which at first gave sanction to the apostolic ministry. The canon of the New Testament has been long since completed and ratified; and we are now to depend upon that, as the most sure word of prophecy.

But yet there are *graces* of the spirit given to all believers, as earnestly to them of their real reception of that Spirit. The Holy Ghost is promised to all believers,—to all petitioners: (Luke, xi. 13.) But how many deceive themselves in this matter, who think they have received him, when really they have not! As there are pretenders to the gifts of the divine Spirit, so are there likewise to his *graces* and his *comforts*: and hence we see the necessity strictly to examine ourselves by the apostle's inquiry: *the tree will be known by its fruits*.—Do we bring forth *the fruits of the Spirit*? Are we led by it?—Do we walk in its light?—Do we live under its government?—How simple, yet how unspeakably important is this inquiry! conscience here may serve for a thousand witnesses.

What could be more reasonable than St. Paul's application to those converts? *We have not so much as heard, say they, whether there be any Holy Ghost*. We may take up his words to every nominal disciple of our Lord, and say, *Unto what then were ye baptized?*—ignorance of the Holy Ghost being as inconsistent with a sincere profession of Christianity, as ignorance of Christ is. It is an inquiry we should often make, not only to whose honour we were created, but to whose service we were from infancy consecrated; that so we may study to answer the ends of our creation, redemption, and baptism. How shall they ever hope to live up to a vow, who neither consider its tenor, nor regard its solemn obligations!

Wonderful was the change wrought on a sudden in these sincere disciples, when baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,

having the *spirit of prophecy* communicated, that they might understand those mysteries of the kingdom of God, which by the *gift of tongues* they were enabled to preach to every nation, in every language; and hence, *they* that but just now had not even heard of an *Holy Ghost*, are now filled with its sacred influences, and *prophecy* its blessed effects.

In order to the continued production of these effects, may those among us who rest indifferent to its sacred operations, be animated by the same divine principle, and made obedient to its motions! But it especially concerns those to whom the *mysteries* of the gospel are committed, to declare them boldly, with St. Paul, whoever may be hardened, whoever may oppose, or how evil soever some, who boast of their knowledge of God, *may speak of this way to life eternal*.

How glorious a character does the great apostle exhibit, every where advancing the kingdom of Christ, and subduing that of the prince of darkness! We cannot expect that the miracles of his days should be renewed in ours; but we may humbly hope, that the noblest effects of his preaching will be renewed; we may still hope that dead souls will be quickened, the languishing revived, and the minds of men rescued from the dominion of their *spiritual adversary*;—those minds, where his possession is so infinitely more fatal and dangerous, than that which the body ever experienced of old.

The case of the *Jewish exorcists*, and their harsh treatment from the man who was possessed by the evil spirit, tended to convince the Jews and all the world, that none but the apostles, and such as believed in Christ, were really able to work miracles, or had power over unclean spirits. These sons of Sceva had said, *We adjure you by Jesus*,—not “whom we believe in,” or depend upon; but—*whom Paul preacheth*: the event shews, that *God is not mocked*. The name of Jesus is powerful so far only as it is accompanied with his virtue and his spirit. It is true religion in his servants, to put their confidence in his name; and to avail themselves of it against his enemies; but it is an abuse and a blasphemy, it is irreligion and an usurpation, for those to pretend to assume or apply it, who are not sincerely devoted to his service. The narrative before us is a striking caution to all those who name the name of Christ, while they do not depart from iniquity. If we resist the devil by a true and lively faith in Christ, he will flee from us; but if we think to subdue him by the bare using of Christ's name, or by a mere profession of his faith; no wonder if he prevail against us, and we come off naked and wounded both in body and soul; no wonder if such a conduct prove the means of irritating rather than of curing those disorders, which the influence of Satan has introduced, but which the Spirit of Christ alone can effectually remove.

We find, as one happy effect of the apostle's preaching, that those who employed wicked books in the research of curious and impertinent arts, burned them. It was the natural

CHAP. XX.

Paul goeth to Macedonia: he celebrateth the Lord's supper, and preacheth. Eutychus, being killed by a fall, is raised to life. At Miletus he calleth the elders together, telleth them what shall befall to himself, committeth God's flock to them, warneth them of false teachers, commendeth them to God, prayeth with them, and goeth his way.

[Anno Domini 60.]

AND ^a after the uproar was ceased, ^b Paul called unto *him* the disciples, and em-

^a Ch. 19. 23—41. ^b Ch. 21. 6. Ver. 37. Rom. 16. 16. 1 Cor. 16. 20. 2 Cor. 13. 12. 1 Thess. 5. 26. ^c 2 Cor. 7. 5. 1 Tim. 1. 3. 1 Cor. 16. 5. ^d Ch. 14. 22. & 15. 41. & 16. 5. Col. 1. 28. ^e To rob him of the money he carried up to Jerusalem, or to kill him. 2 Cor. 7. 5. Rom. 15. 26. Ch. 9. 23. & 26. 21.

braced *them*, and ^c departed for to go into Macedonia.

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and ^d had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

3 And *there* abode three months. And when the Jews ^e laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

4 And there accompanied him into Asia

natural consequence of true *contrition*. They thus shewed a holy indignation at the sins they had been guilty of; just as the idolaters of old, when brought to repentance, *said to their idols, Get ye hence*; and they *cast even those of silver and gold to the moles and to the bats*. *Isai. xxx. 22. ii. 20.* And thus also they took a pious revenge on those things which had been to them the instruments of sin, and proclaimed the force of their convictions how evil it appeared in their esteem. Those that truly repent of sin, like these Ephesians, will, like them, keep as far as possible from the occasions of it; and those who are recovered from sin themselves, will do all they can to keep others from falling into it, and be especially afraid and averse to lay the least occasion of sin in their way.

Of all such occasions, perhaps, there are few or none so dangerous and so destructive as trifling, indecent, or impious books. It is the good effect of a sincere *faith* in Christ, to render all such books as detestable, as they might once be enticing; and they who are truly impressed by a sense of his character, will, like the Ephesians before us, *commit to the flames every such vile incentive to sin*.

Nothing acts with greater force upon the minds of carnal men than the love of money; nothing raises their passions so high, as the hazard of its loss. We see it in the case of Demetrius and his fellows. God grant that the zeal of the *Heathens* in the worship of their imaginary deities, may not rise up in judgment against us for the neglect of the *living Jehovah!* They rent the skies with acclamations of the *greatness* of their goddess, and spared no cost to adorn her temple, and to purchase the *models* of it. May a sense of the *greatness* of our God, who *dwelleth not in temples made with hands*, fill our minds continually, and make us ready to *spend and be spent* in his service!

In too many instances, indeed, religion has degenerated into *craft*, and been made the pretence of promoting men's secular interests: how greatly were it to be wished, that all artifices of this kind were to be found among *Pagans* only:—but the spirit of these votaries to Diana has, alas! too often invaded the Christian church; and, where open violence has failed, secret dissimulation has sometimes but too well succeeded.

We may clearly observe from this whole relation, that as the devil supports his empire only by soothing the passions of men, and especially the desire of earthly wealth,

so Christ Jesus establishes his, only by correcting those passions, and particularly the love of perishable treasures.

The prudence of the Ephesian chancellor, in finding a way to *quiet this uproar*, is worthy of esteem and imitation. Good sense, and mere human probity, teach us never to favour or support calumnious accusations against any man, under any pretence whatsoever. Happy had it been for this judicious *officer*, if the understanding that he shewed on this occasion, had led him to see the vanity of those *idle traditions*,—that an *image fell down* from their imaginary *Jupiter*, or that *they could be gods which were made with hands*. But *the world by wisdom knew not the true God*: the god of this world has in all ages blinded the minds of multitudes, who have acted like *idiots* in religion, while in other instances their *sagacity* has commanded and deserved universal approbation. Of this we cannot have a clearer or more melancholy demonstration, than the prevalence of idolatry through so many nations, ancient and modern, as well those who were polished and learned, as those who were savage and ignorant.

This *great tumult* was at last appeased, though with difficulty, by the chancellor, and St. Paul by this means rescued from the danger that threatened him. We hence learn, how the overruling providence of God preserves the public peace by an unaccountable power over the spirits of men; while thus the jarring world is kept in some order, and men are restrained from being like the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the less. We see how very dangerous are tumults and seditions, notwithstanding the utmost care and vigilance to quell them; and therefore as men, as citizens, as Christians, we ought to avoid every thing that tends to excite them, and to use every means possible to calm and suppress their fury, when excited. And, to conclude, we see how many ways the Almighty has of protecting his faithful people: very probably this chancellor was no friend at all to the apostle, or to the doctrines that he preached: and yet his *human prudence* is made to serve the *divine purpose*. *Many are the troubles of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Whilst Apollos was at Corinth, labouring in the vineyard which St. Paul had planted, the great apostle was travelling through Phrygia and Galatia toward Ephesus, where he arrived.

' Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Derbe, and ^h Timotheus; and of Asia, ⁱ Ty-
Aristarchus and Secundus; and ^e Gaius of chicus ^k and Trophimus.

^f Ch. 17. 10. & 19. 29. & 27. 2. Col. 4. 10. Phil. 24. ^g Not ch. 19. 29. but 1 Cor. 1. 14. Rom. 16. 23, 7. ³ John, i. ^h Ch. 16. 1
¹ Tim. 1. 2. ² Tim. 1. 2. Heb. 13. 23. ^l Eph. 6. 21. Col. 4. 7. ² Tim. 4. 12. Titus, 3. 12. ^k 2 Tim. 4. 20. Ch. 21. 29.

1. He found there certain disciples, who had been baptized either by John or some of his followers, and had been instructed in a very imperfect manner concerning Christ. St. Paul therefore inquired of them, as they made profession of their faith, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost, in his miraculous gifts, since ye believed?* They own they had not, nor had even heard that any such were bestowed by him. *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.* They knew there would be an abundant effusion of his mighty influences, according to the promise in the days of the Messiah; but as yet they had received no intelligence that any such extraordinary gifts had been bestowed. The apostle with some surprize then asked them, *Unto what then were ye baptized?* on what account, in whose name, or to the profession of what doctrine? *They said, Unto John's baptism, in the faith of the Messiah, who was quickly to be revealed.* Note; (1.) Though we may not look for the miraculous powers, we may, we must, be partakers of the mighty influences of the Spirit in our hearts, if we be genuine Christians. If we make profession of our faith, we should therefore seriously inquire into its reality, and whether the Holy Ghost witnesses to his own work in our souls. (2.) They who are baptized, and have received the outward and visible sign, should often examine themselves whether they possess the inward and spiritual grace; else the washing of water will be a merely unprofitable ceremony.

2. St. Paul hereupon set himself to explain the true intent of John's baptism. *John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, engaging and encouraging men to turn to God from the views of the riches of his grace, shortly about to be displayed in the kingdom of the Messiah, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus, as the only Saviour from guilt and misery.* And when they heard this, their hearts were so impressed with what he said, that they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, devoted to the service of the Messiah, who was now come; who had accomplished the great work of atonement, and was exalted to the right hand of God; and had already poured out his Spirit in a miraculous manner upon his disciples:

3. When the apostle had informed them of the grand intention of John's baptism, and they had gladly received Christian baptism, he laid his hands upon them, and the Holy Ghost came on them, enduing them with miraculous gifts, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied, as the disciples did at the first effusion of the Spirit. They were twelve in number, and probably designed for the ministry of the word, for which they were hereby eminently qualified.

2dly, Paul having thus opened his ministry, and produced such authentic evidences of his mission, we
1. Find him, according to his custom, in the synagogue of the Jews, where, during three months, he continued speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, preaching his gospel, and disputing and persuading the things concern-

ing the kingdom of God; reasoning with them on the subject, endeavouring to rectify their mistaken notions, answering their objections, earnestly and affectionately urging them to accept the proffered grace of the Redeemer, and commence subjects of that happy kingdom which the adored Messiah was come to erect here below, that they might be admitted hereafter to partake of his glory in a better world.

2. When, after so long a season, the generality seemed but more riveted in their pride and prejudices, and hardened in their sins, not only obstinately rejecting the gospel themselves, but seeking to prejudice others against it, speaking evil of that way before the multitude, he then departed from them, abandoning them to their determined infidelity; and separated the disciples from such incorrigible blasphemers, erecting them into a Christian society, and laying the foundation of the Ephesian church afterwards so renowned; disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus, whither all, both Gentiles and Jews, might resort to him, and hear the gospel which he preached, defended by the most convincing arguments. Two years he continued there his daily labours, so that all they who dwell in Asia, who resorted on various accounts to this famed city, first or last heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks, either from St. Paul himself, or from those who spread the report of his preaching on their return into the country; as perhaps some of his assistants made excursions into parts adjacent, and helped to spread abroad the glad tidings.

3. In confirmation of the doctrine which St. Paul preached, and to give greater weight to his discourses, God wrought special miracles by his hands, such as were not only out of the common course of nature, but which none of the other apostles had wrought; so that even handkerchiefs or aprons, either such as he wore at his trade, or which were sent to him, were brought from his body unto the sick; and with such miraculous efficacy were they as it were impregnated by his touch, that the diseases were instantly cured, and the devils dispossessed:—an emblem of the greater cures which the gospel that he preached was designed to work, even to deliver the souls of sinners from their more fatal spiritual maladies, and to rescue them from the bondage of sin and Satan.

3dly, We have,

1. The profane attempt of certain vagabond Jews, exorcists, who pretended by charms to cure diseases and tell fortunes. Observing the admiration in which the apostle was held through the astonishing miracles that he performed, they undertook to do the same, and to cast out devils as well as he; supposing that the name of Jesus, invoked and pronounced by way of charm, would enable them to perform the same cures. *And there were seven sons of one Sceva a Jew, and chief of the priests, who was probably at the head of one of the twenty-four courses, which did so, leading this strolling life, and pretending to perform these feats of conjuration.* Accordingly, having a patient brought to them, possessed

5 These going before tarried for us at
Troas.

6 And we sailed away from Philippi after
the days of unleavened bread, and came unto

¹ Ch. 16. 8. ² Cor. 2. 12. ³ Tim. 4. 13.

^m Ch. 16. 12. Phil. 1. 1.

ⁿ Exod. 12. 18, 19. & 13. 6, 7. & 34. 18.

possessed of a devil, they began their exorcisms over him, saying, *We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth, solemnly commanding you, by that name which Paul proclaims, to depart immediately.*

2. Far different was the effect of their adjuration from their expectations. Instead of obeying their commands, the evil spirit, using the man's organs of speech, insultingly replied, in contempt of their word, *Jesus I know, and Paul I know: too well he knew the divine power of the one, and the authority with which the other was invested; but who are ye? a vagabond crew, without power or authority; and the man, in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them with fury and rage, and overcame them, and, in spite of all their efforts, prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded, their clothes torn from their backs, and they heartily beaten, bruised, and bloody, the just derision of the spectators.* And, as this was transacted publicly, it was known to all the Jews and Greeks dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, dreading the power of these infernal spirits, nor daring any more to mock God by such incantations, lest he should let loose these furies upon them; and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, it evidently appearing that he alone could dispossess these fiends of darkness; and therefore he was regarded with the highest honour, and his name mentioned with reverence.

3. Seeing these exorcists thus shamefully defeated, many who had before used the like magic arts and charms, but now by the grace of God were brought to faith in the Lord Jesus, came and confessed and shewed their deeds, with shame and confusion of face before God and man; and brought their books together, out of which they had learned their spells and methods of divination, fortune-telling, casting of nativities, interpreting dreams, discovering lost goods, laying spirits, and the like diabolical arts, and burned them before all men, in detestation of such wickedness, and to prevent their falling into the hands of others: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver; for scarce and curious were these manuscripts: so mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed. Note; (1.) They who are brought to the faith of the gospel, will be instantly led to sacrifice their dearest and most beloved iniquities, and feel a holy indignation at the remembrance of them. (2.) They who know the evil of sin, will be careful to remove every temptation thereunto out of their own and others' way. (3.) True converts desire to take shame before all men, and to give to the Lord Jesus the glory due unto his name in the most substantial proofs of their real conversion to him.

4thly, Just as St. Paul thought of departing from Ephesus, an unexpected storm arose.

1. After a stay of about three years at Ephesus from his first coming thither, he resolved to visit the churches that he had planted in Macedonia and Achaia, purposing thence to go to Jerusalem; and, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, he determined afterwards to see Rome also, the seat of empire, and there preach the glorious gospel of

Christ. He sent therefore Timotheus and Erastus into Macedonia, to give the churches notice of his intentions, and prepare their collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem; while he himself stayed a while in Asia, carrying on the blessed work which was there begun.

2. During his stay, there arose no small stir about that way, the way of Christ which St. Paul preached; the occasion and consequences of which are related.

[1.] The ringleader, who stirred up the tumult, was one Demetrius, a silversmith, whose most gainful branch of business lay in making silver models of the temple of Diana, with her image in miniature within, which the superstitious worshippers used to carry home with them for the gratifying of the curiosity of their neighbours, or for the purposes of devotion. This man, calling his fellow-craftsmen together, harangued them on the danger in which their trade stood, whence all their wealth arose; and this through the preaching of Paul, who, instead of paying the least regard to their shrines, or the great Diana and her temples, persuaded and turned away the people, almost throughout all Asia, from the worship of their goddesses, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands, despising the images and deities to whom their ancestors had ever paid such veneration; and, in consequence thereof, not only their craft was in danger, and that was a point which he knew lay near their hearts; but he pretends a higher motive for his present application to them, even his zeal for the great goddess Diana, the object of their own and of universal adoration, who was now likely to grow into contempt, and her magnificent temple to be abandoned, if this new religion should be suffered to gain ground; and therefore it was high time for them to bestir themselves, and oppose the growing evil. Note; (1.) Pomp and numbers are still on the side of idol worship in the papal church, falsely called Christian. (2.) They who make gain of their religion, and follow it as their craft, evidently shew to whom they pay their adorations—not to God, but Mammon.

[2.] This harangue had its desired effect. The craftsmen, inflamed to fury with the apprehension that both their gain and their goddess were in danger, with wild uproar filled the streets, shouting, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians.* The mob readily joined them, and the whole city became a scene of tumult and confusion.

[3.] Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, St. Paul's companions, falling in their way, they seized them, and hurried them to the theatre, where the public games were celebrated, and criminals thrown to wild beasts, and compelled to fight them; intending probably thus to dispatch these fellow-labourers of the apostle. St. Paul, nobly prodigal of life in defence of the gospel and of his suffering friends, would fain have entered in unto the people, and have attempted to reason with them on their wickedness: but the disciples, justly apprehensive of the imminent danger to which he would be exposed, earnestly dissuaded him, and insisted upon his not going: which was also further enforced

them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

* John, 20. 1, 19, 26. 1 Cor. 16. 2. Rev. 1. 10.

7 ¶ And upon the * first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together ^P to break

^P Ch. 2. 42, 46. 1 Cor. 10. 16. & 11. 23—28.

forced by a message from *certain of the chief of Asia*, who, probably, presided over the public games, and had the direction of the theatre; *which were his friends*, and consulted his safety, and therefore desired that he would not adventure himself into the theatre, where all their influence and authority might be unable to restrain an enraged populace from some fatal acts of violence. *Note*; The lives of great and good men are precious: and therefore, though they are prodigal of them, and willing to spend and be spent in the service of Christ, their friends should be more careful of them, than they are of themselves.

[4.] The mob, now prodigiously increased, roared out, *some one thing, some another*; for the assembly was confused, and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together: and some of them drew Alexander out of the multitude, to call him to an account, the Jews putting him forward; either helping to expose him to the rage of the people, being equally enemies to the Christian name; or, if he was one of their body or friends, encouraging him to declaim against St. Paul, and excuse them, who were alike hated on account of their known aversion to idolatry. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, desiring silence, and would have made his defence unto the people; either for himself and the Christians; if he was of their number; or, more likely, he intended to throw the odium upon the apostle, and exculpate his countrymen. (See the Annotations.) But no sooner was it known that he was a Jew, the professed enemy of idol-worship, than they stopped their ears, and would not hear a word; but all with one voice about the space of two hours, continued crying out and shouting, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians!* as if their noise and riot proved the truth of her deity. Thus often is the cause of God and truth run down by those who madly refuse to hear the voice of reason.

[5.] The town-clerk, or rather the chief magistrate, who perhaps presided over the public games, with difficulty at last silenced the uproar, and remonstrated against the tumult, saying, *Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, devoted to her service, and by their charter engaged to take care of her temple and worship; and of the image which fell down from Jupiter, which therefore is not of the gods made with men's hands, against which Paul declaims. Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, being universally received among us as certain, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly, against the persons whom you have seized. For ye have brought hither these men as criminals, which are neither proved to be robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess, treating her with no opprobrious language, nor guilty of any sacrilege. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, who have fomented this riot, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies, where justice will readily be done them; let them implead one another, and submit to the decision of the proper judges. But if ye inquire any*

thing concerning other matters, of more general concern, relative to the state or religion, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly, convoked for that purpose. For, so far from deciding at present upon the merits of the cause, we are in danger of being called in question for this day's uproar, if complaint be carried to the emperor against us; there being no just cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse, if we should be summoned before our superiors.

[6.] And when he had thus spoken to sooth and quiet the inflamed multitude, he dismissed the assembly, enjoining them to retire peaceably to their own homes. *Note*; (1.) God has a variety of ways to rescue his people out of their troubles, and can raise them up friends from quarters where they least expected them. (2.) It is a constant and universal rule to do nothing rashly. (3.) The terror of the law is usually a greater restraint than the fear of God. Happy were it for us, if we remembered, whenever inordinate passion begins to swell in our bosom, that we are liable to be called in question for the uproar, and should therefore check the rising storm.

CHAP. XX.

Ver. 3. And there abode three months.] It seems that St. Paul met with sacred business here and in other places, which detained him longer than he expected.

Ver. 4. There accompanied him—Sopater, &c.] The several persons mentioned in this verse are thought by some to have been joined with St. Paul, as messengers of the churches, in carrying their contributions to the poor brethren at Jerusalem. Compare 1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4. and 2 Cor. viii. 19—23. We know but few particulars of most of them. Sopater, who in most ancient manuscripts is called the son of Pyrrhus, is generally thought to be the same with Sospater, whom St. Paul has mentioned as his kinsman, Rom. xvi. 21. Aristarchus of Thessalonica is mentioned before as a Macedonian, ch. xix. 29. He attended St. Paul in his voyage to Rome, ch. xxvii. 2. and was his fellow-labourer, Philem. ver. 24. and a fellow-prisoner with him, Col. iv. 10, 11. Secundus is not mentioned any where but here. Gaius of Derbé (if he be not a different person of the same name,) is elsewhere mentioned as a man of Macedonia, ch. xix. 29. of which, as some suppose, he was a native; but descended of a family that came from Derbé: he was baptized by St. Paul at Corinth, 1 Cor. i. 14. and entertained him as his host while he abode there, Rom. xvi. 23. and afterwards St. John directs his third Epistle to him. Timothy was a native of Lystra, ch. xvi. 1. whom St. Paul particularly honoured with the appellation of his friend, and distinguished by his two epistles to him, as well as by joining his name with his own in the title of several other epistles. Tychicus of Asia was often employed on messages by St. Paul, and is more than once recommended by him to the churches, as a beloved brother, a faithful minister and fellow-servant in the

bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and ^a continued his speech until midnight.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing *him* said, "Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

11 When he therefore was come up again,

and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

13 ¶ And we went before to ship, and sailed unto * Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.

^a 2 Tim. 4. 2. Ver. 31. 1 Cor. 15. 10. ^f Luke, 22. 12. Ch. 2. 13. & 9. 39. ^g Mat. 26. 40, 41. Jonah, 1. 5. ^h 1 Kings, 17. 21. 2 Kings, 4. 32. ⁱ Mat. 9. 24. John, 11. 11, 44. Ch. 8. 40, 41. ^k Assos, Trogyllium, and Miletus, were cities of Lesser Asia, on the east shore of the Mediterranean sea. Mitylene was a city of the isle of Lesbos. Lesbos, Chios, and Samos, were noted islands near the shore.

Lord; whom he employed not only to acquaint them with his own affairs, but for this purpose also, that he might know their state and comfort their hearts, Ephes. vi. 21, 22. Col. iv. 7, 8. Trophimus of Ephesus appears to have been a Gentile convert, whom we find afterwards with St. Paul at Jerusalem, ch. xxi. 29. and who attended him in other journeys, till he left him at Miletum sick, 2 Tim. iv. 20. These two last are said to be Asiatics; and being distinguished here from Gaius and Timothy, who were of Derbé and Lystra, which lay in Asia Minor, it is plain that they are so called as being natives of the proconsular Asia.

Ver. 6. Where we abode seven days.] St. Paul might choose to do this so much the rather, as he had declined such great views of service as were open to him when he passed through it before, in his way to Macedonia, 2 Cor. ii. 12, 13. Perhaps he might now lodge at the house of Carpus; but it seems to have been on a later journey, that he left there the books and other things to which he refers, 2 Tim. iv. 13. It plainly appears, from the manner in which St. Luke speaks here, and all along afterwards, that he attended St. Paul in all this journey and voyage; though, by his altering the expression, he does not seem to have been with him since he was at Philippi, in his former progress. See ch. xvi. 10, 12.

Ver. 7. The disciples came together to break bread,] That is, to celebrate the eucharist. It is strange, that Barclay, in his Apology, (prop. xiii. sect. 8.) should argue from ver. 11. that this was only a common meal, and not the Lord's supper. It is well known, that the primitive Christians administered the eucharist every Lord's day; and as that was the most solemn and appropriate as well as the concluding act of their worship, there is no wonder that it should be mentioned as the end of their assembly: whereas had nothing more than a common meal been intended, St. Luke would hardly have thought that worth mentioning; especially when, St. Paul being with them on a Lord's day, they would naturally have something far nobler and more

important in view: in which accordingly we find them employed; and it is quite unreasonable to suppose that they spent their time in feasting, which neither the occasion nor the hour would well admit. The argument which some over-zealous Papists have drawn from this text, for denying the cup in the sacrament to the laity, was so solemnly given up in the council of Trent, that it is astonishing any who profess to believe the divine authority of that council, should ever have presumed to plead it again. See Father Paul's History, b. iii. p. 486.

Ver. 9. In a window] The word *Sups*, plainly signifies an open window, with a sort of wooden casement, a little door, which was set open that the room might not be overheated with so much company and so many lamps. It is well known, that the ancients had not yet glass in their windows; nor indeed are the windows glazed at this day in the east and many parts of Europe.

Ver. 10. And Paul—fell on him,] This expression probably signifies that St. Paul threw himself on the body, as Elijah and Elisha did on those whom they intended to raise by the power of God, 1 Kings, xvii. 21. 2 Kings, iv. 34. The word *Συμπεριλαβων*, may either signify his embracing him at the same time, or his lifting him up in his arms with the assistance of some who stood near.

Ver. 13—15. Assos, &c.] Assos was a principal town on the sea-coast of Asia, in Mysia. Mitylene, (ver. 14.) was a celebrated sea-port in the island of Lesbos. Chios, (ver. 15.) was an island between Lesbos and Samos, famous for producing some of the finest Grecian wines. Samos was a celebrated island of the Archipelago, upon the coast of Asia Minor. Trogyllium was a promontory of Ionia, not far from Samos. Miletus was a town on the continent of Asia Minor, and in the province of Caria; memorable for being the birth-place of Thales, one of the seven wise men, and founder of the Ionic sect of philosophy: at present the place is called by the Turks *Meias*. Not far distant from it is the famous river Meander, which,

16 For Paul had determined to ^s sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the ^v day of Pentecost.

17 ¶ And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the ^z elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, ^a Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19 ^b Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which beset me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 And ^c how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and

have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

21 ^d Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And now, behold, ^e I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 ^f Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions ^g abide me.

24 ^h But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that ⁱ I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which ^j I have received of the Lord Jesus, ^k to testify the ^l gospel of the grace of God.

^s Ch. 18. 21. & 21. 4, 12. & 19. 21. ^v Ch. 2. 2. Lev. 23. 15—21. Numb. 28. 26—31. Exod. 23. 16, 17. & 34. 22, 23. with ch. 24. 17.
^a Or Presbyters. Ver. 28. 1 Tim. 4. 14. & 5. 17. 1 Peter, 5. 1. 3 John, 1. James, 5. 14. ^b 1 Theff. 2. 1—10. & 1. 5, 9. 2 Tim. 4. 2. Ch. 19. 1—20. & 18. 19. ^c 1 Cor. 2. 3. & 15. 9. 2 Cor. 3. 5. Phil. 3. 18. 1 Cor. 4. 9—13. 2 Cor. 4. 7—11. & 6. 4—10. & 11. 23—29. & 7. 5. James, 1. 2. ^d Ver. 27, 31. Ch. 18. 28. & 2. 46. & 5. 42. Col. 1. 28. ^e Ver. 24. Mark, 1. 15. Luke, 24. 47. Ch. 26. 18. John, 14. 6. ^f 17. 3. & 20. 31. & 3. 15, 16, 18. ^g Ch. 18. 21. & 19. 21. ^h Ch. 9. 16. & 21. 4, 11. & 14. 22. John, 16. 33. 2 Tim. 3. 11. 1 Theff. 3. 3. ⁱ Or wait for me. ^j Ch. 21. 13. Rom. 8. 36. 1 Cor. 15. 31. 2 Cor. 1. 8. & 4. 8, 16. & 6. 4, 9. & 7. 4. & 12. 10. Gal. 6. 14. Eph. 3. 13. & 6. 20. Phil. 1. 12. & 4. 12. Col. 1. 24. 1 Theff. 2. 2. & 3. 3. 2 Tim. 2. 9. & 3. 11. & 4. 7, 16. Heb. 10. 34. & 12. 1. ^k John, 17. 4. ^l 1 Cor. 9. 24. 2 Tim. 4. 7. Col. 4. 17. ^m Gal. 1. 1. Titus, 1. 3. Ch. 9. 15. & 22. 21. & 26. 17, 18. & 13. 1—4. ⁿ Ver. 21. John, 15. 27. Ch. 1. 8. Heb. 2. 3, 4. ^o Ch. 14. 3. Titus, 2. 11, 12. Luke, 2. 10, 11. Rom. 5. 20, 21.

which, though it encircles the plains it runs through with innumerable mazes and windings, yet in some places rolls with a very rapid and impetuous current. St. Paul put into the mouth of this river in his course toward Miletus.

Ver. 16. *If it were possible—to be at Jerusalem*] This was, that he might have an opportunity of meeting a greater number of people from Judea and other parts, the days being then longer than at any other feast. In consequence of this, some journeys might perhaps be saved, and many prejudices against St. Paul's person and ministry obviated; and, which was particularly considerable, the readiest and best opportunity taken of distributing to those Jewish Christians who lived perhaps at some distance from Jerusalem, part of the alms with which he was charged. Yet, by a mysterious providence, this very circumstance of meeting so many strangers at the feast, was the occasion of his imprisonment. See ch. xxi. 27, &c. and the note on ch. xviii. 21.

Ver. 21. *Testifying both to the Jews, &c.*] The word rendered *testifying* sometimes means to prove a thing by testimony (ch. ii. 40. viii. 25.); and sometimes, from a conviction of its truth and importance, to urge it with great earnestness; 1 Tim. v. 21. 2 Tim. ii. 14. It is plain that we are to take it in the latter sense in this place, but both are included, ver. 24. *Repentance toward God*, implies our turning to him in sorrow and contrition, as he is infinitely offended by sin; and *faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ* signifies the making Christ the grand object of our faith and confidence for the pardon of our sins, the sanctification of our souls—in short, as the meritorious cause

of every blessing that we can possibly receive for time and eternity.

Ver. 22. *I go bound in the Spirit*] “Under the strong impulse of the Spirit of God upon my mind; intimating my duty to me in such a manner, that I can neither omit nor delay it, but am firmly resolved to proceed to Jerusalem.”

Ver. 24. *But none of these things move me*] *But I make no account of any of these things.* It adds great beauty to this and all the other passages of scripture, in which the apostles express their contempt of the world, that they were not uttered by persons, like Seneca and Antoninus, in the full affluence of its enjoyments; but by men under the pressure of the greatest calamities, who were every day exposing their lives for the sake of God, and in the expectation of a happy immortality. To what has been observed respecting the word *testify*, on ver. 21. we add, that in heathen writers it is used in a forensic sense, for contesting by law, and pleading in a cause; and hence it signifies, *earnestly to contend*, or to persuade by arguments and threatenings. In the LXX in signifies to *protest*, to *convince*, to *press earnestly*, to *persuade*. It is most frequently used by St. Luke in a very intense signification, and is sometimes joined with *exhorting* or *earnestly persuading* to a thing, as in ch. xviii. 5. where being *pressed in the spirit*, signifies intension and vehemency in testifying to them;—that he did vehemently endeavour to convince them; and it seems to be equivalent to the expression, ver. 28. where it is said, *Apollo did mightily convince them.* St. Paul uses this word in a most vehement sense, 1 Tim. v. 21. The

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the^m kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26^a Wherefore I take you to record this day that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*.

27^o For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

28^p Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which^q he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my depart-

ing shall grievous^r wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30^s Also of your ownelves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

31^t Therefore watch, and remember, that^u by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

32 And now, brethren,^x I commend you to God, and to^y the word of his grace,^z which is able to build you up, and to^a give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

33^b I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

^m Ver. 24. Mark, 1. 1, 14, 15. Ch. 28, 23. Mat. 13. 19, 52. ⁿ Ch. 18. 6. 1 Theff. 2. 10—12. Ezek. 3. 18—21. & 33. 4—9. ^o Ver. 20. Luke, 7. 30. 1 Cor. 11. 23. 1f. 8. 20. Ezek. 3. 17. Mat. 28. 20. John, 15. 15. Ch. 26. 22, 23. ^p 1 Cor. 9. 27. 1 Tim. 4. 16. Heb. 13. 17. John, 21. 15—17. Ch. 13. 2. & 14. 23. Phil. 1. 1. 1 Pet. 5. 2, 3. ^q 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. Rev. 5. 9. Heb. 9. 12, 14. Eph. 1. 7. Col. 1. 14. 1f. 53. 10—12. ^r Ver. 30. Mat. 7. 15. 2 Pet. 1. 1. ^s Mat. 26. 21. 1 John, 2. 19. Rev. 2. 6. Ch. 1. 17. 1 Tim. 1. 20. ^t 1 Pet. 5. 8. Mark, 14. 38. Rev. 16. 15. & 2. 5. Heb. 13. 17. ^u Ch. 19. 10. & 26. 7. 1 Theff. 2. 9, 10. 1 Theff. 3. 8. 2 Tim. 1. 3. Col. 1. 28. ^v Ch. 14. 23, 26. & 15. 40. Jer. 49. 11. ^w Ver. 24. Luke, 2. 10, 11. ^x John, 15. 3. & 17. 17. Ch. 9. 31. Col. 2. 2. Jude, 20, 21. Heb. 13. 9. & 6. 12, 14. ^y Jer. 3. 19. Ch. 26. 18. Eph. 1. 18. ^z Numb. 16. 2, 15. 1 Sam. 12. 3, 5. 1 Cor. 9. 12. 2 Cor. 7. 2. & 11. 9. & 12. 13, 14.

word here, signifies not only St. Paul's bearing his testimony to the truth of the gospel, but his preaching, persuading, and persuading to the acceptance of it with the greatest earnestness.

Ver. 25. *I know that ye all, &c.*] It appears evident that the apostle had received some particular revelation, that if he should even return to these parts of Asia again (as from Philem. ver. 22. it seems likely he might), yet that he should not have an opportunity of calling at Ephesus, or of seeing the ministers whom he now addressed.

Ver. 27. *I have not shunned to declare unto you*] The proper import of the word ἀποστειλάω, here rendered *shun*, in such a connection, is to disguise any important truth, or, at least, to decline the open publication of it, for fear of displeasing those to whom it ought to be declared. “*I have not declined to declare unto you, with the utmost freedom and integrity, all the counsel of God; but, on the contrary, have laid before you the whole system of divine truths, relating to our redemption by Christ, and the way to eternal happiness through and with him, in the most plain and faithful manner, whatever censure, contempt or opposition, I might incur by such a declaration.*”

Ver. 28. *Hath made you overseers, &c.*] Ἐπιτιθέμενος, *Inspector*, or *bishops*. The expression *over which the Holy Ghost hath made, &c.* applied to men who had been regularly set apart to the ministerial office, shews how absurd it is for any to reject the ministry in general, under a pretence that they have the Holy Ghost to teach them. This passage must be allowed as an incontestable proof, that the *blood of Christ* is here called the *blood of God*, as being the blood of that Man, who is *God with us,—God manifested in the flesh*; and *who is over all, God blessed for ever*.

Ver. 29. *Grievous wolves*] Some, thinking that the word βαρῆ; properly alludes to the *strength* of these animals, would render it *oppressive*; but there seems no reason to

depart from our version. Their eager and overbearing temper made them, no doubt, *grievous* to the Christian church, though destitute of the secular power. The apostle evidently makes a distinction between the *wolves*, who were to *break in* upon them from without, and the *perverse teachers*, who were to *arise from among themselves*. Both may be interpreted of *seducers* who call themselves Christians, as false prophets are called by Christ *wolves in sheep's clothing*, Matth. vii. 15. For St. Paul would not have spoken of Heathen persecutors, as to arise *after* his departure, considering what extremities from persons of that kind he had *himself* suffered in Asia, 2 Cor. i. 8—10. It seems probable therefore, that, by the *grievous wolves*, he means *judaizing false apostles*, who, though they had before this time done a great deal of mischief at Corinth and elsewhere, had not yet got any footing at Ephesus; and by the *perverse men arising* from among themselves, he may mean such as Phygellus and Hermogenes, and some others who revived the exploded doctrine of *Hymeneus and Alexander*; as also those who afterwards introduced the *Nicolaitan* principles and practices, of which Christ so awefully complains as prevailing here, as well as in the neighbouring city of *Pergamos*. See Rev. ii. 6. 14. 15.

Ver. 31. *To warn every one night and day with tears.*] If this expression be taken in any other than a general sense for *incessantly, or without intermission*, it may probably intimate that the Christians sometimes assembled at nights, either about the time of the tumult, to avoid offence, or because many of the Christians, being poor, were obliged to spend great part of the day in secular labours. Compare ver. 7. and 34.

Ver. 32. *Which is able*] *Who is able*: for God is evidently the last person mentioned in the Greek, *of the grace of him* [αὐτῶ] *who is able*: though the *gospel* may be said to be *able to edify men*, yet it seems harsh to say, that doctrines or writings *can give us an inheritance*.

Ver.

34 Yea, you yourselves know, ' that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 'I have shewed you all things, how that

so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, ' It is more blessed to give than to receive.

^c 1 Cor. 4. 12. 1 Thess. 2. 9. & 4. 11. 2 Thess. 3. 8. Ch. 18. 3. ^d Ver. 20, 27. 1 Thess. 5. 14. 1f. 35. 3. Rom. 12. 15. Eph. 4. 28. Heb. 13. 15, 31 & 12. 12, 23. Eph. 4. 28. ^e Prov. 19. 17. Heb. 13. 16. Mat. 10. 8. 1f. 32. 8.

Ver. 35. To support the weak, &c.] To assist the infirm. The word *σοληνηναι* has exactly this signification; and, as Raphaelius has shewn, may express either *sickness* or *poverty*; yet here undoubtedly it signifies such poor persons as were disabled by some means or other from maintaining themselves by their own labour. Compare Ephes. iv. 28. The evangelists have assured us, that they neither intended to relate, nor have related, *all* that our Lord did and said; the latter clause therefore, quoted by St. Paul, was one of those which they omitted, and was probably a favourite saying of our Lord's.

Inferences.—What a mercy is it to see the servants of Christ get safe through the uproars that are at any time made against them, and to take our leave of them in peace! And how affectionately should they part with their Christian friends and brethren, who cannot but be grieved at the loss of their edifying company and ministrations; especially when they have reason to think that they shall never see their faces any more! But in the most afflictive and self-denying cases, it becomes us to say, The will of the Lord be done: however, since ministers must die as well as other men, how ready should we be to accompany them, as long as we can, in their services and sufferings, and to attend their holy ministrations, especially on the Lord's days, which are divinely set apart for the celebration of sacred ordinances, such as hearing the word, breaking of bread, and prayer! And whenever we are engaged in religious worship, how should we watch against drowsiness and sleep, lest we meet with a rebuke like *Eutychus*, who fell down dead; though God, for his own glory, and the comfort of his people, raised him to life again? How indefatigable was the great apostle in the service of his Lord! He sometimes laboured with his hands to supply his own and others' wants, as knowing that our Saviour himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive; and at other times he laid himself out, by night and by day, for counselling, cautioning, establishing, and building up believers, and directing the pastors of churches, as well as for the conversion of sinners. What an excellent pattern has he set the ministers of the gospel! And how happy is it for them to be able, with a good conscience, and in view of a future judgment, to appeal to their hearers, at their last parting, as witnesses for them! With what prayers and tears, affectionate concern and holy zeal, humility, condescension, and contempt of this world, should they, like this great apostle, serve the Lord Jesus, amid the various trials that befall them! With what unbiafled and disinterested faithfulness and plainness should they declare the whole counsel of God, insisting especially on the most necessary and practical parts of it, such as repentance and faith, that the guilt of souls that perish may be chargeable upon their own stupidity and obstinacy, and not on any

partiality or neglect of those that ministered to them! And how cheerfully should they follow the footsteps of Providence in their ministrations, whatever dangers it may expose them to! They should expect sufferings for the sake of Christ, and even despise their own lives, in comparison with finishing their course with joy, and fulfilling the trust which Christ has committed to them, for setting forth the excellencies of the gospel of the grace of God. O with what diligence should they look to themselves, and to the church of the dear Saviour, who is God, and by his own infinitely dignified blood has purchased it for himself! How, in love and duty to him, and to the Holy Ghost who has made them overseers, should they feed his people with sound doctrine, and watch over them in the Lord, that neither secret nor open enemies may seduce any of them! But, alas, who is sufficient for these things! And how much need have pastors, as well as their flocks, to be recommended by prayer, and to commit themselves by faith to Christ, and to the power and promises of God through him, to carry them on with an increase of gifts, graces, and success, and to give them a free admission at last to the eternal inheritance, which is to be enjoyed by none but holy souls!

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Soon after the uproar, which Demetrius raised, had ceased, St. Paul determined to proceed on his journey as he had before purposed.

1. After an affectionate parting with the brethren, St. Paul set off for Macedonia to visit the churches that he had planted; and, having gone over those parts, and given them much exhortation to persevere, amidst all opposition, in the profession of the faith which they had embraced, he came to Greece,—into Achaia, where he abode *three months*, employed in the same profitable manner, confirming and strengthening the faithful; and thence was purposing to sail for Syria, in order to go directly to Jerusalem; but, by intelligence or inspiration, having learned that the Jews intended to way-lay and murder him, and carry off the collection which the churches had made for their poor brethren in Judea, he changed his route, and returned through Macedonia.

2. The companions of his travels into Asia were *Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus*; and now Luke the historian, who had probably been left in those parts before, to carry on the work so prosperously begun, seems to have joined the apostle's train. The rest, going before, tarried for Paul and Luke, and those who accompanied them, at Troas; whither they followed immediately after the passover, sailing from Philippi; and in five days joined their companions at Troas, where they stayed seven days.

2dly, Seven days the apostle abode at Troas, desirous to

36 ¶ And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37 ¶ And they all wept fore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

¶ Ch. 7. 60. & 21. 5. & 16. 13. Phil. 4. 6. 1 Pet. 5. 7.

¶ Gen. 33. 4. & 45. 14. & 46. 29. 1 Sam. 20. 41. Luke, 15. 20.

to spend one Lord's day with the disciples, before he went on his journey. And a blessed day, no doubt, it was to the church in that place.

1. According to their established custom, upon the first day of the week, which had succeeded to the Jewish sabbath, and, in memory of the Lord's resurrection and the descent of the Holy Ghost, was consecrated henceforward to God's more immediate service in all acts of religious worship and for the public administration of the ordinances, the disciples came together to break bread, commemorating, as they constantly did every week, the sacrifice and sufferings of their Lord. Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and, having much to say, and being probably not likely ever again to have another opportunity of speaking to them, his warm heart led him on, so that he continued his speech until midnight, unwearied in exhortation, and addressing himself to those who counted the longest of his discourses short. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together; they were content to put up with this probably mean inconvenient place of meeting; and, as no deeds of darkness were found among them, they took care that the place should be well illuminated, to confute the malicious insinuations of their enemies. Note; According to the practice of the apostles and the primitive church, the first day of the week is appointed for the assemblies of the faithful disciples of Jesus, to join together in all acts of religious worship, hear his word, partake of his ordinances, and maintain communion with each other. They who neglect the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is, evidently shew that they have renounced Christianity, and have no part nor lot among the faithful in Christ Jesus.

2. A melancholy accident happened to a youth in the company, whose name was Eutychus. He sat in a window that was open; and, the apostle lengthening his sermon so much more than usual, sleep overtook the young man; and, falling backward through the window, which was three stories high, he was killed on the spot—a warning to those who sleep under sermons, where they have none of those things to plead which might be urged in his excuse.

3. St. Paul raises him again to life. It served for a momentary interruption to the assembly, but in the issue contributed to the furtherance of their faith and joy. The apostle immediately went down, and fell on him, and embracing him, as Elijah stretched himself on the dead corpse of the widow of Sarepta's son, 1 Kings, xvii. 21. said, Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him, restored by divine power. Then he returned to the room where they had assembled, and, after the administration of the Lord's supper, spent the remainder of the night, till break of day, in sweet communion and conversation; when, in the most affectionate manner, he took his leave. But, before they parted, they brought the young man alive into the assembly; and were not a little comforted, as some reproach might have

been cast upon them, had he thus died; but now it tended to the credit of the gospel. Note; (1.) They who know the sweetness and profit of Christian conference, are glad to improve every moment while in the company of those faithful ministers, whose discourse so greatly tends to quicken and comfort them. (2.) Providences which appear at first view very afflictive, God can and often does overrule to the increase of our joy.

3dly, St. Paul now without delay hastened to Jerusalem. His companions went by ship before to Assos, where they were to take in the apostle, who, for some important reasons which we are not told, resolved to go thither on foot. There embarking, they all sailed for Mitylene, whence, without stopping, they proceeded the next day as far as the isle of Chios; and the next arriving at Samos, they made a short stay at Trogyllium: the following day they arrived at Miletus, sailing by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia; for he hastened, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem, the day of Pentecost; and he apprehended that the importunity of his Ephesian friends might have delayed him. Note; When the glory of God and the business of our station call for our attendance, pleasant and delightful as it is to enjoy the company of our dear friends, we must forego that satisfaction.

4thly, Though St. Paul would not call at Ephesus, he greatly desired to see the elders of the church, and therefore sent for them to Miletus. They attended him accordingly at Miletus, where he addressed to them such an affecting and solemn discourse, as can scarce, even now, be read by any gracious heart without a tear.

1. He begins with a noble appeal to them concerning his life and doctrine during the time he had sojourned among them.

[1.] As to his life. Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, how exemplary, holy, and unblamable his conversation had been; how uniform his conduct; how steady amidst all his trials; serving the Lord with all humility of mind. His master's service was his one business; and, amidst all the honours which the Lord had put upon him, he sought no glory nor applause; but, with the lowliest thoughts of himself, and deepest condescensions towards others, was ready to stoop to any service, even to the meanest, whereby the Saviour might be glorified, and the bodies or souls of men be benefited; and with many tears, in his prayers for them, and affectionate discourses to them, he watched over their spiritual welfare, deeply concerned for those who obstinately rejected the counsel of God against their own souls, tenderly sympathizing with the afflictions of the faithful, and lamenting over backsliders and apostates; and with many temptations, added he, which beset me, by the lying in wait of the Jews, ever contriving his destruction: in all which his approved fidelity had been abundantly manifested, and his example remained for their imitation.

[2.] As to his doctrine. Ye know how I kept back from you

38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, ^a that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

^a Ver. 25.

¹ Ch. 15. 3. & 17. 10. & 21. 5, 16. ¹ Cor. 16. 11.

you nothing that was profitable unto you, not shunning, with all simplicity and sincerity, to declare the whole counsel of God; unawed by fears, undismayed by difficulties, uninfluenced by any worldly motives; and have shewed you and have taught you publicly in the congregation, and privately from house to house, continually labouring to diffuse a sweet savour of Christ, and to communicate edification, encouragement, and consolation, wherever he went; testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, with the most earnest affection and concern, repentance toward God, the necessity and nature of it, as implying a deep and humbling sense of sin, its evil malignity, and danger; a genuine self-aborrence in the view of its guilt and ingratitude, with an unfeigned and unreserved renunciation of it; and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, directing sinners to him as the great object of all their hopes, describing the fulness, freedom, and all-sufficiency of his salvation, and urging them to trust in his infinite merit and intercession for pardon, peace, adoption, glory. *Note*; (1.) What was St. Paul's doctrine must be ours, if ever we would approve ourselves to God, and profit men's souls; under the influence of the spirit desiring to lead them to a deep conviction of their ruin, and a humbling sense of their sins, and then pointing out the glorious remedy provided in a crucified Jesus. (2.) They who have the care of immortal souls lying upon them, can never be too diligent. Their private conversation must breathe the same spirit as their discourses in the pulpit; and every company where they are found, should be the wiser and better for them. (3.) No fear or shame should ever lead us to suppress a tittle of those glorious gospel truths which are so offensive to human pride; at least, it should be our labour to deliver our own souls, whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear.

2. He lets them know what a series of sufferings was before him. He left them not to avoid the cross, but was about to encounter greater persecutions than ever. *And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem*, led thither by the mighty constrainings of the Holy Ghost, and fully determined in my own soul to follow his guidance and direction; not knowing the things that shall befall me there; the particular sufferings to which he should be exposed, God had not revealed to him; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bond and afflictions abide me; either in general he had this notice given him, or, in every city he passed through, the divinely-inspired prophets foretold the sufferings which awaited him: but none of these things move me, to terrify him from his duty, or shake his constant mind; neither count I my life dear unto myself; valuable as it was, he paid no regard to it, when the cause of Christ called him to death or danger, content to suffer whatever the Lord pleased to permit; so that I might finish my course with joy, accomplishing his blessed Master's work, and reaching the prize of his high calling; and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God, freely and openly publishing the un-

searchable riches of Christ, and proving by the fullest evidence, the truth that he declared; displaying in the most reviving manner the unmerited and boundless love and grace of God, manifested in the gospel of his dear son towards sinners. *Note*; (1.) If our hearts are truly fixed on God, and our conversation in heaven, we shall look down upon the malice of men and devils as unable to hurt us, and fearless put our lives in our hands, when Christ calls for them. (2.) Life is our race, and death the goal; our one concern is to finish our course with joy; and that by persevering fidelity approving ourselves to God, we may receive the crown of life and glory which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to all his faithful servants. (3.) Our ministry is received from the Lord; and to him must we shortly render up the solemn account. (4.) The grand subject of all discourses, if we would fulfil that ministry we have received of the Lord, must be the gospel of the grace of God, in opposition to all the pride of self-sufficiency, labouring to make lost sinners know the necessity of a free justification through the merit and intercession of a Redeemer, and, from a view of their utter impotence and corruption, to lead them to those supplies of grace and strength which can only be derived from him.

3. He informs them that he is now taking his last leave of them, and appeals to God for his freedom from the blood of all men. *And now, behold, I know, that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, the doctrines, privileges, and duties thereof, shall see my face no more, nor ever again enjoy my personal ministry among you. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.* He appeals therefore to them in the presence of God for his fidelity: the whole truth of the gospel, so far as God had revealed it to him, he had declared; and now, if any souls among them perished, their blood was on their own heads; he was free. *Note*; (1.) It is a singular satisfaction, when we can make such an appeal to God, and to those to whom we have ministered, for our simplicity and faithfulness in the discharge of our sacred trust. (2.) The whole counsel of God, without reserve, must be declared; the truths of God need no concealment: and they shew their ignorance of the spirit of the gospel, who mention its glorious privileges with timidity, pretending fear, lest the free and boundless grace of God should be perverted to licentiousness. We must declare it: let men abuse it at their peril.

4. He gives them a solemn parting charge. *Take heed unto yourselves*, that your own conversation may be exemplary, and your souls influenced by that gospel which you preach to others; and to all the flock committed to your charge, for whom you must give an awful account shortly before the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls; over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, appointing you to your office, and furnishing you with gifts for the discharge of it; to feed the church of God with knowledge and understanding, and to preside over them with wisdom and meekness;

C H A P. XXI.

Paul will not by any means be dissuaded from going to Jerusalem. Philip's daughters prophetesses. Paul cometh to Jerusalem; where he is apprehended, and in great danger, but is rescued by the chief captain, and permitted to speak to the people.

[Anno Domini 61.]

AND it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched,

we came with a straight course unto * Coos, and the day following unto * Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara :

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto ^a Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered * Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into ^b Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

^a Coos, Rhodes, and Cyprus, are islands in the east part of the Mediterranean sea.

^b Mat. 5. 24. & 15. 21. Mark, 7. 24, 26. Ch. 20. 3.

^c On the north-west of Canaan. Ch. 11. 19. & 15. 3. Josh. 19. 28.

ness; which he hath purchased with his own blood; the incalculable value of their souls therefore is evident, when he who is very God, became incarnate, and submitted to the death of the cross, to make atonement for their sins, and to purchase them for his own. Did Jesus bleed to redeem them, and can we, if called to the ministry of the gospel, be his servants, and not desire to spend and be spent in the service of their faith? Surely a negligent minister, beyond all others, tramples under foot the blood of the Son of God.

5. He warns them of the dangers against which they would be called to contend, and exhorts them to be watchful. *For I know this, by revelation, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you; both persecutors will ravage, and false teachers more terribly seek to corrupt the faith, and ruin the souls of the people, not sparing the flock, using every vile art to seduce, ensnare, and destroy them. Also of your own selves shall men arise, of those who now perhaps make a fair profession, and in whom you place confidence; speaking perverse things, departing from the simplicity of the gospel, disseminating pernicious heresies, and introducing dangerous innovations, to draw away disciples after them, and erect themselves into heads of parties.* (See 2 Tim. i. 15. ii. 18.) *Therefore watch, the greatest vigilance would be necessary; and, being forewarned, they were fore-armed, and should with indefatigable diligence endeavour to confirm the disciples' faith, and caution them against those deluders; that they may not by them be moved away from the hope of the gospel: and remember the example which I have set you, which you are called to imitate; that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears; so fervently and affectionately had he been concerned for them, carefully observing the first efforts of deceivers, jealous over the least appearances of a declension from the purity of the faith and the simplicity of the gospel, lamenting with deepest sorrow when any staggered or fainted in their mind, and declined from their holy profession: and ceaseless in his admonitions, he endeavoured to recover the fallen, and to warn others to be more watchful, taught by their sad examples. Oh that we, who are put in trust with the gospel, may be enabled to shew such zeal, fidelity, and affectionate concern toward the souls of our people!*

6. He solemnly commends them to the divine care and keeping. *And now, brethren, having admonished you of*

the dangers you must encounter, and knowing that more than mortal wisdom and strength are needful for you that you may approve your fidelity to Christ, *I commend you to God, to his power to protect, his wisdom to guide, his spirit to comfort you; and to the word of his grace, to his written and revealed word, for your conduct and direction, or to the essential word Christ Jesus, out of whose fulness alone they must receive grace for grace, and by him be preserved and kept steadfast amidst all the wiles of deceivers, and the opposition of persecutors; which is able to build you up, in faith, hope, and holiness, to establish you unto the end, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified, preparing you for that kingdom which he hath prepared for his faithful saints in light and glory everlasting.* Note; (1.) None may hope for a part among God's saints in heaven, who are not partakers of their grace upon earth, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost. (2.) The gospel is the great means of producing, through the power of divine grace, true sanctification.

7. He particularly reminds them of the deadness which he had shewn to this world, and of his labours, that he might not be beholden to any man for a provision, while he freely preached the gospel. *I have coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel, content with what he could obtain from his own industry, and burdensome to none of them for a maintenance. Yea, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities; entitled as he was to a liberal provision, he chose for the sake of the gospel to waive his right, and to work at his trade, by which he was enabled not only to earn a subsistence for himself, but also to help them that were with him, who were less able to provide for themselves: and this he did with a view particularly to the false teachers, that he might remove every shadow of objection which they would have been glad to urge against him. Thus, by my example, I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring as I have done, ye ought to support the weak, assisting the necessitous, and relieving their wants; and removing, as far as possible, every prejudice which the deceivers might seek to instil into the minds of the weak brethren, as if they laboured for mercenary ends. And to encourage them hereunto, he begs them to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive; it is more godlike, a mark of a more noble Christian spirit, to relieve the wants of others, and lay out ourselves for their good without a recompence, than to be burdensome to them for a maintenance.*

4 And ^c finding disciples, ^d we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, ^e that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 And, when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they ^f all brought us on our way, ^g with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and ^h we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they ⁱ returned home again.

7 And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to ^k Ptolemais, and sa-

luted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto ^l Cefarea: and we entered into the house of ^m Philip the evangelist, which was *one* of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, ⁿ which did prophesy.

10 ¶ And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named ^o Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, ^p Thus saith the Holy

^c Ch. 20. 6. Pf. 119. 63. & 45. 12. & 87. 4. If. 23. 18. ^d Ch. 20. 6, 7. Rev. 1. 10. John, 20. 19, 26. ^e Ch. 20. 23. Ver. 11, 12. ^f Ch. 15. 3. & 17. 10. Ver. 16. Ch. 20. 38. ^g Gen. 18. 19. Josh. 24. 15. Prov. 22. 6. Eph. 6. 4. ^h Ch. 16. 13. & 20. 36. & 7. 60. ⁱ John, 16. 12. & 16. 27. ^k Cities on the west of Canaan. Ch. 8. 40. & 9. 30. & 10. 1. & 18. 22. ^l Ch. 6. 5. & 8. 5, 12, 26-40. Eph. 4. 11. ^m Ch. 2. 17. Joel, 2. 28. ⁿ Ch. 11. 28. ^o Ver. 33. Ch. 20. 23. & 24. 27. & 25. 14. & 26. 29. Eph. 3. 1. & 6. 20. Phil. 1. 7, 13. 2 Tim. 2. 9. Heb. 10. 34. Col. 1. 24. with Mat. 16. 21. & 20. 18, 19.

5thly, Having finished this most affecting discourse, 1. He kneeled down, and prayed with them all, commending them solemnly to the Lord Jesus, and begging, no doubt, that they might be enabled faithfully to discharge the solemn trust committed to them, and observe the good counsel which he had delivered. Note; (1.) Ministers must water with their prayers the word sown, that God may give the increase. (2.) Friends will do well to part in prayer, that if it please God they may meet here again in peace; and, if not, that they may together shortly unite their never ending praises before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2. They parted with floods of tears and the most affectionate embraces. They all wept sore, deeply affected with his discourse, his prayer, and his departure from them; and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, taking their last farewell of their dear pastor, with hearts full of love, and swelling with grief; *sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.* To part was bitter; to part for a long while, would have been yet more irksome; but to part, without the hope of ever meeting again among the living here below—this added peculiar anguish to the separation, and antedated the funeral sorrows: it was a kind of living burial. And they accompanied him unto the ship, willing to enjoy his company to the last moment, and testify their deep respect and fervent love towards him. Note; Though our friends may be separated from us, so that we can see their faces no more upon earth, it is our consolation, if we are united in Jesus, and perseveringly cleave to him, that we shall assuredly meet in a better world, never to part again.

CHAP. XXI.

Ver. 1. Coos,] Coos, or Cos, was one of the islands of Cyclades, famous for the worship of Esculapius, and the temple of Juno. There also Hippocrates the prince of

physicians, and Apelles the celebrated painter, were born. Rhodes was another island, famous for the worship of the sun, and for the brazen Colossus erected there, which was reckoned one of the seven wonders of the world. Patara was the chief city and port of Lycia.

Ver. 3. Tyre,] The metropolis of Phœnicia, ver. 2. and the most famous mart of the East. See the notes on Isaiah xxiii.

Ver. 4. That he should not go up to Jerusalem] That is, if he tendered his own liberty and safety. It is necessary to take it with this limitation; for had the Spirit forbidden his journey to Jerusalem, we may be sure he would have desisted from it. This verse might be rendered better, *And we tarried there seven days, meeting with some disciples, who said, &c.*

Ver. 7. Ptolemais,] Was a celebrated city on the sea-coast, which fell by lot to the tribe of Asher; its ancient name was Acco. Judges, i. 31. It was enlarged and beautified by the first of the Egyptian Ptolemies, whence it took its new appellation. It was the scene of many celebrated actions in the holy war. The Turks, who are now masters of all this region, call it Acca, or Accra; and notwithstanding all the advantages of its situation on one of the finest bays of that coast, and in the neighbourhood of Mount Carmel, it is now, like many other noble and ancient cities, only a heap of ruins.

Ver. 8. Philip] One of the seven deacons, ch. vi. 5. and who had settled at Cæsarea after he had baptized the eunuch, ch. viii. 40. Concerning Cæsarea see the note on ch. viii. 40.

Ver. 9. Virgins, which did prophesy.] The miraculous gifts of the Spirit were sometimes communicated to women as well as to men, agreeably to the prophesy recorded, ch. ii. 17, 18.

Ver. 11. He took Paul's girdle,] This was in the manner of the ancient prophets, who frequently attended their predictions

Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, ^p besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? ^q for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, ^r The will of the Lord be done.

15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 ^s There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of ^t Cesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of ^u Cyprus, an ^x old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

17 ¶ And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us ^y gladly.

18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto ^z James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, ^a he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard *it*, they ^b glori-

fied the Lord, and said unto him, Thou see'st, brother, ^c how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all ^d zealous of the law:

21 And they are informed of thee, ^e that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the customs.

22 What is it therefore? ^f the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: ^g we have four men which have a vow on them;

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* ^h thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepst the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, ⁱ we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from *strangled*, and from fornication.

^p Ver. 4. Mat. 16. 22. ^q Ch. 20. 24. Rom. 8. 35. 1 Cor. 4. 9. & 15. 31. 2 Cor. 4. 10. & 21. 25. Gal. 6. 17. Phil. 1. 20. & 2. 17. Col. 1. 24. 2 Tim. 4. 6. ^r 1 Sam. 3. 18. 2 Sam. 15. 25. & 16. 10, 11. Pf. 39. 9. Mat. 6. 10. & 26. 39, 42. Luke, 11. 2. & 22. 42. ^s See ver. 5. Ch. 10. 48. ^t See ver. 8. ^u See ver. 3. Ch. 11. 19. & 4. 36. & 13. 4. & 15. 39. ^v Prov. 16. 31. & 22. 6. Pf. 92. 14. Job. 5. 26. ^w 1 Pet. 4. 9. Pf. 16. 3. Heb. 13. 1, 2. Pf. 119. 63. ^x Ch. 15. 13. Gal. 1. 10. & 2. 9. James, 1. 1. Ch. 15. 2, 6. & 20. 17. ^y Ch. 14. 27. & 15. 12. & xvi.—xx. ^z Ch. 11. 18. Luk. 7. 16. Pf. xcvi. xcvi. c. cv. cxlv. ^a Ch. 2. 41. 47. & 4. 4. & 5. 14. & 6. 7. Mat. 13. 31. Pf. 72. 16, 17. John. 12. 24. ^b Ch. 15. 1. Rom. 10. 2. Gal. 1. 14. Ch. 22. 3. ^c Ch. 6. 14. Gal. 5. 1—4. ^d Ch. 15. 12, 22. ^e Ch. 18. 18. & 24. 18. Numb. 6. 2, 18, 19. ^f 1 Cor. 9. 20. ^g Ch. 15. 20, 28, 29. 1 Cor. viii. x. Exod. 34. 15. Lev. 17. 14. & 3. 17. & 19. 26. Deut. 12. 16, 23. & 15. 23. 1 Sam. 14. 32. Gen. 9. 4. 1 Cor. 5. 1, 9, 11. & 7. 2. Heb. 13. 4. 1 Thess. 4. 3, 5, 7.

dictions with significant and prophetic actions. See Jer. xiii. 1.

Ver. 15. *We took up our carriages,*] *Making up our baggage, we went,* &c.

Ver. 16. *Brought with them one Mnason,* &c.] *Mnason* was a native of Cyprus, but an inhabitant of Jerusalem, who probably had been converted either by Christ or the apostles, at the first opening of the gospel. With St. Paul's arrival in Jerusalem at this time, ended his *third* apostolical journey.

Ver. 18. *James,*] The apostle, commonly called *James the less*, and the brother of our Lord.

Ver. 20. *How many thousands*] The original is μυριάδες, *myriads*, which may only denote in general a great number; and if we consider what a vast confluence there must have been at Jerusalem on occasion of this great festival, we need not be surprised at the expression. See ver. 27.

Ver. 23, 24. *Which have a vow*] Of Nazariteship. See on ch. xviii. 18. Josephus not only tells us in general, that it was customary with persons in any sickness or distress, to make vows, and to spend at least thirty days in extraordinary devotions; but also says, that when Agrippa came to Jerusalem, he offered sacrifices of thanksgiving, and ordered a good number of *Nazarites to be shaved*; a phrase exactly answering to this before us: whence Dr. Lardner very naturally argues, that *to be at charges with Nazarites*, was both a common and very popular thing among the Jews. Maimonides expressly asserts, that a person who was not himself a Nazarite, might bind himself by a vow to take part with one in his sacrifices. The *charges* of these four Nazarites would be the price of *eight lambs and four rams*, besides oil, flour, &c. Numb. vi. 14, 15. The circumstance of *shaving* here, shews that the vow was accomplished; for it was begun with letting the

26 Then Paul took the men, ^k and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

27 ¶ And when the seven days were almost ended, ^l the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, ^m stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, ⁿ help: this is the man, that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place:

and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city ^o Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 ^p And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were ^q shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

^k Numb. 6. 13—20. Ch. 24. 18. ^l Ch. 24. 18. & 26. 21. ^m Ch. 13. 50. & 14. 2, 5, 19. & 17. 5, 6, 13. & 18. 12. & 19. 23. ⁿ Ch. 6. 14. & 19. 25, 25. & 24. 5, 6. & 16. 20, 21. & 16. 2, 20, 21. ^o See ch. 20. 4. ^p 2 Tim. 4. 20. ^q Ch. 16. 20. & 19. 29. & 7. 54. & 16. 21. ^r To keep Paul from refuge, and the Gentiles from entering. Ver. 28, 29. Ch. 24. 6.

the hair grow; and put an end to, by shaving it off. See ver. 26. It is evident from the last clause of ver. 24. that whatever might have passed between St. Paul and St. James on the subject in private, (Comp. Gal. ii. 2.) St. James and the brethren thought it most regular and convenient that the Jewish ritual should still be observed by those of the circumcision who believed in Christ: and considering what tribulation the church of Jerusalem must otherwise have been exposed to by the Sanhedrim, who no doubt would have prosecuted them to the utmost as apostates; and also how soon Divine Providence intended to render the practice of it impossible, and to break the whole power of the Jews by the destruction of the temple, city, and nation; it was certainly the most orderly and prudent conduct to conform to it, though it was looked upon by those who understood the matter fully (which it was not necessary that all should,) as antiquated, and ready to vanish away. Heb. viii. 13.

Ver. 26. To signify the accomplishment, &c.] Dr. Heylin renders this, and declared how many days the purification was to last, and when the offering was to be made for each of them. This seems to be the true meaning of the passage: accordingly Dr. Benson's account of it is this: "The next day, taking the four men, St. Paul began to purify himself along with them; entering into the temple, and publicly declaring that he would observe the separation of a Nazarite, and continue it for seven days: at the end of which days of purification he would bring an offering for himself and the other four who joined with him, according to what was appointed in the law of Moses." See on Numb. vi. 4. To what has been said in the preceding note, in order to vindicate the apostle's character in this transaction, we may observe, that he had not taught all the Jewish Christians in Gentile countries to forsake the law of Moses; nay, he does not appear to have taught it as yet to any of them directly and immediately: that he took upon him the vow of a Nazarite, because it was an indifferent thing, or lawful for him to comply with the deep-rooted prejudices of the Jewish Christians: that if he had not complied at this time, and in the present cir-

cumstances, the Christianity of the Jewish converts would have been in danger, or at least their charity for, and union with, the Gentile churches which he had planted; and that if he had gone about to have explained himself immediately and at large, the consequence would probably have been as bad.

Ver. 27. The Jews which were of Asia,] St. Paul had lately spent three years in preaching there, and, notwithstanding the success his labours were attended with, had met with great opposition from these people; so that it is no wonder they should be the leaders in such an assault upon him. See ch. xix. 9. xx. 3. 1 Cor. xvi. 9.

Ver. 28. Teacheth — against — the law, and this place:] Every thing contrary to the law would be justly interpreted as contrary to the temple which was so evidently supported by a regard to it: but perhaps St. Paul might have declared that the destruction of the temple was approaching; which declaration we know was charged on Stephen as a great crime, ch. vi. 14. They urged further against St. Paul, that he brought Greeks, or Gentiles, into the temple. Now it is universally acknowledged, that any stranger might worship in that which was called "the court of the Gentiles;" but these zealots, without any proof but an uncertain conjecture and rumour, imagined that St. Paul had brought some uncircumcised Gentiles into the inner part of the court, which was appropriated to the people of Israel, and notified as such by Greek and Latin inscriptions on several of the pillars which stood in the wall that separated it, viz. "No foreigner must enter here." If any person violated this law, he was liable to be put to death. But it is to be observed by the way, that a proselyte, who by circumcision had declared his submission to, and acceptance of the whole Jewish religion, was no longer looked upon as a foreigner, but as one naturalized, — and so a fellow-citizen.

Ver. 30—33. And all the city was moved,] The accusation brought against St. Paul, though false, put all the city in a commotion, and brought a vast concourse of people together, who seized upon him in order to kill him; and therefore they drew him out of the court of the Israelites,

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 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.

34 And some cried one thing, 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.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, ' Away with him.

37 ¶ And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

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?

^a Ver. 11. Ch. 20. 23. ^b Ch. 19. 32. ^c Luke, 23. 18. John, 19. 15. Ch. 22. 22. & 7. 54. ^d Not Theudas, or Judas. Ch. 5. 36, 37. but another, about A. D. 55.

left it should have been defiled with his blood, and hurried him into the court of the Gentiles, which was not accounted so holy. The gates of the temple being shut, they immediately fell upon him, with what the Jews used to call *the rebels' beating*; which was the people's mode of punishing such as they apprehended had rebelled against their law, and that without any judicial process. Their manner of beating them was with staves, stones, whips, or any thing they could first lay their hands on; and they frequently inflicted this punishment so unmercifully, that several persons died under it. John Hyrcanus, high-priest and prince of the Jews, built the castle which is called *Baris*, that is, a palace or royal castle, on a steep rock, fifty cubits without the outer square on the north-west corner of the temple, but upon the same mountain, and adjoining to the said square. This was called The palace of the Asmonæans in Jerusalem, as long as they reigned there. When Herod the Great came to be king of Judea, he rebuilt the castle, and made it a very strong fortress, lining or casing over the high rock on which it stood with polished white marble, so as to make it inaccessible from the subjacent valley, and building the castle itself so high, as to command the temple, and see what was done in the two outer courts of that sacred place, that he might send down his soldiers in case of any tumult; and when he had made these alterations, he called it *Antonia*, in honour of his great friend Mark Antony. When the Romans afterwards reduced Judea from a kingdom to a province, they also kept a strong garrison in the same place, particularly at the solemn festivals, when the Jews came in such prodigious multitudes to the temple. A great tumult being now made about the apostle, probably some of the centinels who kept watch on the south-east turret of the castle *Antonia*, spied it, and gave notice to the Roman tribune [*Claudius Lysias*, (ch. xxiii. 26.) who was captain of the fortress, and had one thousand soldiers under him] that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. Immediately upon this notice, the tribune took centurions, with the hundred soldiers whom they each of them commanded, and ran down the stairs which led from the south-east turret of the castle into the outer cloisters of the temple, and thence into the

court of the Gentiles, where the tumult was. Upon seeing the tribune, attended with such a number of armed men, they left off beating the innocent apostle; when the tribune himself took him into his custody, and fulfilled the prophecy of Agabus, ver. 10, 11. for he ordered him to be bound with two chains, concluding that he was some notorious malefactor.

Ver. 37, 38. Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? St. Paul's addressing himself in Greek to the chief captain surprised him a good deal, as he took him for an Egyptian impostor; upon which he said to him with some astonishment, "What then! can you speak Greek? Are not you that Egyptian, who some time ago made a disturbance in this country, and, under the pretence of being a mighty prophet, led out into the wilderness four thousand of the sicarii? (*σικαρίων*) a kind of assassins, so called from the daggers or small crooked swords which they hid under their coats: for the Latin word *sica*, signifies a short sword or small dagger. These Sicarii, or assassins, came to Jerusalem, under a pretence of worshipping God at the temple, but they were so audacious, as to murder men in the day-time, in the middle of the city; and at the festivals more especially, when multitudes came thither from all parts, they would mix with the crowd, and with their private daggers stab their enemies: and then, to conceal their wickedness, they would seem as full of indignation against the authors of such crimes as any of the people; by which means they continued for some time unsuspected: but being employed by the governor Felix to murder Jonathan the high-priest, and consequently escaping with impunity for so notorious a crime, they became more bold and insolent, and slew great numbers at every festival; some out of private revenge, but others as hired to it. And these slaughterers they committed, not only in the city, but also in the temple itself, making no scruple of violating that holy place. Four thousand of these men the Egyptian impostor here spoken of led out from Jerusalem; and going into the country, and having raised his reputation among the people, he gathered together a great multitude, which amounted at least to thirty thousand men. It is probable, that before he left the city, he had so concerted matters with some friends

39 But Paul said, * I am a man *which am* a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, † suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him licence,

* Ch. 9. 17, 30. & 11. 25. & 22. 3.

† 1 Pet. 3. 15. & 4. 15, 16.

‡ Ch. 12. 17. & 15. 16. & 19. 33.

* Or Syriac derived from it.

Paul stood on the stairs, and ‡ beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto *them* in the * Hebrew tongue, saying,

friends whom he left behind him, as to entertain hopes, that, upon his return, his design would be favoured by great numbers of the Jews in Jerusalem, and that he should have no opposition from any but the Romans. Having assembled a sufficient number, he brought them round out of the wilderness up to the mount of Olives, whence he intended to force his way into Jerusalem; for, when he came thither, he promised his deluded followers that they should see the walls of the city fall down at his command. However, he hoped, by surprise, to have attacked and beaten the Roman guards, and then designed to bring the people into subjection, and govern them by the help of his armed associates. Upon his arrival at the mount of Olives, Felix came suddenly out upon him, with a large body of the Roman soldiers, both horse and foot, and the citizens in general prepared also to defend themselves against him. This speedy and general opposition so surprised him, that he dared not venture an engagement; but presently fled away with a body of his most trusty friends, as is usual in such cases. The Roman soldiers were ordered to engage with those in particular, neglecting the rest, who were only a confused multitude, and who immediately made off as they could by different ways. All accounts agree that the Egyptian himself escaped, though his attempt came to nothing. Upon a review of this account, which is taken from Josephus, &c. the reader will remark the great accuracy with which St. Luke has represented Lyfias speaking of this matter. The men were led into the wilderness; the impostor's name was unknown, he being only called the Egyptian: he had escaped alive, and most of his followers had deserted him; so that the tumult of the Jews about him would have been no unnatural circumstance, since he had long ceased to be their idol.

Ver. 39. *A Jew of Tarsus,*] The inhabitants of Tarsus, (which city seems to have taken its name from *Tarsibis*, the Son of Javan, (Gen. x. 4.) boasted extremely of their antiquity; and Strabo tells us, that they were so considerable on account of learning, as well as commerce, wealth, and grandeur, that they might dispute the prize with Athens and Alexandria. Tarsus was the metropolis of Cilicia.

Ver. 40. *In the Hebrew tongue,*] Literally *In the Hebrew dialect*, which was the Syro-Chaldaic, and the *language*, or vulgar tongue, then in use among the Jews.

Inferences.—Who can fail to admire the excellent and heroic temper which appeared in the blessed apostle, in the journey that he took to Jerusalem, when still the *Holy Spirit testified in every city that bonds and afflictions awaited him*; when his friends, in so affectionate a manner, hung round, and endeavoured to divert him from his purpose. He was not insensible to their tender regards: so far from it, that his heart melted, and was even ready to break under the

impression; yet still he continues inflexible. There glows a sacred passion warmer in his soul than the love of friends, or liberty, or life. *The love of Christ constrains him*, 2 Cor. v. 14. and makes him willing, joyfully willing, not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for his name, who had indeed died for him there. May this be the temper, these the sentiments of every minister, of every Christian, in such a case as his; where imprisonment is better than liberty, and death infinitely preferable to the most prosperous life, secured by deserting the Redeemer's service, or flying from any post which the great captain of our salvation hath assigned us.

On the other hand, we may learn from these wise and pious friends of St. Paul, to acquiesce in the will of God, whenever its determination is apparent; how contrary soever it may be to our natural desire, or even to those views which we have formed for the advancement of his cause and interest in the world; for who can teach him knowledge, or pursue the purposes of his glory by wiser and surer methods than those which he hath chosen? In the instance before us, the bonds of St. Paul, which these good men dreaded as so fatal an obstruction to the gospel, tended, as he himself saw and witnessed while he was yet under them, to the furtherance of it: and what they apprehended would prevent their seeing him any more, occasioned his returning to Cæsarea, and continuing there for a long time; when, though he was a prisoner, they had free liberty of conversing with him. (See ch. xxiii. 33. xxiv. 23, 27.) And even to this day we see the efficacy of his sufferings, in the spirit that they have added to those epistles which he wrote while a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and in that weight which such a circumstance also adds to his testimony. Let Jesus therefore lead us and all his servants whithersoever he pleases, and we will bless his most mysterious conduct, in sure expectation of that day, when what is now most astonishing and inexplicable in it, shall appear beautiful, and ordered for the best.

It is pleasing to observe the honour paid to *Mnason*, as an old disciple: it is truly an honourable title, and wherever it is found, may days speak, and the multitude of years teach wisdom! Job, xxxii. 7. May there be a constant readiness, as in this good old man, to employ all the remaining vigour of nature, in the service of Christ, and in offices of cordial love and generous friendship to those who are engaged, like the great apostle, in the work of their redeeming Lord!

It is no less delightful to see how the same principles of humble and benevolent piety wrought in the mind of St. Paul on the one hand, and, on the other, in those of St. James and the brethren of the circumcision; while the one recounted, and the others rejoiced in, what God had done by his ministry among the Gentiles. Thus should ministers

CHAP. XXII.

Paul declareth at large how he was converted to the faith, and called to his apostleship. At the very mentioning of the Gentiles, the people exclaim against him. He would have been scourged; but, claiming the privilege of a Roman, he escapeth.

[Anno Domini 61.]

MEN^a, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.

^a Ch. 7. 2. & 13. 15, 26, 38. & 15. 7, 13. & 21. 1, 6. & 28. 17.
^b Deut. 33. 3. 2 Kings, 4. 38. Luke, 10. 39. & 8. 35. Ch. 5. 34.
& 21. 20. Rom. 10. 2, 3.

2 (And when they heard that he^b spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

3^c I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city^d at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught^e according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

^b Ch. 21. 40. ^c Ch. 21. 39. & 9. 11, 30. & 11. 25. & 26. 3—11.
^d Gal. 1. 14. Phil. 3. 6. ^e 2 Cor. 11. 22. Ch. 24. 16. & 26. 4—9. & 25. 6.

sters always remember, that whatever good is done by their ministry, it is the work of God, and that the praise of it is to be rendered to him only. Whenever such assemble together for religious and friendly conference, may they have the same cause for mutual thanksgiving, while they hear and tell what efficacy God is giving to the word, as spoken by them; that efficacy, which is never likely to be greater than when the ministers of it appear least in their own eyes.

A prudent precaution, consistent with the strictest integrity, discovered itself in the advice of St. James and the Jewish Christians to their beloved brother St. Paul, to conform to certain customs of the Mosaic worship, in an affair in which he might so innocently comply. Yet what prudence or integrity may not sometimes be mistaken, or misrepresented? What good may not be evil spoken of, and abused as a cloak for mischief, when men's hearts are overflowing with malice, and are so wretchedly corrupted, as to take pleasure in indulging it under the disguise of religion? What numerous falsehoods attended every article of the charge which these furious Jews brought against St. Paul?—And yet,—so strong is bigoted prejudice!—it is believed on the credit of a noisy rabble. Who can help adoring that divine and remarkable Providence, whose gracious interposition prevented this light of Israel from sudden extinction; which saved the holy apostle from being torn in pieces by an outrageous mob, fierce and irrational as so many wild beasts, before he could have liberty to speak for himself?

Let religion only not be condemned unheard, and then surely it cannot be condemned at all. Blessed be God, he can raise up guardians for its support, even from the most unexpected quarter, and animate men, like the Roman captain, from considerations merely secular, to appear most seasonably and effectually in the defence of his faithful servants. Christians should learn to glorify the wise conduct of an over-ruling Providence in instances so palpable as these,—and hence be stimulated in the firm and courageous pursuit of every duty, since God can never be at a loss for expedients to secure them in their honest adherence to his service.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, With deepest reluctance St. Paul had as it were by violence torn himself from the embraces of his dear Ephesian brethren; and now, since God had so directed, he pursues his voyage.

1. He proceeds to Tyre. They came in a straight course to Coos; the next day to Rhodus, tained for its co-

lossus; and thence to Patara, to which port the ship wherein they sailed was bound, or was from thence to take a different course from that which they pursued; therefore, providentially finding another ship ready to sail for Pœnicia, they embarked, and leaving Cyprus on the left, arrived on the coasts of Syria, and landed at Tyre, where the ship was to unload her burden.

2. Seven days St. Paul and his companions halted at this celebrated mart, spending one Lord's day with the disciples whom they found there, and improving this short stay for their edification and comfort. Note; When we travel, we should inquire after the disciples; their profession will make them singular, and they may be easily found.

3. There he received from some of the inspired prophets of the church, a warning of the dangers which were before him, and that, if he meant to escape them, he must not go to Jerusalem; but his resolution was fixed, and his call evident; and therefore he departed at the expiration of the seven days.

4. They took a solemn farewell of him, when he thus determined to proceed; and brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city, willing to shew the apostle and his companions the greatest honour and respect, and desirous that they and theirs might to the last moment improve the blessing of his presence and company: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed for the blessing of God on the voyage, and upon those who were left behind. Then affectionately taking their leave of each other, the apostle and his friends proceeded on their course, and the Tyrian brethren returned.

5. From Tyre they sailed to Ptolemais, where St. Paul went on shore, desirous to salute the brethren, though he could stay but one day with them; yet one day of his company must have been a singular blessing and comfort to them. The visits of such men, though short, are highly to be prized.

2dly, From Ptolemais they journeyed to Cæsarea, where they designed to make some considerable stay.

1. At Cæsarea, Philip the evangelist hospitably received them. He was one of the seven deacons, and, after his successful labours among the Samaritans, and with the Ethiopian eunuch, was now settled in this great city. He had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy, endued with the miraculous gift of foretelling future events, (see Joel, ii. 28.)

2. There St. Paul receives a full prediction of the sufferings

4^f And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

^f Ch. 8. 3. & 9. 1, 13, 14. & 26. 9—11. 1 Cor. 15. 9. Gal. 1. 13. Phil. 3. 6. 1 Tim. 1. 13.

^b Unbelieving Jews. Rom. 9. 3.

5^e As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the^h brethren,

^e Ch. 9. 2, 14. & 26. 12. Luke, 22. 66.

ings which were before him. *As we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus, who had foretold the famine (ch. xi. 28.), and now probably came on purpose with this prophetic intelligence. Taking up Paul's girdle, he bound his own hands, and then his feet therewith, to affect the spectators the more by this significant action, which he explained of St. Paul, whom the Jews should thus bind, and deliver as a criminal to the Romans.*

3. St. Paul's companions, as well as the brethren at Cæsarea, hearing these melancholy tidings, united in their endeavours to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem; and with tears entreated him to consult the safety of that life, which, however ready he might be to part with, would be to them a loss irreparable.

4. St. Paul nobly replied to their entreaties, *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart?* Their tears affected him more than all his own expected sufferings; they were a temptation to shake his courage; and it troubled him, both that they should shew such timorousness, and labour to dissuade him from what was his duty; and that he should be obliged to deny them any request; since he could not comply, without grieving the Divine Spirit, under whose influence he now acted; and therefore he dares defy the fury of all his persecutors; *for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus*; prepared, if God so pleased, to shed his blood in confirmation of the truth which he preached, and to glorify his Master, as a martyr in his cause. *Note*; (1.) The foolish fondness of our friends is often a more dangerous trial than the avowed opposition of our enemies. (2.) Faithful souls are unmoved with the fear of sufferings. Death is welcome, if Jesus be but glorified thereby.

5. Perceiving his unshaken resolution, his friends desisted, submitting to the will of God, and acquiescing in his determination, which, they perceived, proceeded not from any inflexibility of temper, but from the conviction that he acted agreeably to the call of the Spirit of God. *Note*; Submission to God's will is not only our duty, but should be our delight, when we know that all he does is righteous, and that it will ultimately tend to our good, as well as his own glory.

3dly. We have,

1. The journey of St. Paul to Jerusalem. His resolution was taken; and his companions, if they cannot dissuade him from his purpose, are ready cheerfully to share the danger: they therefore packed up their baggage, which they perhaps carried on their backs, and marched forward, accompanied by other brethren of Cæsarea, and brought with them one Mnaſon, of Cyprus, an old disciple, venerable for his age, and his long standing in the profession of Christianity; *with whom we should lodge*, he having a house at Jerusalem, and it being very difficult to obtain lodgings there during the festival.

2. The brethren at Jerusalem gave him at his arrival a most hearty welcome. *And the day following Paul went in with us unto James*, the only apostle who seems to have been at that time resident at Jerusalem; *and all the elders were present*; when, after friendly salutations had passed, St. Paul gave them a particular and distinct account of all the churches that had been planted by his ministry, and the great success that God had given to his labours; which afforded them the most singular satisfaction, and excited their warmest praises; *they glorified the Lord*, who had done such great things by him. *Note*; God must have the glory of all our success; for whatever our labours are, it is he who giveth the increase.

3. St. James, in the name of the rest, hereupon offers his brother Paul his advice, desiring him, in condescension to the prejudices of the Jewish brethren, to shew his compliance with the ceremonial law. For though it was by no means to be imposed on the Gentile converts, nor was any justification before God, in whole or in part, to be expected from it; yet the Jewish converts being still attached to these rites, to which from their infancy they had been taught to pay such reverence, as being of divine appointment, they were in general zealous for their observance; and as it was not sinful to comply with them herein, St. James and the elders judged it would be prudent in him to conform to them for the preservation of mutual love and peace. The number of the disciples from the Jews was now increased to *many thousands*, or rather *myriads*, tens of thousands; and many had imbibed prejudices against St. Paul, through the false reports of the Judaizing teachers; as if, not content with teaching the Gentiles that they were free from the ceremonial law, he had also dissuaded the Jews from conforming thereto, leading them to apostatize from the institution of Moses, and to discontinue the usage of circumcision. What therefore was to be done in the present case? the multitude must soon know of his coming, and there was a danger of their assembling together to complain of him, as prejudiced against him. To promote therefore St. Paul's usefulness, which might be impeded hereby; and to reconcile the Jewish converts to him who had deserved so highly of the church of God; they propose to him an expedient which would silence the cavillers, and remove the prejudices of his Jewish brethren, who, when they saw him conform to the law, would be convinced of the falsehood of the reports which had been propagated concerning him. They advise him therefore to join himself with four other converted Jews, who were under a vow of Nazaritism, and to go through the usual rites with them, providing the sacrifices offered on this occasion, (Numb. vi. 1, &c.) which would most effectually silence gainfayers; not that this should be any infringement of the Gentile liberty, that being already determined by a solemn decree.

4. St. Paul, willing to the weak to become as weak, readily

and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6¹ And it came to pass, that, as I made my

journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a

¹ Ch. 9. 3—5, 17. & 26. 12—15. ² Cor. 9. 1. & 15. 8. ³ Cor. xii.

readily yielded to their proposal: and taking with him the men who were under a vow of Nazaritism, entered peaceably into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification to the priests, which they would observe with the usual rites, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them as the law directed, Numb. vi. 13—20.

Some have censured St. Paul's compliance, as countenancing the Jews in prejudices which ought to have been opposed; but I am persuaded that the thing was justifiable, and agreeable to the avowed maxim on which he always proceeded, (1 Cor. ix. 20.) according to which he had also circumcised Timothy; willing to please all men for their good to edification; charitably condescending to the infirmities of the weak; desirous, as far as he could with a good conscience, to comply with them in all indifferent matters, if by any means he might save some.

4thly, Soon we shall find the faithful Paul in bonds, and see him no more at liberty to the end of this history.

1. A tumult is raised against St. Paul. When he had nearly accomplished the seven days' attendance on the temple, and was about to offer his sacrifice, the Jews of Asia, who had come up to celebrate the passover, observed him in the temple; and, fired with rage, as if his presence there was a profanation of the holy place, they incensed the people against him; and raising a mob, as if he was the vilest criminal alive, they cried out for every Israelite to help in seizing and punishing most exemplarily such a miscreant, whom they accuse of apostacy from their religion, and as the arch-seducer, *teaching every where*, with a view to prejudice men against the Jewish church and nation, against the sacred law of Moses, and that hallowed temple in which they so highly gloried. And, not content herewith, they charge him with the most atrocious profanation of that holy place, by introducing uncircumcised Gentiles into the court of the Israelites—a calumny malicious and false in the highest degree, and grounded on their merely seeing Trophimus an Ephesian in St. Paul's company in the city.

Note; (1.) The ministers of truth and goodness have been often first branded with an ill name; and then suggestions have been cast out against them, as if they were guilty of ill things. (2.) Innocence is no protection against calumny: some strained inuendo, or misrepresentation, easily turns the most innocent word or action into something highly criminal.

2. The city was soon in an uproar: exasperated by these suggestions, the people ran together, seized the apostle, and dragged him out of the temple; and forthwith the doors were shut, to prevent St. Paul's flying to the horns of the altar, or the Gentiles from rushing in; or rather that this holy place might not be defiled with his blood; for the intention of the people was evidently to murder him; and they began now to beat him violently, and must, if suffered of God, have quickly put an end to his life.

3. St. Paul is, through the divine Providence, rescued from instant death. The chief captain of the Roman forces, which kept garrison in the castle of Antonia, hearing of the uproar, ran down with a detachment to quell the tumult; and, seeing him appear with an armed force, the people immediately desisted from beating St. Paul. The captain hereupon, having seized and bound him, that it might appear he intended not to rescue him, but to proceed against him in a legal way, demanded *who he was, and what he had done*. *Note*; (1.) Popular tumults are highly dangerous, and to be suppressed at their first rising. (2.) God often makes even the earth to help the woman, Rev. xii. 16.

4. The noise was so great, and the clamours so various, that it was impossible for the chief captain to get a satisfactory answer, while *some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude*. Therefore he commanded the prisoner to be carried into the castle, where he might examine into the affair; and as the soldiers guarded St. Paul thither, the crowd pressed so hard upon them, crying *away with him, hang him, crucify him*, that they were forced to take him in their arms, to prevent his being pulled to pieces, or smothered in the throng.

5. The apostle respectfully begs leave to speak a word with the chief captain, who expresses his surprize to hear him talk the Greek language, and intimates his suspicion of him, that he had been that Egyptian impostor, who, a few years before, had raised a sedition at the head of four thousand murderers, who soon increased to a considerable army; but they were defeated, and the ringleader, with a few of his accomplices only, escaped. St. Paul soon undeceived him, informing him, that he was by birth and religion a Jew, a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia, a city of distinguished renown, and wished that he might be permitted to speak to the people, to clear himself from the malicious accusations of his persecutors. *Note*; Many are borne down through misrepresentation, and oppressed by those who, if they knew the truth, would never have joined in the cry against them.

6. Lyfias, the chief captain, readily granted his request; when St. Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with his hand, intimating his desire to speak to the people; and a great silence being made thereupon, he addressed to them, in the Hebrew tongue, in that dialect which was in common use, the noble defence recorded in the following chapter.

CHAP. XXII.

Ver. 3. Brought up—at the feet of Gamaliel,] Strabo tells us that it was customary among the inhabitants of Tarsus, for the young people, when they had gone through a course of education at Rome, to travel abroad for further improvement. Concerning *Gamaliel*, see on ch. v. 34. The phrase of being brought up at his feet, plainly alludes to the posture in which the scholars were usually placed, who sat on

voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 ^k And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they ^l heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 ^m And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And ⁿ when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into ^o Damascus.

12 ^p And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, ^q having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me; ^r Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, ^s The God of our fathers ^t hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and ^u see that ^v Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be ^x his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? ^y Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

17 And it came to pass, that ^z when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a ^a trance;

18 And saw him saying unto me, ^b Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

^k Ch. 9. 7. Daniel, 10. 7. ^l Did not understand the words. Ch. 26. 14. Gen. 11. 7. & 42. 23. Deut. 28. 49. Is. 36. 11. Mat. 13. 17. ^m Ch. 9. 6. & 26. 16. ⁿ Ch. 9. 8, 9. ^o The chief city of Syria. Gen. 15. 2. 1 Kings, 11. 24. ^p Ch. 9. 10—19. & x. Song, 2. 8. Rom. 10. 14—17. ^q Ch. 10. 22. 1 Tim. 3. 17. ^r Gen. 17. 7. Exod. 3. 6. & 20. 2. Pl. 50. 7. & 81. 8—10. ^s Rom. 1. 1. Gal. 1. 1, 12, 15. 1 Tim. 1. 1. 2 Tim. 1. 1. Titus, 1. 1. Ch. 9. 15. ^t Ch. 9. 17. & 18. 9. & 23. 11. & 26. 16. 1 Cor. 9. 1. & 15. 8. ^u Ch. 3. 14. & 7. 52. 1 John, 2. 1. Heb. 7. 26. 2 Cor. 5. 21. 1 Pet. 2. 22. ^v John, 15. 27. Ch. 1. 8. & 4. 20. & 10. 39, 41. & 26. 16. & 20. 21. Luke, 24. 47, 48. ^w Mat. 3. 11. Mark, 1. 4. Luke, 3. 16. Ch. 9. 18. & 2. 38. & 3. 18. Titus, 3. 5. 1 Cor. 6. 11. 1 Tim. 1. 13. ^x Ch. 9. 26, 28. Gal. 1. 18. ^y Ch. 10. 10. Numb. 24. 4. Rev. 1. 10. 2 Cor. 12. 1. ^z Mat. 10. 14, 23. Eccl. 9. 10.

on the ground, or on low seats, while their teacher was raised on a kind of throne. Hence, in one of the rabbies, "to dust themselves with the dust of their feet," is a phrase for being a disciple. See on Luke, ii. 46. x. 39. Instead of taught according to the perfect manner, &c. Dr. Doddridge renders it accurately instructed in the law of our fathers. Vitranga, and some other learned critics, would connect, and as it seems very properly, *καταδουλιον*, taught or instructed, with the foregoing clause, at the feet of Gamaliel, which makes the enumeration more particular; —by profession a Jew,—born at Tarsus,—bred in this city,—instructed in the law at the feet of Gamaliel.

Ver. 4. And I persecuted this way unto the death,] We know that he was concerned in the death of Stephen: ch. viii. 1. and if he was not so in that of many more, it was not for want of zeal and rage, but merely of power. However, there is no reason to think that the sacred history contains a full account of all the outrages committed against Christians during the period to which it extends.

Ver. 5. The high-priest doth bear me witness,] That is, "I can appeal to him for the proof of this." It will not follow from hence, that he who was now high-priest, also bore that office when St. Paul persecuted the Christians; he might then perhaps be only an inferior member of the sanhedrim. Instead of all the estate of the elders, some read the whole court of the elders; the Greek is *πρεσβυτεριον*, the presbytery, or sanhedrim.

Ver. 9. But they heard not the voice] See on ch. ix. 7.

Ver. 14. And see that Just One,] Some commentators refer this to a future vision of Christ, and a future com-

mission to be received from him; but it clearly appears from St. Paul's own narration, that he had already seen him and heard him speak. It seems therefore most natural to refer it to the past, rather than to a future event; though it may possibly include both.

Ver. 16. Be baptized,] Baptism, in respect to adults, except in the very peculiar instance of our Lord, was a token of confession and humiliation for sin; and of a desire to be cleansed from it, as the body is by water cleansed from its pollution; and being administered to such professed penitents by divine appointment, is called the baptism of repentance, Matth. iii. 11. Mark, i. 4. Luke, iii. 3.

Ver. 18. And saw him] That is, the Lord Jesus. Some suppose, that this memorable event happened in the second journey that St. Paul made to Jerusalem. See ch. xi. 30. But the expression rather seems to intimate that it was on his first return to Jerusalem that he had this vision in the temple; and what he pleads here, ver. 19, 20. as to the probability of their receiving his testimony, suits that circumstance of time much better than the other. His dispute with some Hellenist Jews who, toward the close of his first visit to Jerusalem, attempted to kill him, ch. ix. 29. engaged the brethren to hasten his departure; and our Lord's orders to him at this critical season would of course determine him to yield to their instances, which perhaps his desire and hope of usefulness at Jerusalem might otherwise have opposed. But when he had been forced in that manner to flee for his life, while the memory of his zeal against Christianity was comparatively fresh in their minds, it does not seem natural to suppose that he would have pleaded

19 And I said, Lord, they know ^c that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee :

20 ^d And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart : for ^e I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 ¶ And they gave him audience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, ^f Away with such a *fellow* from the earth : for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 ^g The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade ^h that he should be ^{*} examined by scourging ; that he

might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 ¶ And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, ⁱ Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned ?

26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, ^k Take heed what thou doest : for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman ? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have ^l examined him : and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew

^c Ver. 4, 5. 1 Cor. 15. 9. Gal. 1. 13. Phil. 3. 6. 1 Tim. 1. 17. Ch. 26. 9—12. & 8. 3. & 9. 1. ^d Ch. 7. 58. & 8. 1. ^e Ch. 9. 15. & 23. 2, 4. & 26. 17. Gal. 1. 15. & 2. 8. Rom. 1. 5. & 11. 13. Eph. 3. 8. 1 Tim. 1. 12. & 2. 7. 2 Tim. 1. 11. ^f Ch. 21. 36. & 7. 54, 57, 58. & 25. 24. Luke, 21. 18. John, 19. 15. ^g Gen. 22. 14. Deut. 32. 36. Pl. 46. 1. Rom. 8. 28. ^h Ch. 16. 23, 27, 37. John, 19. 1. & 18. 23. Heb. 11. 35. Ver. 25, 29. ⁱ Scourged to make him confess his crime. ^j Ch. 16. 37. Ver. 27, 28. ^k Ch. 16. 38, 39. Ver. 29. ^l Or tortured him. Ver. 24. Heb. 11. 35.

pleaded the probability of their regarding it, after an interval of six years more.

Ver. 24. He should be examined by scourging ; One of the ways of examining by torture among the Romans, as well as among the Jews, was by binding the person to a pillar, and severely scourging him ; so that this infamous practice of extorting a confession has, to the disgrace of human nature, prevailed among almost all nations !

Ver. 25. Is it lawful, &c. ? See the note on ch. xvi. 37.

Ver. 28. But I was free born.] This is thought, by some, to have been in consequence of his being a native of Tarsus ; but Dr. Lardner has produced many strong arguments against admitting that city to have been a colony, or what the Romans call *municipium*, that is, a place where all the natives were free of Rome by birth. It seems therefore much more probable, that St. Paul's father, or some other of his ancestors, might have been rewarded with the freedom of the city for his fidelity and bravery in some military service, as an auxiliary to the Romans, as Josephus says several Jews were. It is also most certain that the freedom of the city of Rome might be bought.

Ver. 29. Which should have examined him :] Put him to the question or torture. See on ver. 24. The latter part of the verse might be better rendered, *the chief captain was afraid*, —because he had bound him, knowing that he was a Roman.

Inferences.—The learned education which St. Paul had received at the feet of Gamaliel, was once, no doubt, matter of his boasting and confidence. Unsanctified learning, —that potent snare to many an unstable mind, —made his bonds strong, and furnished him with frequent and spe-

cial arguments to *oppose the gospel* ; yet, when once divine grace had changed his heart, and turned *these accomplishments* into their proper channel, they made the *conquest* so much the more glorious, and rendered him the fitter instrument to subserve the merciful purposes of the almighty and all-wise God, for the defence and propagation of Christianity. Wherever *learning* is possessed, may it always be so directed and improved ! and wherever it is perverted and abused, may Christ thus manifest his victorious arm, to cast down *imaginations*, and every *high thing which exalts itself* in daring rebellion against him !

By whatever methods God has been pleased to bring us home to himself, and to introduce into our minds the saving light of his gospel, we shall have, if faithful unto death, long,—nay, everlasting reason, with St. Paul, to *recollect it* with pleasure. They who have *obtained mercy of the Lord*, should make it their care often to bring back to remembrance the particular circumstances of it, and be ready, on every proper occasion, to recount those wonders of power and love for the encouragement and instruction of others. Compare 1 Tim. i. 16.

How adorable the condescension of that blessed Redeemer, who spared this prostrate enemy, and reduced him by the tender expostulations of *mercy*, rather than the terrors of *wrath* ! It is of the same *divine mercy that we are not all consumed*, and because his *compassions fail not*. Speak, ever speak thus from heaven, O Lord, to those who ignorantly persecute thee ; and make them humbly willing to *receive the law from thy mouth*, and to embrace thee as their only Saviour !

We learn from ver. 17, 18. as well as from many other passages of sacred writ, that our *Lord Jesus Christ*, though *invisible*, is present while the proclamation of his gospel is made,

that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 ¶ On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was

made, and ever attentive to the temper with which it is received. Justly therefore does he resent the injury which is done him, when these messages of life and peace are neglected: justly does he often, in the course of his providence, remove those ordinances which men have ungratefully slighted, as did these Jews of Jerusalem; and call away the faithful ministers, who have all the day long stretched out their hands in vain to a disobedient and gainsaying people. Rom. x. 21.

But what cruel malignity did these Jews express, whom all the wonders of that astonishing relation given by the holy apostle could not convince, nor all the eloquence of it persuade!—On the contrary, for no crime—but that of being made the ambassador of divine mercy, the instrument of deliverance to thousands of perishing sinners,—they raise a clamour against the delegate of Heaven, as if he were the most impious of blasphemers; and would have hurried him from the face of the earth as unfit to live upon it. How much less were they fit to continue there? But thus forbidding the apostle to speak unto the Gentiles, (as he himself observes,) they filled up the measure of their iniquities; so that, after the abused mercy of God had waited a little longer, his deserved wrath came upon them to the uttermost. 1 Thess. ii. 16.

As unrighteous as it was in the Roman officer, on this popular clamour, to attempt putting this holy apostle to the torture, so reasonable was St. Paul's plea, as a Roman citizen, to decline that suffering. It is a prudence worthy the imitation of the bravest of men, not to throw themselves into unnecessary difficulties. True courage widely differs from rash and heedless temerity; nor are we under any obligation, as Christians, to give up our civil privileges, which ought to be esteemed as the gifts of God, to every insolent and turbulent invader. In a thousand circumstances, gratitude to God, and duty to men, will oblige us to insist upon them; and a generous concern for those who are to come after us, should engage us to labour and strive that we may transmit them down to posterity improved, rather than impaired.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, No sooner had the apostle obtained permission to speak, and all in silence listened, than with noble composure of mind, and in the most respectful manner, he addressed himself to the people, saying, Men, brethren, and fathers, bear ye my defence, which I make now unto you. He touches not on their violence, but merely aims to apologize for himself, and undeceive them respecting the false charges laid against him; and it is the greatest injustice to condemn any man, till he has been heard impartially in his own defence.

As he spoke aloud to them in the Hebrew dialect, which they understood, they kept the more silence, and he proceeded as follows.

1. He gives them an account of his parentage and education. He was one of their own body, a native Jew, a Hebrew of Hebrews; not a poor obscure man, nor illiterate, as some might have said; but a freeman of Tarsus in Cilicia, and educated under the most famous of their

rabbis, at the feet of the learned Gamaliel; and as he was thus early initiated in the most critical and accurate knowledge of the Mosaic law, with all the traditional comments of the elders thereupon; so was he most zealous for these institutions, and for the observance of these traditions, from a conscientious regard to God's glory, as they themselves now appeared to be.

2. He informs them of the bitter enmity which he had himself formerly expressed against that religion of Jesus which he now preached. He had been a bloody persecutor of the disciples of Jesus; furious to extirpate the Christian name from the earth; seizing without respect of rank, age, or sex, the professors of Christianity; and dragging them to prisons, endeavouring by every ignominy and cruelty to compel them to blaspheme and recant. And for this he appeals to the high-priest and sanhedrim, by whom he had been employed, and under the sanction of whose commission he had been sent to Damascus, to seize and carry prisoners to Jerusalem all who should be there found professing the Christian religion; that they might be proceeded against, and punished as apostates. None could have been farther from Christianity than himself: the bitterest of those who now persecuted him, came short of the enmity which he had shewn against it.

3. He relates the history of his conversion. It proceeded from no affectation of novelty, no discontent at being disappointed of preferment, from no worldly motives, nor the sophistry of others; but was the immediate miraculous work of God. For as he was ready to enter Damascus, with all his prejudices, and breathing out threatenings and slaughter, suddenly at noon a light from heaven, brighter than the meridian sun, shone around him; and, falling in terror to the earth, he heard the voice of Jesus, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And when trembling, and astonished, he answered, Who art thou, Lord? it was replied, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. Convinced now of his own dreadful guilt, and earnest to escape the fearful consequences thereof, he begs to be informed what he must do; when the Lord bid him go to Damascus, and there he should receive information of every thing that was appointed for him to do. And being now raised from the earth, and blinded with the heavenly light, his companions led him by the hand to Damascus; for the truth of which facts they could witness, this being no fancy or delusion; for though they heard not distinctly the words which were spoken, they saw the light, were terrified, and fell to the earth together with him, and heard the sound of a voice, though not the articulate discourse.

4. He declares the farther instructions and cure which he received from Ananias, whose character he describes, to recommend him to their regard. He was a devout man according to the law, and, though a Christian, still zealously observed the ritual service, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, for his exemplary life and conversation, and attachment to the temple worship. He came, and said, Brother Saul, receive thy sight, which was no

accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and ^m commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

^m Luke, 21. 12. Mat. 10. 17, 18. & 24. 9.

sooner spoken than accomplished: *the same hour I looked up upon him.* Then Ananias delivered his message, and said, *The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, as revealed in the gospel, and see that Just One, who so wrongfully suffered; and shouldst bear the voice of his mouth, and in some future time receive a fuller commission and farther instructions from him. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men, to the Jews and Gentiles, of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? without delay arise, and be baptized, receiving this instituted sign of admission into his church, and to all the privileges of it; and wash away thy sins, now pardoned through his atoning blood, calling on the name of the Lord, the only Saviour, that all the blessings of his gospel may be conferred upon thee, according to his promises.*

5. He informs them of the divine warrant by which he was commissioned to go and preach to the Gentiles. It was given him at Jerusalem, while he was in the temple praying; where he fell into a trance, and saw this divine Redeemer, who said unto him, *Get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me, being obstinately prejudiced against it. And I said, unwilling to leave my dear countrymen, for whose souls I so earnestly longed, and to whom I fancied my ministry might be particularly convincing, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagoge them that believed on thee. And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And this he urges as a reason why the people would now more readily regard his testimony, when he preached that faith which he once destroyed; since it must needs be a supernatural power which could produce so wonderful a conversion. But the Lord, who knew the hearts of all men, and that his ministry would be rejected by the Jews, repeated his command Depart, and appointed him other work; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.*

From all which they might see clearly how far he was from being that enemy to the Jewish nation and worship, which he was represented to be; how earnestly he would have continued labouring among them; how reluctant he was to leave Jerusalem; and by what most express divine authority he acted in his labours among the Gentiles.

2dly, Hitherto with patience the Jews gave audience to the apostle's discourse; but the very mention of the Gentiles fired their indignation, and they would hear no more.

1. They cried out in the most raging fury, *Away with such a fellow from the earth; for it is not fit that he should live; the very thought that the idolatrous Gentiles should be preferred to them, exasperated them beyond bounds, and they imagined no punishment was equal to the desert of such a miscreant, who could dare plead a divine commission to preach to the abhorred heathen. Therefore they cried out against him with the utmost detestation, and*

cast off their clothes, resolved to stone him on the spot as an apostate and blasphemer; and threw dust into the air to express the violence of their rage, or as if they wanted to bury him alive. Thus have the greatest and best that the world was ever blessed with, been treated as the offscouring of all things, and unworthy of the air they breathed.

2. The chief captain Lyfias, seeing such madness and fury expressed by the people, commanded Paul to be brought into the castle, partly to shelter him from the popular rage, partly from the apprehension that he must needs have been guilty of some enormous wickedness, which could occasion such general abhorrence; and therefore he most unjustly bade, without further inquiry, *that he should be examined by scourging, to extort a confession from himself of the supposed crime which made the people so violent against him.*

3. When the soldiers who were about to execute the chief captain's command, were binding the apostle with thongs to the pillar in order to scourge him, St. Paul mildly addressed himself to the centurion who stood by, and said, *Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?* The centurion, startled at this intimation, and knowing the dangerous consequence of such a procedure, stayed the soldiers, and went immediately to acquaint the chief captain, suggesting to him the necessity of proceeding with caution, since the person whom they had in custody was one of much greater distinction than they apprehended, being a Roman citizen.

4. The chief captain Lyfias, knowing the jealousy of the Roman citizens, and the severity of the law against those who should dare to bind or scourge any of them, especially without a fair and public trial, came directly, and desired to be informed in this point, saying, *Art thou a Roman citizen?* St. Paul said, *Yea.* The chief captain, surprised at this, answered, *With a great sum obtained I this freedom; and you seem a poor Jew, unable to purchase so high a dignity: and Paul, who held his privilege from a more honourable source, said, But I was free-born.*

5. Instantly orders were given for his being loosed. They who were about to scourge him, departed; and the chief captain himself was under terrible apprehensions, lest, if St. Paul should complain of this outrage, it might be attended with very ill consequences to himself—that he had rashly proceeded so far as to bind his prisoner, he being a Roman. Our civil privileges are invaluable blessings.

6. The next day, the chief captain, desirous of coming at the certainty of the thing laid to St. Paul's charge, commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear; and having loosed him from his bands, that he might not seem to prejudice his cause, and treat him as a criminal without proof, he brought Paul down, and set him before them, that they might bring their accusations, and he be at liberty to answer in his own defence.

CHAP. XXIII.

As Paul pleadeth his cause, Ananias commandeth to smite him: dissention among his accusers: God encourageth him. The Jews' design to lay wait for Paul, is declared unto the chief captain. He sendeth him to Felix the governor.

[Anno Domini 61.]

AND Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

2 And the high-priest Ananias commanded

them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

^a See Ch. 22. 1. ^b Ch. 24. 16. ^c 1 Cor. 4. 4. ^d 2 Cor. 1. 12. & 4. 2. ^e 2 Tim. 1. 3. Heb. 13. 18. ^f 1 Kings, 22. 24. Jer. 20. 2. John, 18. 22. Mic. 5. 1. ^g Mat. 23. 27. Rev. 3. 2. Tit. 1. 16. ^h 2 Tim. 3. 5. Jer. 7. 4. Mic. 3. 11. ⁱ Lev. 19. 35. Deut. 17. 4, 9. & 25. 1-3. ^j Exod. 22. 28. Eccl. 10. 20. 2 Pet. 2. 10. Jude, 8.

CHAP. XXIII.

Ver. 1. Men and brethren, I have lived, &c.] St. Paul could not intend by this to intimate, that he thought himself free from guilt while persecuting the Christians, since he so expressly declares the contrary elsewhere. See 1 Tim. i. 13. 1 Cor. xv. 9. Gal. i. 13. He was only examined with respect to his conduct as a Christian; and therefore it would not have been pertinent here to refer to his conduct, while a persecuting Jew; though it was indeed true, that he did not then act against his conscience, how criminal soever he was in suffering it to continue misinformed. The plain sense of the passage is, "That his conscience, when examined as in the sight of God, with respect to what they alleged against him, did not charge him with any known and deliberate contradictions to its dictates:" and so it was, in effect, a solemn and very pertinent appeal to the Searcher of all hearts, that he had not devoted himself to the service of the gospel, in which he was now engaged, from any mean and dishonourable principle, but was fully convinced of the truth of it, and therefore was prepared to abide all extremities in its defence. Well might there be, in such a case, a fall of joy arising in an upright heart, from a consciousness through grace of its own integrity, amid such violent calumnies as were now advanced against him.

Ver. 2. The high priest Ananias] He was the son of Nedezeus, and by his station head of the sanhedrim. He had before this been sent in chains to Rome, to give an account to Claudius Cæsar of his behaviour in the quarrel which had happened between the Jews and Samaritans, during the government of Cumanus in Judea; but, being acquitted, he returned to Jerusalem, and still enjoyed the dignity of the high-priesthood, probably at the intercession of Agrippa the younger. Full of prejudice against St. Paul and the gospel doctrine, he condemned the apostle's speech, as too boasting and arrogant; and ordered some of the apparitors who stood by St. Paul to smite him on the mouth, for taking upon him to glory so much, though he had in reality used only a well grounded and just defence. But St. Paul could not wonder at such cruel and unrighteous treatment, when he considered that so had the false prophet Zedekiah dealt with the true prophet Micaiah; so

had the high-priest Pasbur smitten the prophet Jeremiah; and, what is more, in like manner had the wicked Jews struck our Lord, when he had behaved with the greatest modesty, and innocence.

Ver. 3. God shall smite thee, thou whited wall, &c.] Alluding to the beautiful outside of some walls which are full of dirt and rubbish within. See on Matth. xxiii. 27. and Luke, xi. 44. The account which Josephus gives of the character and fate of Ananias, abundantly illustrates this prophetic speech of St. Paul. He might well be called a whited wall, not only as he committed this indecency in violation of the law, (Levit. xix. 15.) while gravely sitting in a sacred character on the tribunal of justice; but also, as at the same time that he carried it plausibly towards the citizens, and stood high in their favour, he most impiously and cruelly defrauded the inferior priests of the assistance which the divine law assigned them; so that some of them even perished for want:—and God did remarkably smite him; for after his own house had been reduced to ashes, in a tumult begun by his own son, he was besieged and taken in the royal palace; where, having in vain attempted to hide himself in an old aqueduct, he was dragged out and slain;—an event which happened five years after this, in the very beginning of the Jewish war.

Ver. 5. I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest:] Animated on a sudden by the secret impulse of a prophetic Spirit, which bore him, as it were, for that moment beyond himself, St. Paul delivered the words of ver. 3. which being urged against him, he chose not to enter upon a question so difficult to be cleared up, as the divine original of that impulse on his mind, by which he found himself inclined to utter those remarkable words; and only touched upon a circumstance attending it, saying, "Indeed, brethren, in the sudden transport of my mind, I was not aware that it was the high-priest." This is a natural rendering of the original words;—which cannot fairly be translated, I do not acknowledge him to be the high-priest: nor can it be imagined that St. Paul would enter on so curious and so dangerous a question as the justice of his accession to that office. Some have thought that St. Paul did not know him personally, but his habit and place in the sanhedrim must have distinguished him; or, if we were to suppose with Ribetus and others, that St.

6 ¶ But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, ^a I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissention between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 ^b For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, ^c We find no evil in this man: ^d but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

10 ¶ And when there arose a great dissention, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should

have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle.

11 ^e And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

12 ¶ And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, ^f and bound themselves ^g under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

^a Ch. 24. 15, 21. & 26. 5, 6, 8. & 28. 20. Phil. 3. 5. ^b Mat. 22. 23. Mark, 12. 18. Luke, 20. 27. ^c Ch. 25. 25. & 26. 31. Luke, 23. 4, 14, 15, 22. with Prov. 16. 7. 1 Sam. 24. 17. ^d Ch. 9. 4. & 16. 9. & 22. 7, 17, 18. & 5. 39. & 11. 17. ^e Pf. 109. 31. & 46. 1. Ch. 2. 25. & 18. 9. & 19. 21. & 28. 16—31. Deut. 32. 36. If. 41. 10, 14. & 43. 2. ^f Ver. 20. 30. ^g If. 8. 9, 10. Mat. 26. 74. ^h Or with an oath of execration. Mat. 26. 74. 1 Sam. 3. 17. & 20. 13. & 25. 22. 2 Sam. 3. 9. 1 Kings, 2. 23. & 19. 2.

Paul, hearing the voice while looking another way, did not know whence it came, the solution is utterly insufficient; for his answer plainly shews, that he knew the person speaking to be a judge. The best exposition therefore of this matter, I am persuaded, is that above given, which will easily reconcile all that passed with Christ's promise of being with his disciples, when appearing before councils. Matth. x. 19. Mark, xiii. 11. For, according to that exposition, St. Paul by inspiration uttered a true prediction, and then alleged a true fact, to prevent any ill use of the circumstance in which it was spoken; only waving something which he might have justly urged in his own vindication, and from which he had an undoubted right to recede, if he thought fit. In the mean time, the candour both of the apostle and of the sacred historian, is well worthy our remark.

Ver. 6. Of the hope and resurrection, &c.] The apostle here refers particularly to the resurrection of Jesus, and, by him, of all mankind. All the Jews, long before, knew this to be the Christian doctrine; and therefore here was no fraud nor artful gloss to obtain favour with the Pharisees; but only an appeal to their prevailing doctrine, as a point in which the apostle agreed with them, and as what greatly favoured the Christian doctrine which he preached, and for which he suffered. See Acts, iv. 2. and v. 17.

Ver. 8. For the Sadducees, &c.] "For, on one hand, the Sadducees, those freethinkers of the age, deny that there will be a resurrection of the dead, or that there is any such permanent being, as an angel, in the invisible world, or a separate spirit of man that survives the death of the body, and subsists in a state of disunion from it: but, on the contrary, the Pharisees, the strictest sect of the

"Jews, contend earnestly for the certainty of the resurrection of the body, and the existence of spiritual beings, both of the angelic and human rank, in the other world."

Ver. 9. Let us not fight against God.] When they mentioned it as a supposable case, that an angel might have spoken to him, they might probably allude to the many visions and revelations which St. Paul, in his late speech to the people, had professed to have received. Gamaliel was now dead, otherwise one would have supposed that he had made this speech, it being so very like that which he is recorded to have made, ch. v. 39. Party spirit now carried the Pharisees to say the same things concerning Christianity, which policy and the national expectations led Gamaliel to say in the place above cited. Instead of cry in the first clause, several render it, *clamour*.

Ver. 11. The Lord stood by him, &c.] This plainly shews that our Lord approved of the part which St. Paul had acted before the sanhedrim, though some had censured it without understanding or considering the circumstance of it. Witius observes, that it must have been a greater consolation to so faithful a soldier of Christ as St. Paul was, having been thus approved and encouraged by his general, to be led on to further combats, than to be immediately dismissed: and such a temper he expresses, Phil. i. 20, 26.

Ver. 14. We have bound ourselves under a great curse.] *We have bound ourselves by a s. k. m. anathema,* seems a proper rendering of the emphatic original. Such execrable vows as these, were not unusual with the Jews, who challenged to themselves a right of punishing those without any legal process, whom they considered as transgressors of the law; and in some cases, thought that they were justifi-

15 ^o Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 ^p And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 ^q Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain; for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22 So the chief captain then let the young

man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

23 ¶ And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and * spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.

27 ^x This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

30 ^a And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewel.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to † Antipatris.

^o Prov. 1. 11, 16. & 4. 16. Ch. 25. 3. ^p Job. 5. 13. Prov. 21. 30. ^q Mat. 10. 16, 17. Eph. 5. 15. ^r Ver. 12—15. Ch. 25. 3. ^s Ch. 25. 3. & 20. 3. Ps. 10. 9, 10. & 37. 32. Mic. 7. 2. Prov. 1. 16. & 4. 16. ^t Or curse. Ver. 12, 14. Rom. 9. 3. with Mat. 26. 74. ^u Or rebels, or javelin casters. ^v Ch. 24. 3, 25, 27. ^w Ch. 21. 32, 33. & 23. 10. ^x Ch. 22. 30. ^y Ch. 18. 15. & 24. 6, 10—21. & 26. 2—6, 51. & 25. 8. ^a Ver. 16—24. Ch. 24. 7, 8. & 25. 16. [†] A city near the north-west of Canaan.

fied in killing them. Josephus mentions a case not much unlike this, of some who bound themselves with an oath to kill Herod; in which they gloried, as a laudable intention, because he had violated the ancient custom of their nation. It is no wonder therefore that these Jews should make no scruple of acquainting the chief-priests and elders with their conspiracy against the life of St. Paul; who were so far from blaming them for it, that, not long after they renewed the same design themselves. Dr. Lightfoot has shewn from the Talmud, that if they were prevented from accomplishing such vows as these, it was an easy matter to obtain an absolution from their rabbies.

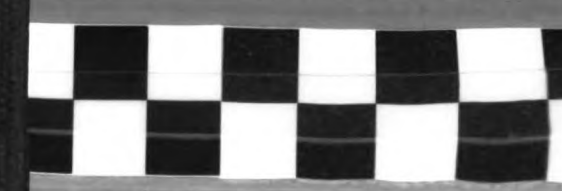
Ver. 15. Or ever he come near,] That is, before he come near.

Ver. 17. Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him,] Though St. Paul had an express promise from Christ for his security, ver. 11. yet he did not neglect any proper means of safety. Comp. ch. xxvii. 24, 25, 31.

Ver. 19. Then the chief captain took him by the hand,] It is observable, that Lysias seems to have conducted this whole affair like a man of integrity, prudence, and generosity.

Ver. 27. With an army,] That is, With a band of soldiers. By the latter clause Lysias seems in general to intimate that he had, on the whole, been more solicitous to provide for St. Paul's security, out of regard to his being a Roman citizen.

Ver. 31. Antipatris.] Very different accounts are given of



32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle :

33 Who, when they came to ^b Cæsarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

34 And when the governor had read *the*

letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of ^c Cilicia ;

35 I will hear thee, said he, ^d when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's ^e judgment-hall.

^b A city on the north-west of Canaan. See ch. 8. 40. built by Herod. John. 19. 28. Mat. 27. 27.

^c A country in Lesser Asia. Ch. 15. 41. & 22. 39.

^d Ch. 24. 19. & 25. 16.

^e A palace

of the situation of Antipatris, which must however have been north-west of Jerusalem, as it was in the way from thence to Cæsarea. Its ancient name was *Caphar Salama*, 1 Macc. vii. 31. But Herod the Great rebuilt it, and gave it the name of *Antipatris*, in honour of his father *Antipater*. It was something more than thirty-eight of our miles from Jerusalem. Probably the soldiers thus hastened, lest the Jews, in their rage against St. Paul, should pursue them. However, it is not necessary to conclude that St. Paul was carried thither in one night, or that the soldiers returned in one day : it is only said that they travelled by *night*, which they might do, and rest by the way, nor is it probable that they took St. Paul with them by night from Jerusalem, and reached Cæsarea the next day, when it appears from Josephus, that from Jerusalem to Cæsarea was near seventy miles.

Ver. 35. Herod's judgment-hall.] This was a palace or court erected by Herod the Great, when he rebuilt and beautified Cæsarea. Probably some tower belonging to it might be used as a kind of state-prison, as is common in such places.

Inferences.—Next to the history of *the great Captain of our salvation*, as recorded by the holy evangelists, none of *the Christian heroes* of whom we read, makes a brighter figure than St. Paul ; nor is there any who seems a *spectacle more worthy the view of angels*, or of God himself : nobly supported in the midst of persecutions and indignities, by *the testimony of his conscience* as to the integrity with which he had *walked before God*, and therefore assured of the divine aid, he appears superior to all human injuries. Most unrighteously did *the high priest* command that *mouth* to be *smitten*, which had spoken *the words of truth and soberness* : most justly did God verify the prediction of his faithful, though despised servant, and *smite that whitened wall* with speedy destruction, which had stood in such a haughty opposition to his gospel.

St. Paul might have urged a great deal *in defence* of what he had said, and yet he chose prudently to decline that defence ; and seems much more solicitous to prevent *the abuse* of what might appear dubious, than to assert his own cause to the utmost that it would bear. Thus should we sometimes be ready, as the Psalmist beautifully expresses it, *to restore what we took not away*, (Psal. lxi. 4.) and for the peace of society, and the edification of others, should be content to *wave apologies* which we might justly offer. Let us learn particularly to *revere that authority* with which God hath clothed *magistrates* ; and be very cautious how we *speak evil of the rulers of our people* : Let the *ministers of the gospel* especially be cautious of it, lest the *ministry* be

upon that account *blamed*, and their own character exposed, as if they were *trumpeters of sedition*, rather than *ambassadors of the Prince of peace*.

Our Lord had given it in charge to his *apostles*, that they should be *as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves* ; (Matth. x. 16.) both these characters are joined in St. Paul's behaviour on this important occasion : it was no dishonest artifice to *divide the council*, and to engage the favour of *the Pharisees*, by reminding them of what, if they considered the circumstances of the case, must needs appear to them to be the truth ; that it was *his zeal* for the doctrine of *the resurrection* that brought upon him a great deal of *that opposition* which he was then encountering, and that the most convincing evidence of *that doctrine* depended on the facts which, as *an apostle of Jesus*, he publicly maintained. And it had been most happy for *the Pharisees* had they always borne in their own minds the caution which they now gave *the Sadducees*, to *take heed of fighting against God*. May none of us *provoke the Lord to jealousy*, as if we were *stronger than he* ; which we shall certainly do by rejecting the tidings that he has sent us by his apostles, and the life and immortality which he promises in his gospel.

Graciously did Providence provide for the rescue and deliverance of St. Paul from *the tumult* then excited, and *the conspiracy* afterwards formed : who would not lament to see a *design of murder* avowed with impunity before the *chief magistrates* of the Jewish nation, and approved by them under a pretence of *religious zeal*, while it was consecrated to God by the solemnity of a *vow* ? *The time* was indeed *come*, when they that killed the servants of Christ thought they did God good service, (John. xvi. 2.) as if *no libation* or offering could have been so pleasing to him as *the blood of his saints* : but names alter not the nature of things ; God regarded their councils with righteous abhorrence, and *laughed them to scorn*. In vain did they form and approve a *conspiracy* which heaven had determined to defeat ; *their lying in wait* was, we know not how, *discovered to a youth* ; and by means of *that youth*, who might perhaps have seemed *beneath their notice*, God as effectually *preserved St. Paul* as if he had sent an *angel from heaven* to deliver him, and turned the cabals of *these bigots* that thirsted for his blood into perplexity and shame. So, *Lord*, do thou continue to *carry the council of the froward along*, (Job. v. 13.) and save from the hand of violence and fraud all who *commit themselves* unto thee *in well-doing*, and humbly confide in thy wisdom and goodness.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, St. Paul with undaunted courage appears before the sanhedrim, nor fears their faces, though well persuaded of their inveterate enmity against him.

C H A P. XXIV.

Paul, being accused by Tertullus the orator, answereth for his life and doctrine: he preacheth Christ to the governor and his wife. The governor hopeth for a bribe, but in vain. At last going out of his office, he leaveth Paul in prison.

[Anno Domini 61.]

AND after five days Ananias the high-priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who in-

* Ch. 23. 2, 30, 35. & 25. 17.

formed the governor against Paul.

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse *him*, saying, ^b Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

3 We accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further

^b Pl. 12. 2. & 55. 21. Jude, 16.

1. He makes a solemn profession of his own integrity. *Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God, until this day; even in his unregenerate state he had, according to his best light and knowledge, acted with conscientious zeal for God's glory; and his outward conversation had been ever unimpeached by the Jews. And as in his conversion to Christianity he had embraced the gospel upon the strongest evidence, so had he ever since with all fidelity approved himself to God; and they who have this latter testimony of a good conscience, need never be ashamed.*

2. Ananias the high priest, highly offended at such a protestation of his innocence, commanded one of the officers who stood by St. Paul, to strike him on the mouth, and not suffer him to proceed with such confidence and familiarity of address.

3. Justly indignant at such an insult, and not actuated by private revenge, but a prophetic impulse, the apostle denounces the doom of this proud high-priest: *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall*, with some stroke of his vengeance for thy pride and hypocrisy: *for fittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?* how unjust and iniquitous is such a procedure! *Note*; Proud persecutors are but whited walls, and shall soon feel how unable they are to stand before the storm of divine judgments.

4. Some who were present, were highly offended at the apostle's freedom, as an unbecoming insult on the high-priest's character and office, saying, *Revilest thou God's high-priest?*

5. St. Paul immediately apologized for what he had said, unwilling to prejudice his Jewish brethren, however great the provocation which had been given him: *I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest*; being under the immediate and powerful influence of a divine impulse, he did not advert to his dignity at that time: *for he meant not to speak disrespectfully of that high office, since it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*; and he always desired to have his conduct governed by God's revealed word, and to honour the magistrate, however wicked the man might be.

zuly, Since the apostle had to deal with men, on whom he might now easily perceive he could not hope to prevail by pleading the cause which they were determined to persecute, he,

1. Prudently disconcerted all their measures by a plea which they little apprehended. He observed that the council

VOL. I.

was divided into two sects, consisting partly of Pharisees and partly of Sadducees; and if he could wisely gain one party of them to his side, he might more easily extricate himself from his difficulties. Accordingly he cried aloud, *Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee*; have always been brought up in the faith of their distinguishing tenets; and among the chief articles thereof we reckon the resurrection of the dead; for which hope *I am called in question*; the great salvation which I preach being built on the resurrection of the Redeemer.

2. This immediately, as he expected, raised a division in the house; the Pharisees espousing this great truth, the Sadducees opposing it: for the Sadducees denied the resurrection of the body, the immortality of the soul, and any future state of rewards and punishments; while the Pharisees, though wedded to their traditions, stiffly maintained these great doctrines of truth. Hence arose the schism between them; and their fury against St. Paul was now turned into a sharp contention between themselves; so that a great cry arose, and, in mere opposition to the Sadducees, the Pharisees took the apostle's part, and contended for him as orthodox in his principles, and innocent in his behaviour: *But if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him*, as it is possible may be the case, *let us not fight against God*; since all opposition to such a heavenly message would be in fact rebellion against God himself, according to the advice which Gamaliel had formerly given.

3. A violent tumult hereupon arose; the Sadducees were enraged at the opposition they met with: and in the quarrel between his friends and foes, St. Paul was in danger of being torn limb from limb; so that the chief captain was again compelled to interpose, and with his soldiers to carry him off, and secure him in the castle, lest he should be pulled in pieces by them. Thus the Lord again providentially rescued him from the jaws of death.

4. The night following, *the Lord stood by him*, to comfort him, and encourage him to stand fast with unshaken confidence, *and said, Be of good cheer, Paul*: be confident on the supports of my power and love, and let no dangers dismay thee; *for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome*: so the apostle had designed formerly (chap. xix. 21.); and now the Lord will make even the malice of his persecutors the means of carrying him thither. *Note*; If the Lord speak comfort to our souls, and stand by us, then our prison shall be a palace, and our sufferings our joy.

tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldst hear us of thy clemency a few words.

5 For we have found this man a * pesti-

lent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes :

* Ch. 16. 20. & 17. 6, 7. & 21. 28. † Kings, 18. 17.

• Gr. a *plague*.

3dly, We have a desperate plot laid against the innocent apostle, but by the divine Providence discovered and defeated.

1. The plot was deeply laid, and ready to be executed. Since they could gain their ends no other way, the next day some of his most envenomed foes determined to assassinate him. The number of the conspirators amounted to more than forty, who by a dreadful oath bound their souls to be faithful to each other, and *neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul*. And this their horrid design they communicated to the chief priests and elders for their approbation, who they knew would stop at nothing to destroy a man whom they so abhorred. They proposed, therefore, that the council should desire the chief captain to bring St. Paul once more to the council-board to be examined; and they undertook to assassinate him by the way as he came: nor did the chief priests, it seems, or elders, hesitate at the proposal.

2. God brought this bloody conspiracy to light. A nephew of St. Paul's, his sister's son, got some intelligence of their design, and instantly ran to the castle to acquaint the apostle of his danger, who begged the favour of one of the centurions to introduce the young man to the chief captain, he having some very interesting intelligence to communicate. The centurion very obligingly went, and informed Lyſias of St. Paul's request, and he without delay gave the young man a private audience. Taking him kindly by the hand, the chief captain led him aside, and bade him speak freely what he had to say: whereupon he informed him of the whole conspiracy which was ready to be put in execution, the conspirators waiting only for a promise from him. The young man therefore humbly begs, that he will not *yield to them* in this matter. The chief captain, with a solemn injunction of secrecy, hereupon dismissed him, engaging to take effectual care of St. Paul. *Note*; (1.) The Lord often wonderfully brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and lays open by strange methods the deep designs of bloody conspirators. (2.) It is a high recommendation to men of rank who are in office, to be easy of access, and not proudly to disregard their poor suitors. (3.) Secrecy is often most essential to the success of our affairs.

3. Lyſias immediately took the most effectual method to prevent this horrid assassination: fearing lest, if he kept St. Paul in the castle, the madness of the Jews might hurry them to some dreadful outrage, or to attempt by one method or other to compass his death, he called two centurions, and bade them get two hundred soldiers, and as many spearmen, with seventy horsemen, ready to march to Cæsarea by nine o'clock that evening, and to *provide beasts*, one or more, for St. Paul's use, and perhaps also for some of his companions who might choose to attend him; and to deliver him up safe to Felix the governor; treating the prisoner with all possible respect, and desirous thus to rescue him from the hands of the conspirators.

4. With the prisoner he sent the following letter. *Clau-*

dius Lyſias unto the most excellent governor Felix, sends greeting, wishing him all prosperity. This man whom I have sent, was taken of the Jews, in a tumultuous manner, and would have been killed by them, had I not interposed. Then, hearing of the riot which was made, I came with an army to quell the disturbance, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman citizen. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, willing to give the matter an impartial hearing, I brought him first into their council, to know what they had to say against him; when I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing really criminal laid to his charge, worthy of death or of bonds. And when it was told me, how that the Jews had sent for the man to assassinate him,—to prevent to be a deed, I sent straightway to thee, referring the whole matter to your excellency's cognizance, and gave commandment to his accusers also, to say before thee what they had against him, as a more competent judge and fitter to decide on this matter. Farewell.

5. The soldiers under the command of the centurions departed at night, and, probably, before morning had brought St. Paul safe to Antipatris; (see the Annotations;) when, being out of danger, the infantry returned, and left the seventy horse to conduct him to Cæsarea; who on their arrival delivered the letter to the governor, and presented the prisoner before him. When Felix had perused the contents, he asked St. Paul, of what province he was; and having understood that he belonged to Cilicia, *I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall*, assigning him some kind of apartment in the palace, and, though under confinement, permitting his friends to visit him without restraint.

CHAP. XXIV.

Ver. 1. Ananias—descended.] Or, Went down.

*Ver. 2. Tertullus began to accuse him,] Almost every word of this oration is false,—the accusation of St. Paul, the encomium on the government of Felix, and the declaration of a lawful intention in what they had done and attempted. When he says, *We enjoy great quietness by thee*, he probably refers to what Felix had done to clear the country of robbers and impostors; for all the historians agree that he was in every other respect a man of so bad a character, that his government was a plague to all the provinces over which he presided; and as for Judea, its state under Felix was so far from being what Tertullus here represents, that Josephus, besides what he says of the barbarous and cowardly assassination of Jonathan the high-priest by his means, declares, that the Jews accused him before Nero of unsufferable oppressions; and had certainly ruined him, if his brother Pallas had not interposed in his favour. We may read the next clause, and illustrious deeds are happily done to this nation by your prudent administration, which is the exact rendering of the original.*

Ver. 4. Notwithstanding,] Or, But.

Ver.

6 ^d Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

7 ^e But the chief captain Lyfias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,

8 ^f Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of ^{*} whom, thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.

9 ^g And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

10 ¶ Then Paul, after that the governor had ^h beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years [†] a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11 ⁱ Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 ^k And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising

up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, ^l that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, ^m believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, ⁿ that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16 ^o And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

17 Now after many years I came to bring ^p alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 ^q Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult:

19 ^r Who ought to have been here before

^d Ch. 21. 26, 27, 31. & 22. 10. Ver. 11—13. Ch. 25. 8. ^e Ch. 21. 31—33. & 22. 30. & 23. 10. ^f Ch. 23. 30. & 25. 16. ^g Paul. ^h Pl. 4. 2. & 64. 3. Jer. 9. 3—5. John, 8. 44. ⁱ Ch. 12. 17. & 13. 16. & 19. 33. & 21. 40. [†] Felix was made procurator over Judea in anno Domini 53. ^j Ch. 21. 26. ^k Ch. 25. 7, 8. & 28. 17. ^l Mat. 10. 32. Pl. 119. 46. Ch. 3. 13. & 5. 30. & 7. 32. & 22. 14. & 26. 22. & 28. 22. & 9. 2. ^m 2 Tim. 1. 3. ⁿ Ch. 10. 43. & 26. 22, 23. Luke, 24. 47, 44. John, 5. 39. ^o 2 Cor. 1. 20. ^p Ch. 23. 38. Daniel, 12. 2. John, 5. 28, 29. Ch. 26. 6, 8. & 28. 20. Rev. 20. 12. Job, 19. 25, 26. ^q 1 Theff. 4. 14—16. Mat. 22. 31, 32. ^r 1 Tim. 4. 7, 8. ^s 1 Theff. 2. 10. Ch. 23. 1. ^t 1 Cor. 4. 4. ^u 2 Cor. 1. 12. & 4. 2. ^v 2 Tim. 1. 3. Heb. 13. 18. ^w Ch. 11. 29. Rom. 15. 25, 26. Gal. 2. 10. ^x 1 Cor. 16. 4. ^y 2 Cor. viii. ix. Ch. 21. 26. ^z Ch. 21. 26, 27. & 25. 28. & 26. 21. Luke, 12. 1. ^{aa} Ch. 23. 30. & 25. 16.

Ver. 6. Who also hath gone about to profane the temple:] Tertullus artfully mentions this as the most express fact he had to charge upon him, well knowing that the Romans allowed the Jews a power of executing, even without forms of law, any person who should be found in any such act of profanation; and he seems to have designed to make a merit of their moderation, that they intended, nevertheless, fairly to have tried him, and not to have destroyed him on the spot, as Lyfias had justly charged them with attempting: and it is observable, that Tertullus no where expressly avows so much as a design to have put St. Paul to death, though it was undoubtedly intended. The expression, with great violence took him, ver. 7. is another base and false insinuation of this orator, as if Lyfias's just care of the life of a man had stopped the course of justice, and been an act of the highest outrage.

Ver. 10. Then Paul—answered, Forasmuch, &c.] It was now about seven years since Felix entered on his government. The three articles of Tertullus's charge were sedition,—heresy,—and a profanation of the temple. St. Paul's answer exactly corresponds to each of these. As to the first he suggests, that he had not been long enough at Jerusalem to form a party, and attempt an insurrection; and challenges his accusers, in fact, to produce any evidence of such practices, ver. 11—13. As to the second, he confesses himself to be a Christian, but maintains that Christi-

anity is a religion perfectly agreeable to the revelation of Moses and all the prophets, and consequently not deserving to be branded with any infamous or invidious title, ver. 14—16. And as for the profanation of the temple, he tells them, that on the contrary he had entered it with some peculiar rites of religious purification, and had behaved himself therein in a most peaceful and regular manner; so that his innocence had been evident even before the sanhedrim, where the authors of the tumult did not dare to appear against him; ver. 17—21.

Ver. 14. So worship I the God of my fathers,] This was a very proper plea before a Roman magistrate, as it proves that he was under the protection of the Roman laws, since the Jews were so; whereas, had he introduced the worship of new gods, he had forfeited that protection.

Ver. 16. And herein] εν τούτω, that is, in this work do I employ myself; or, as others render it; "In the mean time, whilst I am in this world;" or as others, (I think most probably,) "for this cause, or on this account, because "I believe a resurrection, therefore, I have a conscientious care of my life, and all the actions of it." That the phrase εν τούτω sometimes signifies on this account, is shewn by Raphelius, Annot. ex Xen. p. 185.

Ver. 18. Neither with multitude, nor with tumult:] If the apostle had disturbed other people in their religious worship, whether Jews or Gentiles, invaded their civil rights,

thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil-doing in me, while I stood before the council,

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, ' Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

22 ¶ And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that* way, he deferred them, and said, When Lyllias the chief captain shall come down, I ' will know the uttermost of your matter.

23 " And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

24 ¶ And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife * Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the * faith in Christ.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix ' trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

¹ Ch. 23. 6. & 26. 6, 9. & 28. 20. ² Deut. 19. 18. Ch. 23. 20.
married to another man. ³ 2 Cor. 7. 1. ⁴ Ch. 2. 37. Heo. 4. 11.

⁵ Prov. 16. 7. Ver. 26. Ch. 27. 3. & 28. 16, 31. ⁶ Who was
Rom. 3. 19, 20. Ch. 17. 32.

or made any tumult, sedition, or insurrection, the Roman law would have condemned him: but as there were already several sects among the Jews, the Christians might, if considered as a new sect, differ from them all, and yet remain under the protection of the Roman law.

Ver. 22. Having more perfect knowledge, &c.] Dr. Heylin, after many learned expositors, translates this verse thus: *Felix, having heard both parties, put them off to another time, saying, When I shall be better informed concerning this sect, and the chief captain Lyllias shall be here, I will inquire more narrowly into this affair.* If the passage is to be understood according to our version, the meaning must be, " that Felix when he heard these things, having been more accurately informed concerning *this way* of Christianity, and knowing it not to be the mischievous thing which these accusers suggested, put them off."

Ver. 23. That he should forbid none of his acquaintance] This was a circumstance graciously ordered by divine Providence, which would make St. Paul's confinement much lighter than it could otherwise have been, and gave him an opportunity of much greater usefulness. The word *ὑποπέλειν*, rendered *minister*, sometimes is used for *assistance in general*, where personal ministration and attendance is out of the question; and as it is here distinguished from and prefixed to *coming to him*, it may probably signify, " Sending him food, books, or other accommodations."

Ver. 24. His wife Drusilla,] She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa, and sister of the king Agrippa mentioned in the next chapter. She had been married to Azizus king of the *Emessenes*; but Felix, being struck with her beauty which was remarkably great, made use of the agency of one Simon, a wicked Jew, who professed himself a magician, to persuade her to abandon her husband, and marry him; to which she consented, more perhaps to avoid the envy of her sister Bernice, than out of love to Felix; though Azizus had but a little before submitted to circumcision, and so embraced Judaism as the condition of the nuptials. She was afterwards consumed with the son she had by Felix, in a terrible eruption of Vesuvius.

Ver. 25. And as he reasoned of righteousness, &c.] How suitable this discourse was to the character and circum-

stances of the persons to whom it was addressed, appears sufficiently from the former note, and from the note on ver. 2. but see more in the *Inferences*. It may be proper here to obviate some mistakes, and perhaps dangerous ones, which have been drawn from this passage; as if *reasoning* on these topics was sufficiently *preaching of faith in Christ*. " This (says Dr. Benson,) was St. Paul's *preaching Christ*, " or the *faith of Christ*:" whereas, if the reader will cast his eye on the preceding verse, he will find that the foundation of St. Paul's discourse was *concerning that faith in Christ*, the great Messiah, which this great apostle ever laid down as the ground-work of what he delivered; in strict conformity with what he himself had said,—*Other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, namely Jesus Christ*. Upon this foundation alone he always raised the amiable and important superstructure of holy and virtuous practice; and agreeably hereto, upon the present occasion, speaking of faith in Christ, as the great and important subject of his ministry, he took an opportunity from the peculiar characters of his principal hearers, to dwell upon subjects in a particular manner adapted to them, and at the same time inseparably dependant upon that *faith in Christ* which he preached. And undoubtedly this is the true and important method of preaching Christ; and they who think they discharge this duty properly, and imitate St. Paul's example, by preaching of righteousness, temperance, and other moral virtues, separately and independently from their living foundation, *faith in Jesus*, not only mistake this matter greatly, but certainly have not the least countenance from the apostle's practice in this place.

Ver. 25. When I have a convenient season, &c.] And I will take some future opportunity to call for thee. This is fully expressed by the original. St. Paul must, no doubt, discern those marks of confusion, which would be so apparent in Felix's countenance, and which would give him some hopes of succeeding through grace in this important attempt for such a conversion, and consequently would animate him when he resumed the discourse: this must of course have increased in Felix a conviction of the apostle's innocence, and an esteem for his virtues; yet, in spite of all, he was so far from genuine repentance, that he would not do justice

26 ¶ * He hoped also that money should loose him: wherefore he sent for him the have been given him of Paul, that he might oftener, and communed with him.

* Job, 15. 34. Pf. 26. 10. 1 Tim. 6. 10.

tice to St. Paul. However, the conviction might perhaps prevail so far, as to engage him to persist in his resolution of not delivering him up to the Jews. How affecting an instance and illustration of the treachery of the human heart! See on ch. xxvi. 24.

Ver. 26, 27. He hoped also that money should have been given him] This stroke finishes the character of Felix, and shews still more plainly how far off he was from really receiving the gospel. Felix might indulge such expectations, from considering that St. Paul was a Roman citizen, and a principal of the sect of the Christians, who having formerly sold their possessions to maintain their brethren, might contribute largely on this occasion. He might even expect to have received a considerable present from the apostle himself, knowing that he had been intrusted with a large sum of money collected for the brethren at Jerusalem. But the apostle, not being used to give bribes, continued in bonds for two years; for though a Roman citizen might not be bound with thongs, by way of punishment, or in order to be scourged, yet he might be chained to a soldier, and kept in custody, upon suspicions supposed to be just, or when credible accusations were brought against him; though St. Paul was indeed in every respect detained unjustly. The policy however of Felix, and his desire of conciliating the favour of the Jews, did not prevent their clamorous accusations from following the governor to Rome; which had certainly ruined him had not the interest of his brother Pallas prevailed to obtain his pardon from Nero. How much more effectually had he consulted the peace of his mind, had he embraced the gospel on St. Paul's admonition, and cultivated those serious impressions which were once so strongly made upon his conscience! It was during the two years of St. Paul's imprisonment here, that those contentions arose between the Jews and Gentiles as to their respective rights in Cæsarea, which, after many tumults and slaughters of the Jews, were inflamed rather than appeased by the hearing at Rome, and did a great deal towards exasperating the Jewish nation to that war, which ended in its utter ruin.

Inferences drawn from St. Paul's appearance before Felix, the Roman governor. Ver. 24, &c. Who would not wish to have been present at this astonishing scene, which represents the apostle of the Gentiles as giving an account of his faith to Felix the Roman governor; and that in so moving and convincing a manner, under the grace of God, and with such force of eloquence and strength of argument, that even he, before whom he stands capitally accused, is struck, awed, confounded, by his discourse, and the judge himself quakes at the voice of the prisoner!

The subject matter of St. Paul's discourse, is said to have been *righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come*: not that we are to imagine that he confined himself solely to these three particulars; for the words of ver. 24. inform us, that Felix sent for him, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ; and therefore all the articles of the Christian

faith, we may be sure, were sufficiently explained by him. But though many other doctrines might be handled at the same time, yet these of *righteousness, temperance, and future judgment*, had so large a share in the apostle's consideration, and were so warmly and powerfully urged by him, that St. Luke has not thought fit to take notice of any other part of his discourse.

Nothing could be more apposite than a discourse concerning *righteousness* and *temperance*, before a person so cruel and voluptuous as Felix so remarkably was: nothing could be more proper than to put this unjust judge in mind of another, a more impartial and dreadful tribunal, before which he himself should one day stand and be judged.— Thus did St. Paul adapt what he delivered to the peculiar exigencies of the hearer; and in so doing he has left us a pattern worthy of imitation, such as when attentively considered, will give us great occasion to admire the *address*, the sincere and disinterested *conduct*, the mighty courage and zeal of this eminent apostle.

He fears not, we see, to utter necessary, though harsh and ungrateful truths, in the ears of one who had the power of life and death over him. He knew with what dangers the faithful discharge of his duty would, in this case, be attended; how impatient the great are under reproof, though couched in the most gentle and least offensive language; what absolute dominion *Drusilla* had gained over the heart of Felix, and with what resentments that impure woman might pursue any one who ventured to represent his guilt to him, and to rouse his sleeping conscience. And yet none of these alarming considerations were able to repress his godly zeal, or check his freedom; which he conducted indeed with sacred caution and prudence, founding his exhortations and reproofs on the grand fundamental doctrine of faith in Christ, but at the same time, under the Spirit of God, with such force and success, as to strike terror and confusion into the person for whom they were intended.

Let us copy this excellent pattern, by taking all opportunities of spreading the kingdom of Christ in the hearts of men, and of advancing the interests of his gospel; and while we act in such cases as that before us, discreetly, warily, and wisely, let us also, in humble dependence on the divine blessing, act courageously, zealously, firmly, and disregarding the *fear of man*, when once it comes in competition with the *fear of God*. These are the intimations; these are the important instructions given us by the behaviour of St. Paul; when before an *oppressive*, a *dissolute*, and an *unbelieving* magistrate, he took an occasion to discourse of *righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come*.— And Felix trembled! Even the mind of a Felix was filled with horror, at the remembrance of his past crimes, thus drawn up in battle-array against him; the dire apprehensions of a future reckoning harrowed up his labouring soul; and these inward fears and forebodings appeared in the outward and visible marks of a heart-felt consternation.

From

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, * willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

* Ch. 12. 3. & 25. 9, 14. Gal. 1. 10. Prov. 29. 25.

From the circumstance before us, we are obviously led to observe, what a miserable thing it is to have a conscience burdened with guilt, when a man will not trust himself to *think*, for fear of being alarmed, and filled with terror and confusion. Felix does not seem to have been at all prone to superstition, or in general to have had any troublesome sense of his crimes. The flatteries of a court, the amusements of grandeur and luxury, gave him no time to cool, and diverted all grave and serious reflections; but when St. Paul began to discourse to him of the immutable obligations of infinite justice, against which he had been a most heinous offender, he immediately saw the vileness of his conduct, and trembled for the consequences.

How remarkably different is the success of Tertullus's pleading, compared with that of St. Paul! The former, we may well presume, was one of the most famous pleaders of his time; or the high-priest and elders, in a cause of such consequence, that they themselves went down from Jerusalem to Cæsarea on purpose to prosecute it, would certainly not have pitched upon *him* for their advocate. And yet this great orator, with all his studied eloquence, made no impression that we find on Felix; whereas St. Paul's plain speech soon after moved, terrified, and confounded him. What was the reason of this different effect,—but that the *one* was engaged with good words to varnish over an ill cause, and by the power of rhetoric to support a false and lying accusation: whereas the other spoke by the power and spirit of God, and of course had right and truth on his side, and therefore pressed them earnestly?—He *himself felt* what he *spoke*; and had an inward and vital sense of the truths that he delivered; and therefore through divine grace he made *others* feel them too. He spoke *from* the heart, and *to* the heart, and therefore, under God, he for a time prevailed.

O how does this instance of the operative virtue of God's word, applied by his Spirit, reproach the sluggishness and insensibility of too many among us! An impure and wicked heathen, we hear, trembled at St. Paul's doctrine: the same doctrine sounds every day in the ears of negligent Christians, so called, without terrifying, without alarming them! The same apostle still reasons with them, in the history before us, and in his epistles, concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come: but he reasons to no purpose: his words seem to them as idle tales: they neither feel their force, nor regard their meaning. God Almighty grant that this hearing and trembling Felix may not one day rise up in judgment against them!

But let us follow Felix to the consequences of his trembling. He abruptly breaks off St. Paul's discourse, and dismisses him in haste, ver. 25. but he soon recovers from his perturbation; and hopes that money shall be given him to loose his prisoner from his bonds, ver. 26. Here we see, that the seed of the word sown by the apostle fell among thorns, and immediately the thorns sprung up and choaked it, Matth. xiii. 7. The love of unjust gain, that root of all evil, quickly returned upon his avaricious soul, and drove

out all the divine impressions that he had received: and then, when *once* he had flooded the shock of his conscience given by the Spirit of God, and hoodwinked his fears, he could hear the *same things* repeated without any degree of the *same remorse* and concern. For it follows, *he sent for Paul often, and communed with him.*—So suddenly and totally may the best suggestions be stifled, and the strongest convictions overborne, by the force of any one prevailing vice or lust, one *easily besetting sin*, that has gotten an absolute dominion over us.

That this may not be *our* case, whenever we hear an awakening discourse from the pulpit, or find our consciences touched to the quick with some apposite arrow, shot from the quiver of God's word, let us not act like Felix, and endeavour instantly to get rid of the smart, and to dismiss such troublesome reflections with a *go your way for this time, till a more convenient season.* Nay, but *this is the proper time; this the most convenient season* for our entertaining and conversing with them, when they press to be admitted, and demand a hearing. Let us not call in company, or business, or pleasures, to divert our thoughts from their present, though melancholy employment, since by this *sadness and heaviness, the heart is* under the grace of God frequently *made better*; but rather let us study every way to promote and cherish these good beginnings by retirement, meditation, and prayer: let us suffer these terrors of the Lord freely to reason and plead with us, till they have, through the Spirit of God, *persuaded* us; and may we so reapply, reinforce, and improve the good impressions received in *public*, as to rivet the influence of them fast in our minds, till they have reached the end for which the good Spirit of God intended them; even that *repentance unto salvation not to be repented of!*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Lyfias, no doubt, informed the chief priests and elders what he had done concerning St. Paul, and referred them to Felix, if they chose further to prosecute the apostle. Whereupon,

1. Without loss of time, *after five days*, reckoning from the time when they first apprehended him, they came down to Cæsarea, with Ananias the high-priest at their head; and appearing in a body before Felix, to give the greater weight to their cause, they desired to be heard against Paul, and had engaged an artful and plausible counsellor, one Tertullus, to plead for them. Note; Inveterate malice against the gospel will sometimes make the most reverend characters stoop to the meanest actions.

2. St. Paul being brought forth, Tertullus, with many oratorical flourishes, and a most flattering address to the judge, opens his speech against the prisoner at the bar.

[1.] He compliments the governor on his administration, though universally known to have been one of the most oppressive, covetous, and cruel, that ever ruled over Judea; yet, to court his favour, and win him to the party, he, as one that pleaded not for truth but for hire, daubs thick his adulations, *seeing that by thee we enjoy great quiet-*

CHAP. XXV.

The Jews accuse Paul before Festus: he answereth for himself, and appealeth unto Cæsar. Afterwards Festus openeth this matter to king Agrippa, and Paul is brought forth. Festus cleareth him of having done any thing worthy of death.

[Anno Domini 63.]

NOW when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended

• Ch. 24. 1. Pf. 2. 1, 2. Mat. 10. 17.

ness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, penetration, and prudent care; we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness; professing the deepest sense of our obligations for such singular favours, and emboldened thereby to hope more confidently for the justice we demand against the prisoner. But that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee, that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words; the case being so clear, that it can take up very little of your Excellency's time, to be convinced of the prisoner's guilt.

It was well known how the Jewish nation in general, and the elders in particular, hated Felix and his government; but now, when they have a point to carry, they liberally offer at his feet their flattering applause.

[2.] He comes to the point, and boldly alleges many grievous crimes, with which he charges the innocent prisoner. *We have found this man a pestilent fellow, propagating his pernicious tenets like a plague, the very pest of society, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, exciting tumults, wherever he goes, against the Roman government; and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; a promoter of that detestable heresy, for which, and for his notoriously seditious principles, the first author of it, one Jesus of Nazareth, was crucified some years ago. Who also hath gone about to prophane the temple, with daring impiety introducing those who were by the law forbidden admission there.*

All these charges are a tissue of falsehoods. All the pestilence that St. Paul carried with him, was the gospel of salvation, doing good to men's bodies and souls wherever he came. Far from sedition, he taught the most conscientious obedience to the ruling powers. The tumults complained of, were made not by him, but by his accusers themselves. He set himself up for no head of a sect, nor attempted to draw any man to his standard, but to his divine Master: and so far from profaning the temple, none could behave with greater piety, seriousness, and conformity to the law, than he had done. *Note; (1.) The purest innocence is no protection from the vilest aspersions. They who make no conscience of lies, will with solemn assurances and repeated falsehoods strive hard to blacken the fairest character. (2.) The charge against the gospel and its ministers has often been, that they raise disturbances and riots, when in fact the very persons who lay this accusation against them, are the authors of the tumults; like Nero, who set Rome on fire, and then persecuted the Christians for the atrocious deed: but there is one who seeth and judgeth.*

from Cæsarea to Jerusalem.

2 * Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, ^b laying wait in the way to kill him.

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be

• Ch. 23. 15. Pf. 140. 5. & 37. 32.

[3.] He insinuates the equity with which they were proceeding against the prisoner, by a fair trial according to the law; when Lyfias, the chief captain, interrupting the course of justice, by violence seized the prisoner, and carried him off, putting them to all this trouble and expence by bringing the cause hither: but he hopes that now at least justice will be done, and that the governor, fully satisfied of Paul's guilt, will pronounce sentence against him. Nothing could be more false and invidious than this assertion; but Lyfias was not here to disprove it, and therefore he hoped that the pretended weight of evidence which he brought with him would prevail.

3. The high priests and elders added their solemn attentations to the truth of Tertullus's harangue: nor is it a wonder, that they who wanted to murder St. Paul by assassination, should now attempt to carry their point by the blackest perjury.

2dly, How different is the spirit which breathes in the defence of St. Paul, from that which actuated the plausible orator Tertullus. He is not exasperated with the falsehoods which were advanced, or in a heat to reply, but waited the governor's permission to speak; which when Felix had signified, he rose, with conscious integrity, to pour confusion on the charges of his adversaries.

1. With that deep respect for his judge, which was consistent with that severe regard to truth which became him, he opens his discourse; *forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:* Felix well knew the spirit and temper of the Jews by his long acquaintance with them, and could not wonder at the malice of these furious zealous: had half the things been true which they alleged, the governor would, no doubt, have heard of them before.

2. He flatly denies the charge of *sedition*, of which he was accused. It was but twelve days since he came to Jerusalem, not to *profane the temple*, but with high respect of that sacred place *to worship* there, where they neither found him disputing with any man, either about religion or government, nor fomenting the least disturbance in the synagogues or the city, but demeaning himself with all peaceableness: and he defies his accusers to prove one of the charges which they so peremptorily alleged. *Note; It is in every villain's power to propagate falsehood, and to bring the heaviest charges against the noblest characters; but the sedate hearer and upright Judge will not rest in his assertions, but require proof of the facts.*

3. He owns, and glories in the acknowledgment, that after

kept at Cefarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*.

5^c Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse

^c Ch. 23. 30. & 24. 8.

after the way which they stigmatized as heresy, so worshipped he the God of his fathers, *believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets*, the divine authority of the precepts, and the accomplishment of the promises; and his hope towards God, and preaching, were in exact correspondence with the fundamental doctrine of the orthodox faith which they themselves held, that there should be a resurrection of the dead, *both of the just and unjust*; who must answer before the eternal Judge, that divine Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Jews had crucified. *And herein do I exercise myself*, persuaded of this solemn day's approach, and expecting to stand before the great Judge of all,—*to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.* *Note*; (1.) The scriptures are the only rule of faith and practice: to them we must cleave. (2.) As there will be a resurrection of the just and of the unjust, it is a matter of awful inquiry, which character is ours? (3.) Hope towards God, is an anchor which will keep the soul steadfast in every storm.

Lastly, As to his *profaning the temple*, this was of a piece with the other falsehoods advanced; the very contrary was evident. He had, after a considerable absence from Jerusalem, returned with charitable contributions for the poor saints who dwelt there; and, having a religious vow, had brought his own offerings to the temple, where certain Jews of Asia saw him, purifying himself according to the law, *neither with multitude, nor with tumult* (only four persons who had vows like himself, were with him), demeaning himself with all possible quietness and regularity: and as to the supposed offence of having brought Greeks into the temple, which was suggested as the occasion of the riot that was raised, he challenges them to produce these men of Asia who raised this report, and who ought to be there, if they had any thing to object. Or since they were absent, he appeals to his accusers themselves, if, on examination before the council, any one misdemeanour was so much as proved against him, except they reckoned his declaration concerning the resurrection of the dead to be such, wherein he had been supported and countenanced by the most respectable part of that assembly;—a defence so clear, so ingenuous, so convincing, as carried its own evidence along with it, and demonstrated his innocence of every crime that they had alleged against him.

3dly, Felix patiently heard the parties, but deferred passing judgment upon the cause.

1. He put off the determination till the arrival of Lyfias, on whom they seemed to reflect; when he could more thoroughly examine into the circumstances; and probably, though unwilling to disoblige the chief men of the nation, he was little apprehensive of any danger of sedition from the professors of Christianity, *having more perfect knowledge of that way*. As Cornelius, a centurion, long ago had been converted to the Christian faith at Cefarea, and many others, Felix was, no doubt, in some measure, acquainted with their principles, and an eye-

witness of their peaceable conduct, and therefore did not readily believe these atrocious accusations against St. Paul.

2. He committed the apostle to the custody of a centurion, who should let him enjoy liberty to walk about as a prisoner at large, permitting any of his friends to visit him, converse with him, and amply supply him with whatever he wanted. Thus the malignant priests were disappointed; and St. Paul, though justice was delayed, had reason to be thankful for his escape from their malice.

3. The curiosity of Felix, and of his wife Drusilla (who, though a Jewess, had married him a heathen, and had forsaken her former husband Azizus, king of Emeiss), prompted them to hear from this celebrated preacher, an account of the Christian religion, and of that faith in Christ which he inculcated. *Note*; Many are willing to know the speculative principles of religion, whose hearts have no relish for the practice of it.

4. St. Paul readily appeared, to give an account of his doctrines before them, not as mere speculative opinions, but as practical principles; and knowing the characters of the persons before whom he spoke, he failed not to reason powerfully on the nature and necessity of righteousness and temperance, the guilt and danger of the opposite vices, of injustice, oppression, excess and impurity; and on the awful account which all must shortly give before the Judge of quick and dead, when, without respect of persons, the everlasting state of men must be determined. So faithfully should Christ's ministers bring home to men's consciences the word of truth, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.

5. Felix, with conscious guilt, trembled as he sat; and affrighted heard these alarming words: but, more in haste to get rid of his convictions than his sins, he dismissed the apostle with an intimation, that, when his affairs were less urgent, he would hear him again on the subject. *Note*; (1.) The word of God will sometimes make the stoutest-hearted sinner tremble. (2.) Many are terrified with the apprehensions of their sins, and dread to think of death and judgment, who, notwithstanding, live and die the slaves of corruption. (3.) In the concerns of our souls, nothing is more fatal than delay. If God's word has spread an alarm in the conscience, Satan seldom asks more than to defer the matter to a more convenient season, till we are older, or have less worldly engagements: and if he can thus far prevail, the cause is gained; and we, like Felix, are undone.

6. Many future conferences passed between them, but all in vain. His covetous heart thought to make a good advantage of his prisoner; and knowing how high St. Paul was in the esteem of his friends, he hoped they would have proposed a considerable ransom to obtain his discharge: but though perhaps they would have done so, St. Paul never would be indebted for his liberty to any such indirect method; and therefore, after two years, Felix being recalled from his government to answer for his mal-

admin-

this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cæsarea; and the next day, sitting on the judgment-seat, commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

8 ¶ While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended any thing at all.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar's judg-

ment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar.

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go.

13 ¶ And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cæsarea to salute Festus.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

^d Some copies read *no more than eight or ten days.* Ver. 17. ^e Esth. 3. 8. Pf. 27. 12. & 35. 11. Luke, 23. 2, 5, 10. Mat. 26. 60. Ch. 21. 28. & 24. 5, 6. ^f Ch. 24. 12, 16. & 23. 1. & 26. 4—6, 22. & 28. 17. Ver. 10. ^g Ch. 12. 3. & 24. 27. Gal. 1. 10. Prov. 9. 25. ^h As a citizen of Rome. Ch. 19. 37, 38. & 22. 25—28. ⁱ Josh. 22. 22. ^j 1 Sam. 11. 3, 5. Ch. 18. 12. & 21. 24. & 23. 29. ^k Ch. 16. 37, 38. & 22. 25—28. ^l 1 Theff. 2. 15. ^m 1 Sam. 27. 1. Ver. 21. Ch. 26. 32. & 19. 21. & 23. 11. ⁿ Ch. xxv. Ver. 23. He lived in incest with Bernice his sister. ^o Ch. 24. 27.

administration, and justly apprehensive that the rulers of Judea would swell the number of his accusers, he endeavoured to gain their favour by leaving St. Paul bound in the hands of Portius Festus, his successor.

CHAP. XXV.

Ver. 1. *Now, when Festus was come, &c.*] That is, *When Festus entered upon his government, after three days he went up, &c.* This was in conformity to the Roman law, and in order to make himself acquainted with the present state of their public affairs.

Ver. 3. *And desired favour,*] That is, *desired this favour.* Instead of *laying wait, &c.* Dr. Doddridge reads and paraphrases the passage thus: "*Laying an ambush of desperate wretches for him, who they knew would readily undertake to intercept his journey, and to kill him by the way.*" These assassins were probably some of the *sicarii*, mentioned ch. xxi. 38. The high priests about this time were, according to the account that Josephus gives of them, such monsters of rapine, tyranny, and cruelty, that it is not to be wondered at that such a design should be favoured by him who now bore the office.

Ver. 4. *Festus answered*] It certainly was extraordinary that Festus, who, as a new governor and a heathen, could not but incline to make himself popular, should deny this request, when it had the appearance of being so reasonable, and came from persons of such eminent rank in the Jewish nation. But when we consider, how much edification to the churches depended on the continuance of St. Paul's life; and how evidently, under God, his life depended on this resolution of Festus; it must surely lead us to reflect

by what invisible springs the Almighty God governs the world; with what silence, and yet at the same time with what wisdom and energy!

Ver. 10, 11. *I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat,*] When St. Paul says, *as thou very well knowest,* he may either refer to the examination of him that day taken before him, or more probably to the information which we cannot but suppose Felix gave concerning him, when he resigned up his government to Festus. The word *παριστάσθαι* which we render *deliver*, implies a deliverance in order to gratify: "No man can lawfully deliver me into their hands, so as to gratify them with my death." This, however, will by no means prove that the Jews had the power of life and death in their hands; for St. Paul might reasonably apprehend, not only that he might be murdered by the way, as he probably would have been; but that, had the sanhedrim condemned him, Festus might, for particular reasons, have acted the part which Pilate did with respect to our Lord, in permitting and warranting the execution, though in his own conscience convinced of his innocence, and even declaring that conviction. See Matth. xxvii. 24—26. On these accounts St. Paul appealed to Cæsar. It is well known, that the Roman law allowed such an appeal to every citizen before sentence was passed, and made it highly penal for any governor, after that, to proceed to any extremities against the person making it.

Ver. 12. *Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council,*] It was customary for a considerable number of persons of some distinction to attend the Roman præfects into their provinces, with whom they were used to consult, especially in matters of judicature.

Ver. 13. *King Agrippa and Bernice*] This Agrippa was

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, ° the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring to *have* judgment against him.

16 To whom I answered, † It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

17 † Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment-seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such

things as I supposed :

19 † But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20 And because † I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul had † appealed to be reserved unto the * hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cesar.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, † I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

° Ver. 1—3. Esth. 3. 9. 18. 15. & 23. 29. Rev. 1. 18. † If. 52. 15. Ch. 9. 15.

† John, 7. 53. Deut. 17. 4. & 19. 17, 18. † Or I was doubtful how to enquire hereof.

† Ver. 4. 5. † Ver. 7. Ch. 26. 22, 23. 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4. Ch. Ver. 9. † Ver. 10. Ch. 26. 32. 2 Tim. 4. 18. † Or judgment.

son to Herod Agrippa, whose tragical death is related, ch. xii. He was by profession a Jew, had the power of the temple and the sacred treasury, and could likewise dispose of the high-priesthood as he thought proper. Bernice, his sister, was the eldest daughter of Herod Agrippa, and had been contracted in her infancy by Claudius Cesar to Mark, the son of Alexander Lyfimachus, the Alabarch; but he dying before the marriage was consummated, her father married her to his own brother Herod, king of Chalcis, though that was contrary to the law of Moses. After his death she went and lived with her brother Agrippa, with whom she was suspected of an incestuous commerce; of which Josephus speaks, and to which Juvenal is supposed to refer, in a celebrated passage, Sat. vi. ver. 154, &c. To wipe off this aspersion, she endeavoured to marry again, offering herself to Polemon, king of Cilicia, upon condition that he would become a *proselyte of righteousness* to the Jewish religion. Polemon, who had more regard to the riches than to the character of the lady, consented to be circumcised, and actually married her. But Bernice did not continue long with her husband, which occasioned his casting off the Jewish religion; and notwithstanding the scandal which she had formerly lain under, she went and lived where she pleased, not only continuing her criminal acquaintance (as there is too great reason to fear) with her brother Agrippa, but afterwards insinuating herself so far into the affections of Titus Vespasian, as to occasion much discourse; for she was of great beauty, and remarkably liberal: nay, she had even the prospect of being empress, had not the murmurs of the people of Rome prevented it. See Suetonius in *Titus*, c. 7. Tacit. Hist. l. ii. c. 2. and 81. Joseph. Antiq. b. xix. c. 5.

Ver. 16. *It is not the manner of the Romans, &c.*] According to the Roman law, accusations were never to be heard in the absence of the accused person—a rule, which has justly gained to the Roman people the highest approbation of the best writers, and of all good men; a rule,

which as it is now happily common to almost all nations, so ought it to direct our proceedings in all affairs, not only in public, but private life. It evidently appears from hence, that the *judgment* which they demanded against St. Paul, ver. 15. was not a trial, but a *sentence* upon a previous conviction, which they falsely and wickedly pretended; and probably it was the knowledge which Festus had of St. Paul's being a Roman citizen, that engaged him to determine to try the cause himself.

Ver. 19. *Of their own superstition,] Of their own religion.* See on ch. xvii. 22. As Agrippa was a Jew, and now come to pay a visit of respect to Festus on his arrival at his province, it is improbable that he would use so rude a word as *superstition*; so that this text affords a further argument, that the word *δαιμονια* will admit a milder interpretation; and it is remarkable, not only that the Jewish religion is spoken of by this word in several edicts reported by Josephus, which were made in its favour, but that Josephus himself uses it in the same sense too, Jewish War, lib. ii. c. 9. We may just observe from this, as well as many other places in the *Acts*, that St. Luke has generally given us no more than the *substance* of the speeches; for there is nothing of what is mentioned in this verse related in the place where he speaks of what passed when the apostle made his first apology before Festus.

Ver. 21. *Of Augustus,] Of our august emperor.* As Augustus was not properly one of the names of Nero, though it was of Titus, the above version more justly expresses the import of *Σεβας*, which was plainly a complimentary form of speaking.

Ver. 22. *I would also hear the man myself.]* No doubt but Agrippa had learned from his father (by whom, it is to be remembered, St. James had been put to death, and St. Peter imprisoned, ch. xii. 2, 3.), and from many others, something of the history of Christianity; so that he would naturally have a curiosity to see and discourse with so eminent a Christian teacher as St. Paul; who, on account of what he had been in his unconverted state, was certainly

23 ¶ And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with ^x great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25 But when I found that he had com-

mitted ^y nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write ^{*} unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, ^z and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

^x Esth. 1. 4. Dan. 4. 30. Ch. 12. 21. 1 Cor. 7. 31. Jam. 1. 11. 1 Pet. 1. 24. Eccl. 1. 2. ^y Ch. 23. 9. & 26. 31. John, 18. 38. Luke, 23. 4. 14, 15. ^z Nero the Roman emperor. ^{*} Ch. 26. 2, 3.

more regarded and talked of by the Jews, than any other of the apostles.

Ver. 23. With great pomp,] Dr. Hammond has shewn by a variety of quotations, that the word *Φαυτασίας*, here, signifies *train*, or *retinue*;—with a numerous and splendid train, making a most pompous and magnificent appearance. When they were seated, Festus gave orders that Paul should be brought forth; who came presently, in his humble garb, and, as it should seem, with his *chains* on; but his inward integrity was more honourable, and of greater excellence, than all their external pomp and grandeur.

Ver. 24. Have dealt with me,] *Have pleaded with me.* Doddridge.

Ver. 26. Unto my lord,] The term, *Τῷ κυρίῳ*, plainly signifies *to the lord* of the empire; a title by which it is well known the emperor was now frequently spoken of. Festus knew very well the account which Felix had left behind him, and the accusations of the leading men among the Jews, both at Jerusalem and Caesarea; yet he was at a loss what to allege against the apostle, because the Romans had then no laws against the Christians. He was therefore in hopes that king Agrippa, who understood the Jewish customs and privileges, would help him out of this difficulty, and teach him how to form his charge against the prisoner, in so uncommon and remarkable a case.

Inferences.—In the conduct of Festus, as well as of Felix, we see what dangerous snares power and grandeur may prove, to a man who is not influenced by resolute and courageous virtue: the liberty of the worthiest of mankind was sacrificed by both, to their political views of ingratiating themselves with the Jewish people. Happy that ruler, who, approving the equity of his administration to every man's conscience, has no need to court popular favour by mean compliances; and whom the greatest eagerness of men's unjust demands can never turn aside from that steady tenor of justice which a righteous God requires, and which will engage that protection and favour in which alone the most exalted creatures can be happy, in which alone they can be safe.

Mysterious as that dispensation was which permitted St. Paul's labours to be interrupted by so long an imprisonment, it is nevertheless very pleasant to trace the manner in which all was graciously over-ruled by a wise and kind providence. On this occasion he had an opportunity of bearing his testimony, first *before rulers and kings* in Judea, and then in Rome, and in *the palace of Caesar*.

None of the jewels which these princes might wear, none of the revenues which they might possess, were of any value at all, when compared with the advantage which their converse with St. Paul gave them, for learning the way of salvation: but how shamefully was the advantage neglected, even the price which was put into their hands to get this divine wisdom, (Prov. xvii. 16.) Alas! how coldly do they speak of the most important matters, even those relating to *the death and resurrection* of him, by whose knowledge and grace alone hell was to be avoided and heaven secured! There was a *question about one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive: A doubtful question!* But, O Festus, why was it doubtful to thee? Surely, because thou didst not think it worth thy while seriously to search into the evidence that attended it; else that evidence had opened upon thee till it had grown into full conviction, and this thine illustrious prisoner had led thee into the glorious liberty of God's children; had led thee to a throne far brighter than that of Caesar, far more stable than the foundations of the earth.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, No sooner was Festus entered upon his government, than St. Paul's implacable enemies beset him.

1. After three days' stay at Caesarea, Festus proceeded to Jerusalem; where he no sooner arrived, than the high-priest and elders, coming in a body to pay their compliments to the governor, failed not to seize the opportunity to prepossess his mind, informing him against Paul; and, setting the affair in the most invidious light, they besought him to give judgment against the prisoner; and for that purpose, begged the favour of him, that he might be sent for to Jerusalem; resuming the old scheme, to assassinate him by the way. How restless are the struggles of malice! and

CHAP. XXVI.

Paul, in the presence of Agrippa, declareth his life from his childhood, and how miraculously he was converted, and called to his apostleship. Festus chargeth him with madness, whereunto he answereth modestly. Agrippa is almost persuaded to be a Christian. The whole company pronounce him innocent.

[Anno Domini 63.]

THEN Agrippa said unto Paul, ^a Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then

^a Prov. 18. 13. John, 7. 51.
¹ Cor. 13. 7.

^b Ch. 13. 16. & 12. 17. & 19. 33. & 21. 40.

^c Ch. 25. 26.

^d Gr. a *knower*. Deut. 17. 13—10.

what wickedness is not the wretched heart of man capable of, when enslaved by envy and revenge?

2. Festus excused himself from granting their request, choosing rather to decide the matter at Cæsarea: either he thought their desire unreasonable, or perhaps suspected some design; and therefore, informing them that he should shortly depart thither, he assured them, if they would prepare their evidence, and those who were best able to manage the prosecution would go down with him, and could prove him guilty of any crime or misdemeanour, he would grant them impartial justice.

3. After more than ten days' stay at Jerusalem, Festus went down to Cæsarea with those who were to carry on the prosecution against St. Paul; and, without delay, the very next day the prisoner is brought to the bar, and his enemies surrounding the judge, as if to intimidate him into compliance, or by their number to give weight to the cause, laid many and grievous accusations against the apostle, as if he was the vilest of the vile: but when the evidences which should have supported these allegations were required, it evidently appeared that they could not prove one of their charges: while, in his defence, St. Paul confidently denied every accusation, having neither offended against the law, the temple, nor the civil government; and desired them to produce a single instance wherein he had acted unbecoming his profession as a Jew, or his allegiance to Cæsar. *Note*; Nothing is easier than to advance high charges against Christ's people: but accusing and proving are on such occasions very different things.

4. Festus could not but perceive the malice of the accusation and the innocence of the prisoner; but willing, on his first coming to Cæsarea, to ingratiate himself with the Jews, by granting them the favour which they desired, of having St. Paul tried at Jerusalem, he asked him whether he would go up thither, and have the cause decided by him in the presence of the sanhedrim? Too well St. Paul knew the designs of his persecutors, to consent to a proposal so dangerous; therefore he wisely pleads his privilege as a Roman, and appeals unto Cæsar. *I stand*, says he, *at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged, and am ready to appear: to the Jews, have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, according to the laws of the empire, I refuse not to die, content to suffer the desert of my offences: but if there be none of these things whereof they accuse*

Paul ^b stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

3 ^c Especially *because I know* thee to be ^d expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

me, and the charge be evidently false and malicious, no man may deliver me unto them, and put me in their power. I claim my right as a freeman of Rome, to be only judged there, and appeal unto Cæsar. Note; The wisdom of the serpent is highly necessary, when we have to do with unreasonable and wicked men.

5. Festus acquiesces in his appeal. *He conferred with the council, who assisted him in the management of affairs; and as they admitted the right of the prisoner to claim this privilege, he answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? Unto Cæsar shalt thou go; not unwilling, perhaps, thus to rid his hands so fairly of a cause which might have involved him in much trouble.*

2dly, As Christ had told his disciples that they should be brought before governors and kings, so does he order it in his providence, that their persecutors are made the instruments of leading those great men to hear the gospel, who perhaps otherwise never would have heard it. We have,

1. The visit of Agrippa to Festus, to congratulate him on his coming to his government. Agrippa was the son of that Herod who slew the apostle James: Claudius, the Roman emperor, had given him the title of king and the tetrarchy which belonged to his uncle Philip. Bernice, who accompanied him, was his sister; but was accused of too great familiarity with her brother: such were the great people of those times: when viewing then the present corruptions of the age, *say not, the former days were better: the unawakened world was always the same.*

2. Agrippa and Bernice were both brought up in the Jewish religion; and after they had been at Cæsarea some time, St. Paul's case happened one day to be the subject of conversation; which Festus related to the king, either to entertain him with the account, or to have his advice how to act, as better acquainted with the Jewish rites and customs, than he, a stranger, could be supposed to be. He had found St. Paul in bonds, when Felix resigned the government to him, and had no sooner come to Jerusalem, to take possession of his province, than the chief priests and elders clamoured for judgment against him: but he excused himself from a hasty decision of the matter, alleging the constant custom of the Romans to adjudge no man to death, nor to consign him to destruction, through any favour or partiality; but first to have the person accused, and his accusers, face to face, that he might have liberty to exculpate

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerufalem, I know all the Jews;

5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest

sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes,

^c Ch. 22. 3. ^f Ch. 22. 5. ^g Ch. 22. 3. & 23. 6. Gal. 1. 13, 14. Phil. 3. 5, 6. ^h Ch. 23. 6. & 24. 15. & 28. 20. Ver. 8. Gen. 3. 15. & 12. 3. & 22. 18. & 26. 4. & 49. 10. Deut. 18. 15. 2 Sam. 7. 12. Pf. 132. 11. 11. 4. 2. & 11. 1. & 7. 14. & 9. 6, 7. & 40. 10. Jer. 23. 5. & 30. 21. & 33. 15. Ezek. 21. 27. & 34. 23, 29. & 37. 24. Dan. 9. 24, 25. Michah, 5. 2. & 7. 20. Zech. 6. 12. & 9. 9. Mal. 3. 1. & 4. 2. with ch. 2. 39. & 3. 26. & 5. 31. & 13. 23, 26, 32, 46. Gal. 3. 13—16. Titus, 2. 13. ⁱ James, 1. 1. Ezra, 6. 17. & 8. 35. with Luke, 2. 37. 1 Tim. 5. 5.

culpate himself; if he could, from any crime laid to his charge. And to dispatch the matter without delay, the next day after his arrival, the prisoner was brought to the bar; when, to his surprize, he found no one accusation of a criminal nature could be proved, none such as came under his cognizance as a magistrate; but that the charge turned upon certain questions of a religious nature, respecting the tenets that he held contrary to their law, and about *one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.* Counting himself an incompetent judge of such superstitious controversies, as he regarded them, he proposed to Paul to have the matter canvassed before the sanhedrim at Jerufalem; but the prisoner, objecting to them, had pleaded his privilege, and appealed unto Cæsar: he was therefore still in custody, till an opportunity offered to send him to Rome. *Note;* (1.) Every man has a natural right to be heard, before he is condemned. To determine a case, where only one side of the question is told, is the sure way to err, and may be the means of irreparable injury to the purest innocence. (2.) They who know not Jesus, speak slightly of him; but to those who feel their guilt and need of a Saviour, whether he be alive again or not is a matter of infinite importance, on which their everlasting hopes depend.

3. Agrippa, curious to know what St. Paul had to say for himself, intimated a desire to hear him: Festus gladly consented to it, and appointed the next day. On the morrow, Agrippa and Bernice in vast pomp, arrayed in gorgeous apparel, attended by their royal retinue, entered the judgment hall, where all the chief captains and principal men of the city attended, drawn by curiosity, or to pay their respects to the noble personages who were present: when, being seated, the prisoner, at the commandment of Festus, is brought forth, more adorned with his prison-garments and glorious bonds, than they in all their vain splendour and empty magnificence.

4. Festus, with respect, hereupon addressed himself to king Agrippa and the principal men who were present, and opened the occasion of their meeting with an account of the prisoner before them, upon whom he had been solicited with great importunity by all the Jews, both at Jerufalem and Cæsarea, to pass sentence of death, as a miscreant unworthy to live. But when on fair trial nothing criminal could be proved against him, and Paul had appealed to Augustus for the final decision of his cause, he was resolved to send him. But as it looked absurd and unreasonnable to send a prisoner without signifying what crimes he stood accused of, he had therefore brought Paul forth before that honourable assembly, especially before king Agrippa, who was most acquainted with the Jewish laws

and customs, that, after a full discussion of the case, he might have something determinate to write to his imperial master, concerning the prisoner who had appealed to his judgment.

CHAP. XXVI.

Ver. 1. Paul stretched forth the hand,] Elser shews this to have been esteemed at that time a very decent expression of earnestness in one who spoke in public; though some of the most illustrious Greek orators in earlier ages, as Pericles, Themistocles, Aristides, thought it a point of modesty to avoid it. But this was the effect of a false taste; and it is certain, that the prince of orators, Demosthenes, often made use of this gesture.

Ver. 3. Because I know thee to be expert] Agrippa must have had great advantages for an accurate acquaintance with the Jewish customs, from his education under his father Herod Agrippa, and from his long residence at Jerufalem; and agreeably to this, by the permission of the emperor, he had the direction of the sacred treasure, &c. See on ch. xxv. 13.

Ver. 4. Which was at the first, &c.] Doddridge reads this, *Which from the beginning (of my youth) was spent among those of mine own nation, &c.* Probably he had in his childhood been brought up in the school of Tarsus, and there formed an acquaintance with Greek and Roman authors, till he entered on a kind of academical course under the celebrated Gamaliel, about the fifteenth or sixteenth year of his age, when he came to Jerufalem, and was there educated from the beginning of his youth.

Ver. 5. After the most straitest sect] *The strictest sect.* So Josephus, in a variety of places, calls the sect of the Pharisees, almost in the very words which the apostle uses. They were in many respects stricter than the Essenes. It appears from the gospels, that many rigorous severities were used by them. Compare Luke, xviii. 11, 12. Matth. xxiii. 5, 23, 25, 28. We are told, among other instances of their rigour, that many of them used to sleep on narrow planks, that falling down from them, they might soon be awakened to prayer; and that others lay on gravel, and placed thorns so near them, that they could not turn without being pricked by them. See Witfius's *Meletem.* c. i. sect. 15.

Ver. 7. Unto which promise, &c.] Great numbers of the ten tribes returned with the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin from the Babylonish captivity, Ezra, vi. 16, 17, viii. 35. Luke, ii, 36. and many of them who did not return to the land of Canaan, did nevertheless entertain hopes of the coming of the Messiah, and of a resurrection and future state of happiness. See the note on Luke, xx. 38.

instantly serving *God* day and night, * hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

8 ¹ Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?

9 ^m I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them*, even unto strange cities.

12 ⁿ Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 ^o At mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and

saying in ^p the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.*

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 ^q But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, ^r to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 ^s Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 ^t To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and ^u *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive ^x forgiveness of sins, and ^y inheritance among them which are ^z sanctified by faith that is in me.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, ^a I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 ^b But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, ^c that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

* Ch. 23. 8. & 24. 15. Phil. 3. 21. Luke, 7. 19, 20. ¹ Mat. 22. 29—32. If. 26. 19. Dan. 12. 2. Job, 19. 25, 26. ^m John, 16. 2, 3. ¹ Cor. 13. 11. Rom. 10. 2. Phil. 3. 6. Gal. 1. 13, 14. ¹ Tim. 1. 13. ¹ Cor. 15. 9. Ch. 7. 58. & 8. 3, 4. & 9. 1, 14. & 22. 4, 19. Rom. 10. 2. ² Ch. 9. 2. & 22. 5. ¹ Kings. 21. 8. If. 10. 1. John, 7. 48. ^o Ch. 9. 3—9. & 22. 6—16. ^p Ch. 21. 10. & 6. 1. ^q Dan. 10. 11. Rev. 1. 17, 18. ^r Mat. 13. 12. Ch. 9. 15, 17. & 13. 2—4, 31. & 18. 9. & 22. 10. & 23. 11. ^s 1 Tim. 1. 12. ² Cor. 12. 2. ^t 2 Cor. 1. 10. & 4. 8—10. & 11. 23—28. Ch. 9. 23—25. & 14. 19, 20. & 16. 39. & 17. 10, 14. & 18. 12—17. & 19. 30. & 21. 31—35. & 23. 10, 21—31. ^u 2 Tim. 4. 17, 18. with ch. 9. 15. & 22. 21. Eph. 3. 8. ^v 1 Tim. 2. 7. Rom. 11. 13. & 15. 16. ^w 1 Cor. 3. 5, 6. ^x 2 Cor. 4. 5, 6. If. 35. 5. & 42. 7. & 60. 1. & 61. 1. Luke, 4. 18. & 1. 77—79. & 2. 30, 32. Eph. 1. 18. & 4. 17. & 5. 8, 11. ^y 1 Pet. 2. 9, 25. Col. 1. 13. John, 1. 9. & 3. 19. & 8. 12. & 9. 5. & 12. 35. ^z 2 Cor. 6. 14. ^a If. 49. 24, 25. ^b 2 Tim. 2. 26. ^c 1 John, 3. 5, 8. & 5. 19. ^d Eph. 1. 7. Col. 1. 14. Ch. 5. 31. & 10. 43. & 13. 33, 39. ^e Eph. 1. 11. Col. 1. 12. Ch. 22. 32. Heb. 9. 15. James, 2. 5. & 4. 6. ^f 1 Pet. 1. 4, 13. & 3. 9. Rom. 8. 17, 30. ^g John, 15. 3. & 17. 17. Ch. 15. 9. & 20. 21, 32. ^h 1 Cor. 6. 11. Titus, 3. 5. ⁱ Peter, 1. 2. Jude, 1. ^j 1 Cor. 1. 30. ^k Gal. 1. 16. ^l John, 1. 2. If. 50. 5. ^m 1 Cor. 15. 10. ⁿ Ch. 9. 19—30. & xiii—xxi. Rom. 11. 18—20. ^o Ch. 12. 46, 47. & 14. 15. & 17. 30. & 20. 21. & 17. 2, 3. & 18. 11. & 19. 8. Mat. 3. 8. Titus, 2. 11, 12. ^p 2 Cor. 7. 1, 11.

Ver. 8. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible, &c.*] Beza, with the Greek scholiast, would place a mark of interrogation after the word *τις*, and read it, *What? is it thought incredible, &c.?* which is indeed well suited to the animated manner of St. Paul's speaking.

Ver. 10. *I gave my voice against them.*] St. Paul had no vote in the sanhedrim, nor do we certainly know that he was personally concerned in the death of any except Stephen, in whose condemnation there was no voting at all. But the meaning plainly is, that *he infligated the people against them* as much as he could in that instance, and any other that might occur, whether at Jerusalem or elsewhere; which, as we hinted on ch. xxii. 4. might perhaps be more than are recorded. Accordingly the Syriac renders it, *I joined with those who condemned them.*

Ver. 11. *Compelled them to blaspheme;*] A known passage

in Pliny, lib. x. ep. 97. proves that the Heathen persecutors obliged Christians who fell under their trial, not only to renounce Christ, but also to curse him; and it appears from this passage, that the Jews imposed the like test upon them. See ch. xxii. 19.

Ver. 12. *Whereupon*] That is, *In this view as I was going to Damascus, &c.*

Ver. 14. *To kick against the pricks.*] Or, *Against the gad.*
Ver. 17. *Delivering thee from the people, &c.*] "And thou shalt experience my gracious presence with thee, delivering thee from the rage and malice of the Jewish people; and also from the dangers which thou shalt encounter among the Gentiles, to whom I now send thee."

Ver. 18. *To turn them*] *That they may turn*, seems to be the sense of the original, which may properly be rendered thus, without the need of any supplement; and this will best agree with the construction, and with the sense in which

21 For these causes ^d the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

22 Having therefore ^e obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, ^f witnessing both to small and great, saying ^g none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

23 ^h That Christ should suffer, and that he should be ⁱ the first that should rise from the dead, and should ^k shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

24 ¶ And as he thus spake for himself, ^l Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble

Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

26 For ^m the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.

27 King Agrippa, believest thou ⁿ the prophets? I know that thou believest.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, ^o Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

29 And Paul said, ^p I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these ^q bonds.

30 ¶ And when he had thus spoken, the

^d Ch. 21. 30. & 27. 12. & 9. 23. & 25. 3. ^e 1 Cor. 15. 10. ^f 2 Cor. 3. 5, 6. ^g Phil. 4. 13. ^h 2 Tim. 4. 17. ⁱ Ch. 20. 20—27. ^k Luke, 24. 27, 44. ^l John, 1. 45. ^m Ch. 24. 14. & 28. 23. ⁿ 1 Cor. 15. 4. ^o Pf. xxii. lxix. ^p If. liii. ^q Dan. 9. 2—26. ^r Zech. 13. 7. ^s Gen. 3. 15. ^t 1 Cor. 15. 20, 23. ^u Col. 1. 18. ^v Rev. 1. 5. ^w John, 10. 18. & 11. 25. ^x Ch. 13. 34. ^y Rom. 6. 9. & 8. 11. ^z If. 42. 6. & 60. 1. ^{aa} Luke, 21. 32. ^{ab} John, 1. 9. ^{ac} John, 10. 20. ^{ad} Mark, 3. 21. ^{ae} 1 Cor. 2. 14. & 4. 10. & 1. 18, 23. & 4. 10. ^{af} 2 Kings, 9. 11. ^{ag} John, 18. 20. ^{ah} Luke, 24. 19. ^{ai} Mat. xxvi—xxviii. ^{aj} Mark, xiii—xvii. ^{ak} Ver. 22, 23. ^{al} Mark, 12. 34. & 6. 20. ^{am} Rom. 9. 1—4. & 10. 1. ^{an} Col. 1. 28. ^{ao} 1 Cor. 7. 7. ^{ap} Ch. 12. 6. & 25. 14. ^{aq} Ver. 32.

which the word *ἐπιτίθειαι* is generally used in other places. See ver. 20. ch. ix. 35. xi. 21. xv. 19.

Ver. 21. *The Jews—went about to kill me.*] The proper import of the word *διὰ χειρῶν αὐθῶν* is, *to kill with their own hands*; which was with peculiar propriety used here, as there was reason to apprehend that St. Paul would have been actually pulled to pieces in another assembly, which was, as it seems, less numerous and less violent than that which seized him in the temple. See ch. xxiii. 10.

Ver. 22. *Having therefore obtained help of God, &c.*] “I impute it therefore to an extraordinary providence that I am yet alive, and publicly declare it with all thankfulness, that it is by having obtained help from God that I continue until this day; and I endeavour to employ my life to the purposes for which it is prolonged, resolutely and courageously testifying, both to small and great, as what is really a matter of the greatest concern both to the meanest and the most exalted of mankind, the way of salvation by Christ Jesus my Lord, &c.”

Ver. 24. *Paul, thou art beside thyself; Thou art distracted; much study drives thee to madness.* Perhaps Festus might know that St. Paul, in his present confinement, spent a great deal of time in reading; and this was the most discreet turn which could have been given to such a charge. Besides, it would appear quite absurd to Festus to hear St. Paul talk of a resurrection from the dead accomplished in Jesus, as the first fruits: or pretend that a person should come from the Jews, whom he looked upon as a barbarous nation, who should enlighten not only his own nation, but even the Gentiles too, and, among the rest, the polite and learned Romans and Greeks. This, in conjunction with what St. Paul had said of the manner in which it was revealed to him, would naturally lead such a half-thinker as Festus appears to have been, to conclude roundly that he was a visionary enthusiast. Besides, religious topics to men of

rank and fortune among the Heathens, were what they ever avoided; and thus it happened, that when St. Paul pleaded his cause before Festus, as well as before Felix, though his discourse was altogether to the purpose, yet because it turned upon religious subjects, it presently tired the judges, and they would hear no more of it.

Ver. 25. *But he said, I am not mad, &c.*] This answer, in this connection, appears inexpressibly beautiful; when great and good men, who meet with rude and insolent treatment in the defence of the gospel, (which is often the case,) behave with such moderation, it proves a great accession of strength to the Christian cause. The word *σωφροσύνη, soberness*, is with the strictest exactness opposed to *μωρία, madness*.

Ver. 28. *Almost thou persuadest me, &c.*] There can be no doubt that these words were delivered in the most serious manner by Agrippa. It plainly appears by St. Paul's answer, and from the sense in which he there uses *ἐν ὅλῳ, almost*, in opposition to *ἐν πολλῷ, altogether*, that he understood him to mean seriously that he was *almost persuaded*, and consequently that he did indeed mean so. To explain the words as if he had meant, *thou persuadest me to be almost a Christian, or to become an almost Christian*, that is, a hypocritical professor, is quite foreign to the purpose; nor could Agrippa have any temptation to be so.

Ver. 29. *And Paul said, I would to God, &c.*] “When I consider this apostle (says that great enemy of Christianity himself—Lord Shaftesbury,) as appearing either before the *quitty Athenians*, or the *Roman court of Judicature*, in the presence of their great men and ladies, I see how handsomely he accommodates himself to the apprehensions and temper of those politer people, &c.” St. Paul is thought to have had his chain now wrapped about his own arm, and that he was not chained to a soldier while he stood before this grand and numerous audience.

Ver.

king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them :

31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man

doth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cesar.

† 1 Sam. 24. 17. Luke, 23. 4, 14. Ch. 23. 9. & 24. 12, 14. & 25. 25. † Peter, 4. 15, 16. & 3. 10. * Ch. 25. 10, 11, 25.

Ver. 32. This man might have been set at liberty, if, &c.] Though this declaration of Agrippa would not secure St. Paul's deliverance, yet it might do him some service, that a testimony to his innocence was pronounced by so learned and honourable a person of the Jewish nation and religion. Festus would probably entertain a better opinion of him upon this account, and would give directions to the officer who attended him, to treat him with so much the greater regard. Though it might seem in this view an unhappy circumstance, that St. Paul had made his appeal to Cesar; yet as it was, at the time when he made it, the properest method he could take for his own security, he would have reason to reflect upon it with satisfaction; and especially, (as we before observed,) as his visiting Rome under the character of a prisoner, was overruled by an extraordinary providence to answer some important purposes. See Philip. i. 12, &c.

Inferences drawn from St. Paul's appearance before Agrippa. The incident before us is another unanswerable accomplishment of our blessed Redeemer's promise, that when his disciples should be brought before governors and kings for his sake, it should be given them in that hour what they should speak, Matth. x. 18, 19. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine what could have been said more suitable, or more graceful, than this discourse of St. Paul before Agrippa; a discourse, in which the seriousness and spirituality of the Christian, the boldness of the apostle, and the politeness of the gentleman and the scholar, appear in a most beautiful contrast, or rather in the most happy union.

There was no appearance of flattery, in the apostle's congratulating himself upon having an opportunity to speak before one skilled in the manners and records of the Jews; for the more they had been attended to, with the greater advantage would the cause of Christianity have appeared. Nor could there be any arrogance in his insinuating upon the strictness of his former life; since *those things which were once gain to him*, he had long before counted *loss for Christ*, Philip iii. 7. The excellency of the end which inspired him was proportionable to the manner in which he was impressed with it; and well may they *serve God instantly day and night*, who have the hope of a happy resurrection before them: nor is the hope presumptuous and vain, since it is founded on the promise of God. *Why should it seem incredible with any, that he who gave life, should restore it?—that God should raise the dead?*

It was this expectation which supported the Christians while Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter against them, (ch. ix. 1.) while, mad with profane and impious rage against Jesus of Nazareth, he compelled them to blaspheme, and persecuted them even to strange cities. What keen remorse must a conduct like this occasion him, when he came to know what he did, and to see how gracious and

condescending a Lord he had been *persecuting in his members!* No wonder, when he took so kind a method to reclaim him, that it left so deep an impression on his memory and his heart. Indeed, the whole unparalleled narration is so pleasant and instructive, that we may well bear to read it a hundred times; nay, and rejoice in it, as so many instructive circumstances are added to those which were before advanced. Comp. ch. ix. 2—16. and xxii. 5—16.

What can be more affecting than the view which our Lord here gives us of the *state* in which the gospel found mankind, in comparison with *that* into which it was intended to bring them? Its sacred ministry, we see, was calculated to *open their eyes*, before spiritually blinded; to turn *them from darkness to light*, and from the power of Satan unto God; thus to enable them to receive the remission of their sins, and an inheritance among the saints in light. Wonderful scheme of divine goodness! Happy the men who are employed in promoting it! Let the profane world, like Festus, call their zeal *madness*, and account for it in a less decent and candid manner than this *heathen* ruler himself did: still would these be found the *words of truth and sobriety*; and the God of truth and wisdom will still approve them as such, when all the *wisdom of the world* shall appear *folly* and infatuation.

God grant that none of us may rest in being *almost persuaded to become Christians!* When convictions begin to open upon the benighted soul, let us follow the divine ray whithersoever it leads, and not be *disobedient to the heavenly vision*. God grant that all who shall read or hear the remarkable discourse before us, may be *not only almost*, but *altogether prevailed upon to be what they profess*—to become Christians indeed; and so attain to a temper like that of the blessed apostle, even though his *bonds* were not to be *excepted!* The religious joy which such a disposition must introduce, would render even heavier chains than his, light and tolerable; chains, which would quickly be transformed into ornaments of glory, and which shall deck the faithful soul in the presence of God, with a lustre infinitely superior to what the diadem of Agrippa, or the robes of Festus, could display.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As Agrippa was the principal personage in that assembly, to whom Festus had particularly addressed himself, he signified to St. Paul, who waited the order of his superiors, that he was permitted to speak for himself. Glad of the opportunity to vindicate the glorious cause of God and truth, while he apologized for himself, with dignity stretching out his hand, the great apostle, with conscious uprightness and unallected simplicity, began,

1. With the satisfaction that he felt on the occasion now given him of answering before so able and candid a judge. *I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself*

CHAP. XXVII.

Paul shipping toward Rome, foretelleth the danger of the voyage, but is not believed: they are tossed to and fro with a tempest, and suffer shipwreck; yet all come safe to land.

[Anno Domini 63.]

AND when it was ^a determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered

^a Ch. 20. 16. & 25. 12, 25. with Gen. 50. 20. Ch. 19. 21. & 23. 11. Rom. 15. 28, 29. Ch. 10. 1. & 22. 25. & 23. 17, 23.

^c Ch. 16. 11. & 18. 21. & 20. 3, 15. & 21. 1, 3.

^b Captain of an hundred soldiers. Mat. 9. 5. & 27. 54. Ch. 15. 29. & 20. 4. Col. 4. 10. Phil. 24.

myself this day before thee, concerning the charges laid against me by my countrymen, especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently, whilst I endeavour, without art or disguise, to relate the principles which have influenced my conduct from the first day until now.

2. He freely appeals to the Jews themselves, who knew his manner of life from his youth up, that he had been educated at Jerusalem, under the most celebrated of their doctors, had early embraced the principles of Pharisaism, and, according to their most rigid interpretations, had conformed to all the rites Mosaiical or traditionary; and observed with most conscientious regard the commandments of the law, blameless in all his conversation. So that it was neither ignorance, prejudice, loose principles, nor immoral conduct, which could be urged as a reason for the change wrought upon him.

3. He declares freely the cause of his present bonds. It was for holding the hope of the promise made of God unto the fathers, of a resurrection to eternal life and glory through the divine Messiah, who had appeared in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and by his rising from the dead had fully proved his own glorious character, and secured the resurrection to glory of all his faithful saints. Unto which promise, not only he, but all the truly religious of the twelve tribes, hoped to come, labouring with fervency and constancy, day and night in their prayers, to arrive at the possession of the blessings promised through the Messiah. And for this hope's sake he was accused, for preaching this Messiah, the salvation which was in him, and a resurrection to everlasting blessedness through faith in his name. So that, instead of being an apostate from the fundamental articles of the Jewish faith, according to the malicious accusations of his persecutors, he maintained them with all his might and diligence. Nor did he urge any thing absurd or unreasonable when he asserted the resurrection of Jesus, as the first-fruits of his saints: for why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead? Is any thing beyond God's power? and ought we not implicitly to credit his promise? Note; (1.) All our hopes toward God are founded on his promises. (2.) They who would come to the possession of the eternal blessedness, are called upon to serve God day and night in ceaseless and importunate prayer.

4. He owns the inveterate prejudices against Christianity under which he formerly lay. *I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, supposing it a duty that I owed to God and my*

Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a ^b centurion of Augustus' band.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning ^c to sail by the coasts of Asia; one ^d Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

brethren, to suppress by every means the doctrine and pretensions of one who appeared so despicable: which thing I also did in Jerusalem, being most zealous against his disciples; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and, when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them, justifying the most bloody measures, and testifying my fullest approbation of these horrid executions: and I punished them oft in every synagogue, with restless eagerness pursuing them, and compelled them through the dread of scourgings, infamy, or death, to blaspheme that holy name whereby they were called; and, being exceedingly mad against them, to find many of them obstinate in their faith, and to see the number of the disciples increase in spite of all this load of oppression, I persecuted them even unto strange cities, longing, if possible, to extirpate the very Christian name. If he was now therefore a preacher and a sufferer for that faith which once he so furiously persecuted, it could arise only from the deepest conviction; and his conversion was itself a proof of the truth of Christianity. Note; (1.) It is possible for those who seem most confident that they are in the right, and are most violent in support of their opinions, to be most dangerously deceived. I doubt not that many to this hour persecute the truth, and think they do God service. (2.) Nothing will lie heavier on the awakened conscience, than the remembrance of former injuries done to the souls of men, the effects of which perhaps are now irreparable.

2dly, The apostle, having related his former life and conversation, proceeds to account for the amazing change which had been wrought in him.

1. He declares the manner of his conversion. As he approached Damascus to execute the high-priest's commission—at mid-day, a light, brighter than the sun, darted from heaven upon him and his companions; and, when in consternation they were fallen together to the earth, a voice of majesty addressed him, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks: these mad attempts to wound me in my members, must be attended with ruin to thy own soul.* Terrified with this interrogation, when he replied, *Who art thou Lord?* the voice answered, *I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.* That despised Nazarene, whom he branded as an impostor, now demonstrated to him his divine power and glory with such evidence, as in a moment bore down all his prejudices, and struck him to the heart with horror, shame, and remorse.

2. He who had laid him in the dust, with infinite contumaciousness raised him up, and invested him with that commission under which he now acted. He said, *Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee, not to destroy*

3 And the next *day* we touched at ^e Sidon. gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.
And Julius ^f courteously entreated Paul, and

^e Gen. 10. 15. Josh. 19. 23. II. 23. 2.

^f Ch. 24. 23. & 28. 2, 16.

destroy thee, as thou hast deserved, but *for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear to thee*, giving thee farther discoveries of my mind and will, and directions for thy conduct, and, amid all the dangers to which hereafter for my name's sake thou mayest be exposed, *delivering thee from the Jewish people, and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee* with an apostolic commission to publish the glad tidings of salvation, *to open their eyes*, through a divine illumination attending thy preaching; *to turn them from the darkness of superstition, idolatry, ignorance, and error, to the saving light and knowledge of the grace which is in Jesus Christ, and from the power of Satan who now reigns in their hearts, unto God*, converting their souls from the dominion of sin to the love and service of the holy, ever-blessed God, *that they may receive forgiveness of sins, through me the great Redeemer of lost souls, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me*, prepared, if faithful, for the eternal mansions of blessedness, through that divine faith which worketh by love, and purifies the souls of all my faithful people. *Note*; (1.) The whole world lieth in darkness and wickedness, until the light of the spirit of God, and the power of divine grace, be shed abroad in the heart. (2.) The great end of the Christian ministry is in order to the conversion of men's souls to God. They are not sent of him, who are never made use of by him to this blessed end, and neither know nor expect such fruit of their labours. (3.) Forgiveness of sins through the blood of the atonement, is the great foundation, on which repentance toward God can be effectually preached. We must believe that he is a pardoning God, before we can have any hope of returning to his favour. (4.) There can be no true sanctification, but what flows from faith which worketh by love. (5.) Our title to glory is not of debt, but of grace. Jesus hath purchased it for us, and freely bestows it upon his faithful people. (6.) Though the gift be free, we must experience a meetness for it by the power of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We must be sanctified, before we can be glorified.

3. Borne down by such irresistible evidence, he could not hesitate a moment. *Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision; but, instantly becoming a convert to the truth, I shewed first unto them of Damascus, and then at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles*, according to the orders given me, *that they should repent and turn to God*, deeply convinced of their guilt and danger, filled with self-abhorrence, and in simplicity desiring to renounce their sins, while they drew near to a throne of grace through a crucified Jesus; *and do works meet for repentance*, to evince the genuine conversion of their hearts to God. *Note*; Unless our fruits prove the truth of the grace which is in us, we deceive ourselves, if we think that we are real converts.

4. His indefatigable labours and zeal in preaching these

benevolent and infinitely momentous doctrines, were the only causes of provocation given to his unbelieving brethren, who, obstinate against his testimony, and exasperated at his preaching, seized him in the temple, and would, in a tumultuous manner, if he had not been rescued, have pulled him in pieces on the spot. Let the impartial judge, if he had deserved such treatment.

5. Not intimidated by his past dangers, and *having, according to the divine promise, obtained help of God*, he steadfastly persevered, supported and encouraged by the spirit's inward assistances, and the gracious interpositions of the Lord's providence in his behalf; *witnessing both to small and great*, without respect to persons, or fear of man, that great salvation which is brought to light by the gospel, and most clearly revealed through the death and resurrection of Jesus; *saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer*, and not be a temporal conqueror, but devoted to death for the sins of the world; *and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead*, to die no more; and, as the *first fruits of them that slept*, should quicken all his faithful saints to a glorious immortality by his power at the last day; *and should shew light unto the people and to the Gentiles*, diffusing the knowledge of his great salvation, not only among his ancient people the Jews, but extending his grace to the ends of the earth, and sending out the light of his gospel as the light of his sun, to all nations, tongues, and languages, who are freely called to partake of all the blessings and privileges of his kingdom.

3dly, While St. Paul, warmed by the glorious subject on which he had entered, was proceeding to display the great truths of his Redeemer's person, offices, and character, he is,

1. Interrupted by Festus. Unable to hear with patience what he, a heathen, counted so absurd as the resurrection of a dead man, and so strange as this miraculous conversion, he said aloud, *Paul, thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad*. He looked upon St. Paul with an air of disdain, as rather to be pitied as a lunatic, than condemned as a criminal. Perhaps the warmth which St. Paul expressed, as he advanced in his speech, made Festus think that his imagination was overheated with the intensity of his application. *Note*; It is no unusual thing for those who never knew the light of truth, and the zeal of warm affection for a Redeemer, to stamp those who appear fervent in his cause as enthusiasts or madmen.

2. St. Paul's reply was a sufficient proof of the falseness of this invidious imputation. *I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness*, matters of infinite importance, and supported by the most substantial evidence. He does not resent the suggestion of the governor, but by the meekness of his reply proves the unruffled serenity of his own mind; and, referring himself to Agrippa, he adds, *For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely*, he being conversant in the writings of Moses and the prophets, where the sufferings and

4 And when we had launched from thence, we failed under * Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had failed over the sea of † Cilicia and ‡ Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of † Lycia.

6 And there the centurion found a ship of

^b Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7 And when we had failed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against † Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we failed under † Crete, over against Salmone;

8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place

* A large island northward of Syria. † Countries in the south-west of Lesser Asia. Ch. 1. 10. & 13. 13. & 14. 24. & 15. 41. & 22. 3. † A city in the north-west of Egypt. Ch. 6. 9. & 23. 11. † A city on the south west of Lesser Asia. † Or Candia, a large island in the Mediterranean. Tit. 1. 5, 12.

and resurrection of the Messiah are foretold; and has heard how they have been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; he must have been long ago told of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of my singular conversion; for this thing was not done in a corner, but publicly known, and attested by unexceptionable witnesses; many of whom have sealed, and many more are ready to seal, their testimony with their blood.

3. Turning then from Festus to Agrippa, in the most affecting and pathetic manner he applied himself to the conscience of his royal auditor. *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.* He cannot entertain a suspicion to the contrary; and with confidence expresses his assurance of the king's belief of the inspired writings of the Old Testament; paying him the greatest compliment, while he presses on him the most important truths.

4. Agrippa is nearly staggered with this close application, and, struck with the polite yet serious address of the apostle, replies, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian:* so much reason and evidence appeared in St. Paul's discourse, that, were it not for a regard to his dignity and temporal interests, he could become, he thought, a convert to Christianity. *Note;* Many, unable to stand before the evidence of truth, are almost persuaded; but the world holds them in fetters, and they will not pursue their own convictions.

5. With inimitable address, where the piety of the Christian was blended with the politeness of the Roman, St. Paul replied, *I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.* He wished him and them all the happiness which himself enjoyed in Christ, and exemption from all the ignominy and sufferings to which for the sake of Jesus he was exposed.

6. The king hereupon arose, unable perhaps any longer to stand against the powerful evidence of truth, and afraid of some more moving strokes on his conscience: the governor and Bernice followed him, with the rest of the principal persons. And as they retired together, and talked of St. Paul's case and his defence, they perfectly agreed that *this man*, however great the clamour was against him, had done *nothing worthy of death or of bonds:* so clear was the innocence of the apostle. *Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.*

CHAP. XXVII.

Ver. 1. *That we should sail*] Prisoners of importance used

frequently to be sent, as from other provinces, so from Judea, to Rome. *Julius* was very probably a freed-man of the Julian or Cæſarean family, for freed-men bore commonly the names of their masters who gave them their freedom. He was centurion of a cohort belonging to the legion called *Augustus's legion.* Lipsius mentions the inscription of a stone which notices that legion. See Lipsius in Tacit.

Ver. 2. Adramyttium,] Was a city of Mysia, not far from Pergamos. Along with the apostle there went St. Luke, the writer of this book, and *Aristarchus* the Macedonian from the city of Thessalonica. Aristarchus had been with St. Paul in Ephesus at the time of the tumult there, ch. xix. 29. where he had been seized by the mob, and exposed to great hazard. He afterwards attended him to Macedonia, and returned with him to Asia, ch. xx.

4. Now accompanying him to Rome, he was there a fellow-prisoner with him, Col. iv. 10. and is mentioned in St. Paul's epistle to Philemon, ver. 24. who was probably their common friend, as a valuable assistant in his ministerial work. It was, no doubt, a great comfort to the apostle to have the company of two such friends as St. Luke and Aristarchus; as it was also a great instance of their affection to him, that they would follow him when he was going as a prisoner to Rome, not being ashamed of his bonds; and especially that they would attend him at a time when they knew sailing to be dangerous. See ver. 9.

Ver. 3. To refresh himself.] To enjoy the benefit of their care.

Ver. 5. When we had sailed, &c.] When we had traversed the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we arrived at Myra, &c.

Ver. 6. A ship of Alexandria sailing, &c.] Or, Bound for Italy, and put us on board. There was a great trade carried on between Alexandria and the coasts of Italy, consisting chiefly of the produce of Egypt, and of Persian and Indian goods. The usual ports for this traffic were in Italy; and the Alexandrians were indulged with a particular privilege to engage their commerce.

Ver. 7. And when we had sailed slowly] The Syriac assigns a reason for this, telling us that it was owing to the ship's being deeply laden; but there seems to be another, and a very sufficient reason assigned in the verse itself, *the wind not suffering.* Cnidus was a city and promontory of Doris, in the peninsula of Caria. Crete is an island of the Mediterranean sea, now called *Candia;* and Salmone is a promontory on the eastern coast of that island.

Ver. 8. And, hardly passing it,] And passing it with difficulty. *The fair havens,* so called to this day, was a considerable port in that part of Crete; not far from which was the city of *Lasea,* or *Alaffa.*

which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lafea.

9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with * hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

12 ¶ And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they

might attain to ^m Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south-west and north-west.

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

14 ⁿ But not long after there † arose against it a tempestuous wind, called ‡ Euroclydon.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

* The great day of atonement in the month of September. Lev. xvi. & 23. 27, 29. Numb. 29. 7. ¹ Amos, 3. 7. Pl. 25. 14. [•] Or injury.
^m Not Phenicia, the country on the north-west of Canaan. Ch. 11. 19. & 21. 2. ⁿ Isth. 7. 10. Pl. 37. 35. Eccl. 11. 9. Ch. 12. 23. [†] Or beat.
[‡] A north-east wind.

Ver. 9. Because the fast was now already past.] That is, the yearly fast of atonement for the sins of the people of Israel, mentioned in many places of the Old Testament; in two or three of which places it is ordered to be kept on the tenth day of the seventh month, five days before the feast of tabernacles. Now the feast of tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, which answers to part of our September and October; this Jewish fast therefore fell about the twenty-fifth of September, and as it was now past for some time, the nights were growing long and dark, and the heavens cloudy: the Michaelmas floods were coming down upon the Mediterranean sea, and the stormy months of autumn and winter advancing. Philo in several passages speaks of this as an ill time to sail; as does also Aratus.

Ver. 10. Of the lading and ship.] Or, of the cargo and ship.

Ver. 12. And because the haven, &c.] And that port not being commodious to winter in, most were of opinion to depart thence, and endeavour to reach Phenice, (a haven of Crete, which lies on the south side toward the western part of that island,) and pass the winter there. Heylin.

Ver. 13. Loosing thence.] That is, from the fair havens. Some have thought that the word *ασσον* rendered by, in the next clause, is a proper name; but it is used adverbially both by Homer and Herodotus.

Ver. 14. Euroclydon] Among many other particulars respecting the air and weather of Syria, &c. we are told that the westerly winds there are generally attended with rain. (See Luke xii. 54. 1 Kings, xviii. 41, &c.) But the easterly winds are usually dry, notwithstanding they are sometimes exceedingly hazy and tempestuous; at which times they are called by the sea-faring people, *levanters*, being not confined to any single point, but blowing in all directions, from the north-east, round by the north to the south-east. The great wind, or mighty tempest, or vehement east wind, described by the prophet Jonah (i. 4. iv. 8.), ap-

pears to have been one of these *levanters*; as was also, in all probability, the *Euroclydon* here mentioned: for St. Luke describes it to be *ανεμὸς τυφωνικός*, a violent or tempestuous wind, bearing away all before it; and, from the circumstances which attended it, appears to have varied very little throughout the whole period of it from the true east point. For after the ship could not *αντοφθαλμειν*, bear, or, in the mariner's term, *luff up against it*, (ver. 15.) but they were obliged to let her drive, we cannot conceive, as there are no remarkable currents in that part of the sea, and as the rudder could be of little use, that it could take any other course than as the winds alone directed it. Accordingly, in the description of the storm, we find the vessel was first of all under the island Clauda, (ver. 16.) which is a little to the southward of the parallel of that part of the coast of Crete, from whence it may be supposed to have been driven; then it was tossed along the bottom of the gulph of Adria, (ver. 27.) and afterwards broken in pieces (ver. 41.) at Melita, which is a little to the northward of the parallel above mentioned; so that the direction and course of this particular *euroclydon* seems to have been first at east by north, and afterwards pretty nearly east by south. Virgil elegantly describes one of these *Levanters* thus:

—ubi navigiis violentior incidit Eurus,
 Nōsse, quot Ionii veniant ad litora fluctus.
 Georg. ii. v. 107, 108.

— Number, when the blustering Eurus roars,
 The billows beating on Ionian shores.

DRYDEN.

Ver. 15. And when the ship was caught, &c.] And as the ship was violently hurried away, and was not able to bear up against the wind, &c.

Ver. 16. Clauda.] This island, otherwise called *Gaudos*, or *Cauda*, lay a little to the south of the western coast of Crete.

17 Which when they had taken up they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

21 ¶ But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cesar: and, lo, God hath

given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

29 Then fearing lest they should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day:

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

o Jon. 1. 5. Job, 2. 4. Prov. 23. 5. P Pf. 107. 25-27. Jon. 1. 4, 13. Mat. 8. 24, 25. q Pf. 107. 5. Deut. 8. 3. r Ver. 9, 10. s Job, 22. 29, 30. If. 43. 1, 2. & 44. 10. t With Ver. 31. u Rom. 1. 9. 2 Tim. 1. 3. x If. 41. 10, 14. & 43. 1, 2. y Ch. 19. 21. & 23. 11. & 25. 11. z If. 6. 13. Job, 22. 30. Gen. 39. 5, 18, 26, 28-32. Ver. 44. a Rom. 4. 20. 2 Chr. 20. 20. Numb. 23. 19. Tit. 1. 2. Heb. 6. 17, 18. Luke, 1. 45. John, 1. 40. 2 Tim. 1. 12. b Ch. 18. 1. * A sea south-west of Italy. c Means must be used in fulfilling God's infallible promises. Pf. 37. 34. If. 38. 21. Mat. 4. 7. Judg. 20. 28, 29. Ver. 22. 24.

Ver. 17. *The quicksands,*] The greater and lesser Syrtis on the African shore, infamous for their destruction of mariners. Many approved writers of antiquity have described them. *Undergirding the ship,* was binding it round with ropes and cables, in order to prevent it from bulging.

Ver. 21. *And have gained this harm and loss.*] The words ἔβησαν καὶ ἔζημιαν, rendered *harm and loss*, are used ver. 10. and no doubt they have a reference here to what the apostle had before declared. The word ἔβησαν generally signifies some kind of *wrong*, and accordingly it is almost always used with its compounds and derivatives in this sense; (comp. 2 Cor. xli. 10. Matth. xxii. 6. Luke, xi. 45. xviii. 32.) but it extends to any *violent assault*, ch. xiv. 5. 1 Theff. ii. 2. and is here used for that of waves and winds. Our word *injury* exactly corresponds with it, and is used in the same latitude. Thus none would scruple to say that a ship had been much injured by a storm. The word Ζημία signifies a *loss*, especially a *fine*; (see Mark viii. 36.) and perhaps it may be used here to insinuate that this *loss* was a kind of *fine* paid for their own imprudence. To *gain a loss* seems to have been a proverbial expression.

Ver. 23. *The angel of God,*] *An angel of the God, &c.* There was great propriety in this, as St. Paul was speaking to *heathens*.

Ver. 27. *In Adria,*] *In the Adriatic sea.* All that part of the Mediterranean which lay south of Italy, was called by the ancients *the Adriatic sea*; and that which is now the gulph of Venice, was the *Sinus Adriaticus* or *Adriatic Bay*.

Ver. 31. *Except these abide in the ship, &c.*] *“Unless these mariners continue in the ship, without whose help we know not how to manage her, ye cannot be saved; for the promise made you of your lives was to be under- stood as given on condition of your taking the most prudent measures to secure them, that present circumstances will admit.”* God foretold the deliverance of the ship's company as certain, though suspended on this condition, because he knew it would be complied with; and directed St. Paul to urge the necessity of that compliance, as what he knew would be the successful means of securing it; though none can deny but these sailors had a natural power of going out of the ship, or the soldiers a natural power of permitting them to do it. The appli-

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken ^d nothing.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is ^e for your health: ^f for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and ^g gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all ^h of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.

37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

38 And when they had eaten enough, ⁱ they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

39 And when it was day, they knew not

the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

40 And when they had ^{*} taken up the anchors, they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainfail to the wind, and made toward shore.

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, ^k they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42 ^l And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape.

43 But the centurion, ^m willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land:

^d Very little, and no set meal. Ver. 21. ^e Eph. 5. 29. 1 Tim. 5. 23. ^f 23. Mat. 15. 36. John, 6. 11. 1 Tim. 4. 4. ^g Pl. 50. 11. & 107. 30. ^h 2 Cor. 11. 25, 26. ⁱ Luke, 21. 18. & 12. 7. Mat. 10. 30. 1 Kings, 1. 52. ^j 1 Sam. 9. Ver. 19. John, 1. 5. Prov. 23. 5. Job, 2. 4. ^k 1 Sam. 6. 25. ^l Or Jer. 38. 10. ^m Prov. 16. 3. Ch. 23. 10.

ⁿ Luke, 21. 18. & 12. 7. Mat. 10. 30. 1 Kings, 1. 52. ^o 1 Sam. 9. Ver. 19. John, 1. 5. Prov. 23. 5. Job, 2. 4. ^p 1 Sam. 6. 25. ^q Or Jer. 38. 10. ^r Prov. 16. 3. Ch. 23. 10.

application of this remark to other affairs of great moment, appears both easy and important. See the *Inference*

Ver. 33. This day is the fourteenth, &c.] This is the fourteenth day that, waiting for some favourable change, ye have continued fasting, and not taken one meal. Heylin. Comp. Matth. xi. 18. Appian speaks of an army, which for twenty days together took neither food nor sleep; by which he must mean, they never made full meals, nor slept whole nights together. The same interpretation, I think, should be given to the phrase before us; which some also suppose may intimate, that they were now at short allowance, as they were likely to have a much longer voyage than was at first intended, and had 276 souls on board.

Ver. 34. There shall not an hair fall from the head, &c.] This expression appears to have been a proverbial and general expression of entire safety. Comp. 1 Kings, i. 52. Matth. x. 30. Luke, xii. 7. xxi. 18.

Ver. 40. When they had taken up the anchors,] When they had weighed their anchors, they committed [the ship] to the sea. Some rather choose to render this, *Having cut the anchors, they left them in the sea.* The original is certainly dubious, and will admit of either sense. It is said, *they loosed the rudder bands.* Ships in those days had commonly two rudders, one on each side; which were fastened to the ship by bands or chains; and on loosing these bands it is supposed that the rudders sunk deeper into the sea, and by their weight rendered the ship less subject to be overlet by the winds. But more probably the rudders had been fastened when they let the vessel drive; and were now

loosened when they had need of them to steer her into the creek. For after they had just been throwing out their corn to *lighten* the ship, it is not easy to suppose they should immediately contrive a method to *increase the weight of it.* The word *Ἀπρίμωνα*, seems properly to be translated *main-fail.* Grotius contends that it was a fail near the fore-part of the ship, answering either to what we call the foremast, or to the *bow-sprit*; which last seems to agree best with the account which Stephens has collected from the most considerable authorities. See his Latin Thesaurus on the word *artemon.* The last clause should be rendered, *Hoisted up the mainsail, and were carried by the wind to the shore.*

Ver. 43. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, &c.] Thus God, for St. Paul's sake, not only saved all the rest of the ship's company from being lost in the sea, but kept the prisoners from being murdered according to the unjust and barbarous proposal of the soldiers; who could have thought of no worse scheme, had they been all condemned malefactors; and had these guards, instead of conveying them to their trial, been carrying them to the place of execution. As we purpose at the end of this book to make some general observations upon it, with respect to the proofs which it affords of the truth of Christianity, we will anticipate a little, and subjoin here,

Inferences on ch. xxvii. and xxviii.—How great is the force of a virtuous character and a worthy and honourable behaviour, towards engaging the esteem of all around us! Julius the centurion conceives a reverence and affection for St. Paul,

44 And the rest, some on boards, and it came to pass, that^a they escaped all safe to some on broken pieces of the ship. And so land.

^a Ver. 22, 24. Pl. 107. 30.

St. Paul, which, as in the beginning of this dangerous voyage it procured him the satisfaction of conversing with his friends at Sidon, and receiving the fruit of their affection, so was it, in the progress of the voyage, the occasion of saving this great apostle's life, and with it that of the rest of the prisoners. Let us learn thus to soften the fierce, and to convince the prejudiced; humbly trusting in that God, who, *if our ways please him*, can turn our enemies into friends, and preserve and bless us by means of those who were intended to be only the instruments of affliction.

From the account which is here given us of the danger and distress suffered by St. Paul and his companions, we learn to pity those, who, being providentially preserved in a sea-faring life, are often in such deaths as if we send up, we hear the stormy winds raging around, and passionate cries as it were upon their rapid wings, *or in his grasp*, (Prov. to the Almighty *who holdeth the* have those, who are ready xxx. 4.) that he would help a watery grave; and perhaps to be swallowed up alive on the brink of eternity, in the many of them, while others are of all others most unprepared number of those who are of all others most unprepared for it!

Alas! to what perils will persons expose themselves, either to raise a fortune, or to gain a livelihood, or in obedience to the commands of men! yet how few are there who would expose themselves to the same for the sake of God! They commit their all to the mercy of the waves; they trust their life to a plank,—to a pilot; and yet it is often with great difficulty that they can trust themselves to the providence of that God, whose knowledge, goodness and power, are infinite, and the visible effects of which they have so many times experienced.

Happy the man, in whatever extremities of danger he may be circumstanced, who is conscious of a relation to the God of heaven, as his God and his Father—who can say, like St. Paul, in this blessed parenthesis, *whose I am, and whom I serve!* May we be enabled to use the same language, to take the comfort of it, and commit ourselves to the guardian care of our God with cheerfulness. Let our faith put a reality into all his promises. Thus may we continually encourage ourselves in our God; nor will the event in that case shame our hopes; but we shall find, by happy experience, that perseveringly cleaving to this faithful God, he will not only save us from ruin, but conduct us to joy, as well as to safety everlasting.

The conduct of St. Paul offers a remarkable illustration of the obligations we are under, to use the most proper means for security and success, even while we are committing ourselves to the care of divine Providence, and waiting the accomplishment of God's own promises: for it would be most unreasonable to imagine that he ever intended any promise to encourage rational creatures to act in a wild and irrational manner, or to remain inactive, when he has given them natural capacities of doing something, at least, for their own benefit. It is in exerting these capa-

aid; and all the cities, that we are to expect his promise, would be lost grace, beauty, and wisdom, in his view. To abuse it in if we were to take it in a contrary view, is at once a dangerous presumption, if all pretence to piety upon it be not profane hypocrisy.

How solicitous were they to save themselves, if all pretence to piety upon it be not profane hypocrisy. They cast out their goods in a storm; of this perils way the tackling of the ship to lighten it, and they that succeeding days can abstain even from eating for accustomed bread. O when shall we see a solicitude any thing like this, about the concerns of their never-dying souls! Alas! amid the extremest danger, they are rather like those, who in such a storm as is here described, *sleep on the top of the mast*: (Prov. xxiii. 34.) Let us not wonder therefore, if when awakened on a sudden, and made to see and feel the extremity of their case, they are for a while taken off from attending to their secular affairs; nor rashly censure that as madness, which may be the first entrance of true wisdom into their minds.

We see how cheerful St. Paul was, amid the rage of winds and waves, under a sense of the faithful care of his God; and how the assurance which he gave the rest, that their lives should be preserved, animated them to eat their bread with cheerfulness. It was to St. Paul that the lives of those who sailed with him were given. And his fellow-prisoners owed to him a double preservation—both from the sword, and from the sea. To be a prisoner in the company of a Paul, is a privilege preferable to liberty. Thus may a relation to God's faithful servants, and a community of interests with them, prove the means of great temporal advantages, even to those who know not God themselves. Happy these men, had they known that he was also still more truly the minister of an eternal salvation! Surely after so many remarkable circumstances pointing out the apostle to the company of this ship as a teacher commissioned by God, and favoured with extraordinary intercourses with him, they must have been very inexcusable, if they did not henceforward commence his attentive hearers and disciples; and yet, though they all escape safe to land on St. Paul's account, according to his prediction in the name of God, we hear not one word of gratitude and acknowledgment either to the Almighty preserver, or to him.

The customs of Greece and Rome taught them to call every nation but their own barbarous; but surely the generosity which the uncultivated inhabitants of Malta shewed, was far more valuable than all the vanity which the polite education could give, where it taught not humanity and compassion. It is with pleasure we trace among them the force of conscience and the belief of Providence, which some more learned people have stupidly thought it philosophy to despise;—yet they erred, as every one must err, in concluding that calamities are always to be interpreted as divine judgements. Let us guard against the same mistake, lest, like them, we unwarily censure not only the innocent

CHAP. XXVIII.

his many his shipwreck, is kindly entertained of the barbarians: his viper on his hand hurteth him not: he healeth preaching, forsake island: they depart towards Rome: he he preacheth thereof the cause of his coming: after his persuaded, and some believed not: yet
[Anno.

AND when they were come to Malta, they knew that the island was called Melita.

^a Ch. 27. 26. ^b Or Malta, an island, about 150 miles sou.
13. 1, 2. Ch. 27. 3. ^c Luke, 13. 2, 4. John, 9. 2, 3.

2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

3 ¶ And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a mur-

^d Rom. 1. 14. ^e Cor. 14. 11. Col. 3. 11. ^f Col. 3. 12, 13. Heb.

innocent but the excellent of the earth; candidly willing to correct and confess our erroneous sentiments when means of better information offer, and studious to adjust our notions of men's characters according to truth, that so we may neither falsely calumniate nor fondly deify them, but judge righteous judgment.

Happy wreck, on the ruins of which the temple of the Lord was built, and by occasion whereof barbarians were transformed into Christians! Who can say how many dis tempered minds were healed, how many sons and daughters born to God and to glory, in these three months spent in Malta by St. Paul and St. Luke? For modest as that beloved physician of souls as well as of bodies is in every thing relating to himself, we cannot imagine that he was inactive or unsuccessful in his pious labours of love.

It is most extremely probable, that the indulgence shewn to St. Paul at Rome, the remains of liberty which he enjoyed while in bonds there, and the much more valued opportunities of usefulness which that liberty gave him, were in some degree at least owing to the experience and report of these extraordinary events. Thus, O Lord! shalt thou lead us into whatever difficulties and dangers thou pleasest, and we will cheerfully wait the happy event which shall at length prove the wisdom and kindness of thy most mysterious conduct. In the mean time, even while travelling in the bonds of affliction, may we see thine hand in all the countenance which we meet with from our Christian brethren. Cheered with their converse and friendly offices, may we, like the blessed apostle, thank thee and take courage in an humble assurance that thou wilt stand by us in every future unknown extremity; and either manifest thy power and goodness in raising up human supports, or display thy all-sufficient grace in a yet more glorious manner by bearing us up when they fail us!

Who can avoid observing with pleasure that uniform tenor of Christian zeal, and compassionate regard to the salvation of men, which reigned in the mind of St. Paul, even to the very period, not of this history only, but to that of his life? No sooner is he arrived at Rome—a prisoner,—destitute,—afflicted,—despised,—but an earnest desire to communicate the blessings of the gospel, to his kinsmen according to the flesh, engages him to tend for them, and to confer with them concerning the kingdom of God, generously forgetting his own wrongs, and waving those

comp. accusers, which he might so justly have urged against his well as in persecutors.—Yet he found them here, as conquer with an under prejudices which he could not They call Christianity, strength of reason and eloquence. where spoken against. ¶ and maintain that it is every how far was it from being a this were indeed the case, obeying the gospel! since calum against embracing and truth, and men might as well pluck the from its sphere, as by all their malice and rage dethrone the blessed Redeemer, whom God hath established by a decree firmer than the ordinances of heaven. That a religion very where opposed and spoken against, should be every where received, in so short a time, is surely no small or inconsiderable miracle;—especially when this religion is so far from promising any thing here below, to allure sensual men to embrace it, that it directly contradicts all their inclinations. All false religions have been readily received. The Christian system is that alone which, from its infancy, stood exposed to all the powers of the earth, and which, notwithstanding, in a little time spread its influences over the whole world. What stronger evidence can be offered, that it is indeed what it assumes to be,—the power of God unto salvation?

No scripture of the Old Testament is more frequently referred to in the New, than those words of Isaiah, which contain so just a description of the state of the Jewish nation both in the days of that prophet, and in those of Christ and his apostles. How deplorable a case!—to be spiritually blind and deaf under the mid-day splendours of the gospel and its loudest proclamations!—to harden the heart against the most gracious offers of healing and life, and arm themselves against their own salvation with weapons of eternal death! May divine pity and help be extended to those, who are marching on by large steps toward the same character, and, as it is justly to be feared, to the same end! Mean time, let us bless the Lord that there are many who yield to be saved by grace. To them the ministers of Christ may turn with pleasure, and find in their faithful attention to the gospel a sufficient recompence for all the labours and hazards they encounter in a zealous concern for its propagation.

To conclude. Let us humbly and thankfully contemplate that gracious Providence, which secretly interposed

derer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 ° And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

° Mark, 16. 18. Pf. 91. 13. Luke, 10. 19.

to moderate the apostle's confinement, and thereby gave him an opportunity of performing various and extensive services to the church, of which he must otherwise have been incapable. Thus it is that *the wrath of man praises God, and the remainder of it he restrains* (Pf. lxxvi. 10.). The *sacred history* now closing upon us, affords many illustrations of this remark of the Psalmist. May we be duly thankful for this history; and while we peruse its important contents, let us indulge those reflections which so obviously arise from them, to *establish our faith in the gospel, and to quicken our obedience to its laws.* Amen.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, How long St. Paul continued at Cæsarea, is not said; probably on the first opportunity he was shipped for Rome. We have,

1. His embarkation. St. Paul and some other prisoners were put on board a ship of Adramyttium, under the care of one Julius, a centurion of the legion which bore the name of Augustus. St. Luke the evangelist, and Aristarchus a Macedonian, accompanied the apostle, whose presence and society could not but be a singular blessing to him in this tedious voyage.

2. His progress. The next day after they sailed, they touched at Sidon; where Julius reposed such confidence in his prisoner, that, on his parole, he permitted him to visit his friends, that he might have the comfort of refreshing himself with their company and conversation, and be supplied with proper provisions for the voyage. Loosing thence, they beat up under the island of Cyprus, the wind being against them, and, coasting the Cilician and Pamphylia shores, they arrived at Myra a city of Lycia. There the centurion finding a ship of Alexandria sailing to Italy with a lading of wheat and other articles, he contracted for a passage, and carried the prisoners, and the companions of the apostle, aboard, and putting to sea, they made but little way, through contrary winds, scarce reaching Cnidus in many days: and, instead of leaving Crete on the left, they were forced upon the other side, over against the eastern cape called Salmone, and, with great difficulty weathering the point, cast anchor in a bay called, *The Fair Havens*, near the city of Lasea. *Note*: (1.) In our voyage through this tempestuous world, we may expect to meet many an unfavourable gale. (2.) Though the wind of afflictions and temptations blow hard against us, and we can scarcely bear up against it, if we steadily hold on our course, we shall at last reach the fair Havens where we would be.

3. His advice. As the autumn was far advanced, and the fast on the day of Atonement was now passed, the season of the year began to grow tempestuous, and sailing to be dangerous. St. Paul therefore admonished them not to proceed farther till the spring, foretelling by a prophetic impulse, that if they did they would repent their rashness, and not only sustain great damage in the loss of their ship, but also greatly endanger their lives. But the master and owner of the ship being of a different opinion,

the centurion, who chose rather to be guided by their judgment in this matter, disregarded St. Paul's admonition; and *the Fair Havens* being an inconvenient port to winter in, the majority of the ship's company advised to sail for Phenice, a haven in Crete at no great distance, which was made by two points of land that ran south west and north-west, and was more sheltered from the winds, and more commodious for a winter station.

2dly, In consequence of the advice of the majority, we have,

1. The ship pursuing her voyage with a prosperous gale. The south wind blowing gently, encouraged them to put to sea; and now, concluding that they could not fail to reach their desired port, they coasted along the island of Crete: but the gale of prosperity is often but a short-lived delusion. For,

2. The wind suddenly shifted to an opposite quarter, and a hurricane, called Euroclydon, arose, and blew so vehemently, that the ship was ready to be swallowed up in the waves; so that, unable to bear up against the storm, or keep their course, they let her drive at random; and running under an island called Clauda, with great difficulty they hoisted the boat on board; then, undergirding the ship with ropes to prevent her going to pieces, and fearing lest she should be driven on some shore, they reefed their sails, and drove before the wind under the bare poles. Thus they continued to be tossed about violently, while lowering clouds obscured the skies, and neither sun nor stars for many days appeared; so that they knew not where they were. *Note*: We should never be too much elated: the transition from the height of prosperity to the depth of adversity, is often very sudden.

3. All attempts which human prudence dictated, they now made use of. The next day after the storm began, in order to lighten the ship, they cast out part of the merchandise into the sea; and, when still the danger increased, the passengers as well as seamen were called upon deck; and the third day they threw overboard the utensils and unnecessary tackling of the ship; when their lives were each moment in jeopardy, they cared not for any loss besides: but when, after all their efforts, for many days the storm raged with unabating severity, despair sat in general upon the countenances of the seamen, and they expected nothing but to be swallowed up of the merciless waves. *Note*: If men are so prodigal of their goods to save their bodies, when in danger, how much readier should we be to part with them at the peril of our souls?

3dly, Man's extremity is God's opportunity: when we are in the utmost danger he can still open a door for us to escape.

1. St. Paul cheers their hearts with the assurance, that though they gave themselves over for lost, and abandoned themselves to despair, not a man of the company should perish.

[1.] He gently reminds them of his advice which they had disregarded. They should have followed his prophetic

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

7 ¶ In the same quarters were possessors

Ch. 8. 10. & 14. 11. & 10. 25. Rev. 19. 10. & 22. 8, 9.

warning, and then they would have prevented the danger, loss, and injury, which they had now sustained. *Note*; Many of the miseries in which we involve ourselves, are owing to our own obstinacy and disregard of the admonitions of our wiser friends.

[2.] He confidently assures them of the safety of their persons, though their ship would be wrecked; and therefore exhorts them to be of good cheer. Notwithstanding their contempt of his advice, he desired to revive their desponding hearts, and to quicken them to rouse themselves in the confidence of being preserved through the divine mercy. *Note*; Though others involve themselves in trouble by neglecting our counsel, we must nevertheless be ready to lend them our assistance, to comfort them under their trials, or to extricate them from their difficulties.

[3.] He produces divine authority for what he said, that they might rest satisfied with the truth of his assertion, however improbable it might appear. *There stood by me this night the angel of God, a celestial messenger sent from that glorious God, whose I am; his peculiar property by adoption as well as creation, and by his special appointment constituted an apostle; and whom I serve, making it the business and happiness of my life to promote his glory in the gospel of his dear Son, and yielding up my body, soul, and spirit, with unreserved devotedness, to his blessed work and service. And this heavenly minister addressed me, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou art safe in the midst of danger; for thou must be brought before Caesar: and lo! God hath given thee all them that sail with thee, who for thy sake shall be preserved. Such a public blessing is one good man; and they who are hated and persecuted of the world, as not worthy to live, are indeed the very persons for whose sake it is preserved.*

[4.] He comforts them, and encourages them to trust in God: *Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me, and doubt not but the event will confirm his gracious promise.*

[5.] He tells them, they must, however, expect to be shipwrecked on a certain island, which, among other things, when it came to pass, would evidence the divine inspiration by which the apostle spoke.

2. After many days of terror and dismay, on the fourteenth night, as they were tossed to and fro by the tempest in the Adriatic sea, the seamen about midnight apprehended they were near land; and sounding, at first found twenty fathoms of water, and a little farther, fifteen: left therefore they should be driven ashore in the dark, or strike upon some rock, they cast anchor, and longed impatiently for day-light, that they might see in what situation they were. *Note*; In the dark and stormy night of temptation or affliction, the anchor of hope, which enters into that within the veil, must take fast hold upon Christ, and then we shall find in him sufficient, yea, almighty strength.

3. The sailors, disregarding St. Paul's assurances of safety, thought to secure themselves, whatever became of

the rest; and therefore, hoisting out the boat, under pretence of casting anchor out of the fore-ship, they intended to make for the shore, and leave the ship and the passengers to shift for themselves. St. Paul, probably by divine intimation, perceived their design, and immediately acquainted the centurion and soldiers, assuring them, that though God had promised to preserve them, it was to be effected in the use of the necessary means; and that if the seamen, who should work the ship, were suffered to escape, they must not expect to be saved. In the way of duty we may only hope for the fulfilment of the promises. The soldiers therefore, apprized of the danger, immediately cut the ropes, and let the boat drive.

4. While they waited for the morning light, St. Paul, the comforter and encourager of his dejected shipmates, besought them all to take meat, and refresh themselves after their toils, saying, *this day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried, in suspense between life and death, and continued fasting, without any inclination to food, having taken nothing, at least no regular nor hearty meal: wherefore I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health, and will conduce to your safety: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.* And when he had thus animated them with his cheerful counsel and countenance, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all for their past preservation, the promise of assured safety; and the provision that was now before them: and when he had broken it, he began to eat, setting them an example. Revived by this repeated assurance and exhortation, and seeing him so satisfied, they all took refreshment, their number consisting of two hundred and threescore and sixteen persons: and, being strengthened by a hearty meal, they cleared the ship, casting the wheat of which part of her cargo consisted, into the sea, that she might draw the less water, as they intended to run her ashore.

5. When welcome day-light appeared, they descried the land not very distant, though what country it was they knew not: but observing a creek which ran up within the shore, they resolved, if possible, to steer the ship thither; and weighing the anchors, or slipping the cables, they hoisted the main-sail, and loosed the rudder or rudders which had been fastened, and made for shore: but striking on a shoal where two currents met, the prow stuck fast, and, the waves dashing on the stern, she soon went to pieces.

6. In this extremity, the inhuman soldiers proposed the bloody expedient of murdering all the prisoners, lest any of them should escape, and they become answerable for them: a shocking proposal! But the centurion, who now saw more reason than ever to value St. Paul, would not for his sake permit so cruel a project to be executed; and therefore commanded every one to consult in the best manner possible for his own safety; whereupon, some by swimming, and others on part of the wreck, got safe to shore; and not one person of the whole company was drowned,

of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8 And it came to pass that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

9 So when this was done, others also, which

had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

10 ^h Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

11 ¶ And after three months we departed in a ship of ¹ Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was ^k Castor and Pollux.

^a 1 Kings, 17. 20—22. James, 5. 14—16. Mark, 16. 18. & 6. 5. Luke, 4. 40. & 13. 13. Mat 9. 18. ^b Ver. 2. Mat. 5. 46, 47. James, 2. 15, 16. 1 Tim. 5. 17, 18. Mat. 10. 10. ¹ Ch. 27. 6. & 6. 9. ^k Sailors gods. 2 Sam. 5. 21. 1 Cor. 8. 4.

drowned, according to St. Paul's prediction. *Note*; After long beating on life's tempestuous ocean, though we leave earth and all its things behind us, yet, if faithful unto death, we shall not regret their loss, when we feel ourselves entered into the land of rest which remaineth for the people of God.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Ver. 1. Escaped,] That is, *Got safe to land.* There were two islands called *Melita*; this was that which lay between Africa and Sicily, being about twelve miles broad and twenty long, and sixty distant from Sicily to the south. It took its name from the abundance of *honey* found therein,—for *meli* in Greek signifies *honey*. It also yields a great deal of cotton; and though the soil is but three feet deep above the rock, it is very fruitful. It is now called *Malta*; and the place where St. Paul and his company were driven on shore, is at this time shewn to travellers, and goes by the name of *St. Paul's shore*, or *haven*. The people of Malta were originally a colony of Carthaginians, as appears from several old inscriptions in Punic characters, and from the language of the present inhabitants, the number of whom is said to be above 90,000. St. Paul's shipwreck here engaged a kind of religious veneration for the island; in consequence of which it was given in the year 1530, by the emperor Charles V. to the knights of St. John in Jerusalem, when they had been expelled from Rhodes by the Turks: they were 1000 in number, of whom 500 always resided in the island, and were called *Hospitalers*, *Knights Templars*, or *Knights of Malta*. They were at one time composed out of eight nations, but afterwards of only seven, because the English knights became extinct on the reformation. They were, by the statutes of their order, under a vow of celibacy, were obliged to repress all pirates, and to wage perpetual war with the Turks and other Mahometans. This island now belongs to Great Britain.

Ver. 2. And the barbarous people] The ancients looked upon islanders in general as uncivilized, for want of a more free and common conversation with the rest of mankind; and the Greeks and Romans in particular looked upon all nations, except their own, as barbarous. (See Rom. i. 14.) The Maltese however were famous for their civility to strangers. See Diodor. Siculus, lib. v. p. 204. Edit. Steph.

Ver. 4. The venomous beast] The fierce animal seems the proper import of the word *Σηπίον*: Bos has shewn that the physicians use it to express any *poisonous animal*; and Lucian applies it as here to a *viper*. To render it *beast*, is by no

means proper: *venomous creature*, would be more allowable. It has been observed, that these people concluded St. Paul to have been guilty of *murder*, rather than of any other crime, because they saw the *viper hanging on his hand*, which therefore they judged to have been the offending part; according to the rule which prevailed much among the ancients, that persons were often remarkably punished in that part of the body which had been the immediate instrument of their sin. Beza finely observes in the true spirit of criticism, that the phrase *ἐκ ἰκτερος* should be rendered according to its exact form, *hath not suffered*; to signify that they looked upon him as in effect a dead man, after having been bitten by that *venomous creature*. Though *vengeance* may here be understood of the *divine vengeance* in general, yet as these were the words of Heathen idolaters, possibly they might refer to the *idol deity* worshipped among them under this name.

Ver. 5. And he shook off the beast] This was exactly agreeable to what our Lord had promised that his disciples should do. See Mark, xvi. 18. Luke, x. 19. and compare with this the miracles of Moses, Exod. iv. 2—5. vii. 10—12.

Ver. 6. But after they had looked a great while, &c.] Many of the Heathens thought there was something divine in the nature of *serpents*, and that deities, or good genii, who were made use of as the instruments of delivering and honouring those who were the peculiar favourites of the gods, often appeared in that shape. Hence idols were often made with serpents near them; and there have been numerous, and indeed astonishing instances of religious worship, absurd as it may seem, paid to that kind of animals. See the notes on Gen. iii. 15. Grotius, Whitby, and some others, think that the Melitese took St. Paul for *Hercules*, *Ἀλεξάνταξ*, (the driver away of evil,) who was worshipped in this island, and was, according to Ptolemy, one of the gods of the Phœnicians. The *Lystrans* would have worshipped St. Paul as a *god*, and afterwards stoned him as a *blasphemer*, and the worst of men; chap. xiv. 11—19. So soon do unthinking persons run from one extreme to another, and so little regard is to be had to the warmth of affection, where it is not grounded upon scripture, reason, and conviction.

Ver. 7. Of the chief man of the island,] Grotius has produced an ancient inscription, by which it appears that the title of *πρωτῶν*, or *chief*, was given to the governor of this island; and so it is used here by St. Luke with his accustomed accuracy of expression.

Ver. 11. Whose sign was Castor and Pollux,] It was the custom

12 And landing at * Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to † Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to ‡ Puteoli;

14 Where we found brethren, and were

desired to tarry with them¹ seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as § Appii-forum, and the || Three taverns: ^m whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

* The chief city of Sicily, an island south-west of Italy.
20. 6. & 21. 4. Till he preached on a Lord's day.
1 Cor. 12. 21.

† A city on the south point of Italy.
§ A city 51 miles south of Rome.

‡ A city on the south-west of Italy.
|| A place 33 miles south from Rome.

¹ Ch. Heb. 13. 3.

custom of the ancients to have *images* on their ships, both at the head and stern; the first of which was called the *sign* from whence the ship was named, and the other was that of the tutelar deity to whose care the ship was committed. There is no doubt but they had sometimes idol deities at the head; and then it is most likely, if they had any figure at the stern, it was the same; as it is hardly probable the ship should be called by the name of one idol deity and be committed to the care of another. The figure that was used for *Castor* and *Pollux*, was that of two young men on horseback, with each a javelin in his hand, and by their side half an egg and a star; but the *sign* of *Castor* and *Pollux* was that of a *double cross*. When these two appeared together, they were looked upon, by the superstitious Heathen, as propitious to sailors, and therefore for a good omen they had them carved or painted on the head of the ship, and gave it a name from thence; and perhaps most of those who sailed in company with the apostle, might look upon it as fortunate, that they sailed under such a protection, and might promise themselves a more prosperous voyage in that ship, than they had met with in the other which brought them from *Creta*, as indeed they had; but it was owing to the protection, not of *Castor* and *Pollux*, but of an infinitely superior Deity, even that true God whose providence is continually over all his works.

Ver. 12. Syracuse,] Was the metropolis of Sicily, situated on the east side of the island, and had a beautiful prospect from every entrance both by sea and land. The port, which had the sea on both sides of it, was almost wholly surrounded with elegant buildings; all the suburbs being on both sides banked up and supported with walls of marble. While in its splendor, this city was the largest and richest belonging to the Greeks; it was twenty-two miles in circuit, and perhaps equalled *Carthage* in its wealth. It was called *Quadruplex*, because it was divided into four parts; the first of which contained the famous temple of *Jupiter*; the second, the temple of *Fortune*; the third, a large amphitheatre, and a surprising statue of *Apollo*; and the fourth which was the island of *Ortygia*, the two temples of *Diana* and *Minerva*, and the celebrated fountain of *Arethusa*. It was not far from mount *Aetna*. About 210 years before the birth of *Christ*, this city was taken and sacked by *Marcellus* the Roman general, and in storming the place the famous *Archimedes* was slain by a common soldier, while he was intent upon his studies. It was afterwards rebuilt by *Augustus*, and had at this time so recovered itself as to answer its former splendor. It had at length three castles, three walls, and a marble

gate, and was able to send out 12,000 heroes, and 400 ships; but it received such a blow from the *Saracens* in the year 884, when they rased it, that it has never since recovered its former splendor.

Ver. 13. And from thence we fetched a compass.] From thence we coasted round, and came over against *Rhegium*, a city and promontory in the southernmost part of Italy; from which, as the name of the place implies, it was supposed the island of Sicily was broken off; for *Rhegium* comes from the verb *ῥηγνύω*, or *ῥηγνύμι*, to break. It is now called *Reggio*, is an archbishop's see, and a considerable place for trade. *Puteoli*, now commonly called *Pozzuoli*, is a city in the *Terra di Lavoro*, a province in the kingdom of *Naples*, situated upon a hill, in a creek of the sea, and just opposite *Baia*. Within this city are five-and-thirty natural warm baths, celebrated for the cure of several diseases; and from these baths, wells, or pits of water, called in Latin *Putei*, the name of the town is said to be derived. It is a bishop's see, and was till lately under the archbishop of *Naples*.

Ver. 15. When the brethren, &c.] That is, the Christians residing at *Rome*,—came to meet him, sensible of the great character of *St. Paul*, and the important obligations which they were under to him for his excellent *Epistle* to them written a few years before this. It is very remarkable, that we have no certain information by whom *Christianity* was first preached at *Rome*: probably as some inhabitants of that celebrated city were present at *Jerusalem* on the day of *Pentecost*, ch. ii. 10. they being converted themselves, might at their return carry the gospel thither, confirming it by miraculous works, and by the exercise of extraordinary gifts. *Appii Forum* was a town in the *Appian way* between *Rome* and *Campania*, at the distance of fifty-one miles from *Rome*. *Tres Tabernæ*, or *The Three Taverns*, was another place, which stood on the *Appian-way*, about thirty miles from *Rome*. The rendering it *Three Taverns*, gives us the idea of *inns* or houses appointed for refreshment and accommodation. The proper meaning of the word *tabernæ* is *frontier towns*, built to repress the inroads and insults of foreigners. That this was a city properly so called, and an episcopal see in the time of *Constantine*, is evident from *Optatus*, who mentions *Felix a Tribus Tabernis*, “of the *Three Tabernæ*,” as one of the nineteen bishops. The expression at the end of the verse, *he thanked God and took courage*, may perhaps intimate that his courage began in some small measure to be shaken. He knew there was a flourishing church at *Rome*, which had been some time planted, (*Rom. i. 8.*) and to which, about three years before this journey, he had written a long epistle, in

16 And when we came to ^a Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: ^o but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

17 ¶ And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though ^p I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 ^q Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, ^r I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

20 For this cause therefore have I for you, to see *you*, and to speak with because that for the ^s hope of Israel bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We n received letters out of Judea concerning neither any of the brethren that came th or spake any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thinkest: for ^t as concerning this sect know that every where it is spoken again

23 ¶ And when they had appointed a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging to whom ^u he expounded and testified kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Mo and *out of* the prophets, from morning evening.

^a The chief city of Italy, and of the Roman empire. Ch. 19. 21. & 23. 11. ^o Ch. 24. 23. & 27. 3. Ver. 30, 31. Ch. 23. 11. ^p Ch. 2 & 24. 12—16. & 25. 8. ^q Ch. 22. 24. & 23. 29. & 24. 10, 13, 22. & 25. 8, 25. & 26. 31. ^r Ch. 25. 10—12, 25. & 26. 31. in Christ, and the resurrection. Jer. 14. 8. Ch. 23. 6. & 24. 15. & 26. 6—8, 29. 2 Tim. 1. 16. Eph. 6. 20. Phil. 1. 23. Eph. 3. 1, 13. ^s Luke, 2. 34. Heb. 12. 3. Ch. 24. 5, 14. ^t Ch. 23. 11. & 20. 21, 25. & 9. 15, 22. & 17. 2, 3. & 18. 5, 28. & 19. 8. & 26. 22, 23. ^u 2. & 15. 3, 4. Luke, 24. 27, 44. John, 1. 45. Ch. 10. 43. & 13. 27.

which he had expressed an affectionate desire to see them. Rom. i. 11. xv. 32. In a near view of doing this, he now rejoiced, esteeming it as the first-fruits of their friendship that they had come a day's journey to meet him, no doubt in a very kind and respectful manner. He might reasonably expect that they would contribute much to lighten his bonds, as without question they did, though so strange a panic seized them when he appeared before Cæsar to make his apology. See 2 Tim. iv. 16.

Ver. 16. *To the captain of the guard:*] It was customary for prisoners who were brought to Rome, to be delivered to this *præfect*, or *captain of the prætorian band*, who had the charge of the state prisoners, as appears from the instance of Agrippa, who was taken into custody by Macro the prætorian præfect, who succeeded Sejanus; and from Trajan's order to Pliny, when two were in commission. The person who now held this office, was the noted Burhus Afranius; but before and after him it was held by two. The phrase *καθ' ἑαυτὸν*, rendered *by himself*, may signify either *apart* or *at his own pleasure*; and ver. 30. seems to fix the meaning of it to his dwelling *apart in his own house*. By this means he was excused from all the affliction, which lying in the common prison, among the wretched creatures who would probably have been his companions there, must have given to a mind like his. The *soldier* was probably chained to him as the Roman custom was, concerning which see the note on ch. xiii. 4. Who that had met the apostle in these bonds, would have guessed at his real character, and imagined him to have been one of the most upright, pious, benevolent, and generous of mankind? It has been observed, that this entry of St. Paul in chains into the chief city of the world, was

more glorious and triumphant to the eye of faith than the public entries of the Roman emperors.

Ver. 20. *For the hope of Israel*] “ My suffering from my regard to that glorious Messiah for Israel professes to wait, and to that eternal life which has purchased, and secured for those that receive under that character, and perseveringly love and him.”

Ver. 22. *We know that every where it is spoken against*] Justin Martyr has assigned one of the chief reasons why *Christians* laboured so universally under the popular curse for the Jews (says he,) not only cursed them in synagogues, and did all they could to raise the hatred and enmity of mankind against them; but they sent *schismen* from Jerusalem, to acquaint the world more especially the Jews every where, that the *new* which arose from Jesus of Galilee was an atheistical wicked sect, to be avoided and detested by all mankind. The Jews spoke first against Jesus himself, and afterwards against his apostles; but it is not easy to fix the exact time when those *schismen* were sent out by them. See *Diak. cum Trypho*, p. 70.

Ver. 23. *And testified the kingdom of God*] Mr. Craob observes, that St. Paul probably insisted on two things, that the kingdom of God, which they had so long expected, was of a spiritual, and not of a temporal nature; and that Jesus of Nazareth, in whose name he preached was the person foretold, as the promised Messiah, and of that kingdom. The frequent mention which we have of the proof of these points *out of the law of Moses* obviously leads us to conclude, that St. Paul expatiated on the typical nature of that law, whence would arise

24 ^x And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, ^y Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26 Saying, ^z Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should

see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that ^a the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and ^b had great reasoning among themselves.

30 ¶ And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 ^c Preaching the kingdom of God, and

^x Ch. 13. 48, 50. & 14. 4. & 17. 4, 34. ^y Amos, 3. 7. If. 44. 25. Numb. 23. 19. Mat. 24. 35. & 5. 18. ^z Isa. 6. 9, 10. & 44. 18. Mat. 13. 14, 15. Mark, 4. 12. Luke, 8. 10. John, 12. 40. Rom. 11. 8. Jer. 5. 21. Ezek. 12. 2. If. 42. 19, 20. & 66. 4. Pl. 81. 12. ^a Theff. 2. 11, 12. ^b Pet. 3. 5. ^c Heb. 2. 3. Titus, 2. 11, 12. If. 40. 6. Ch. 18. 6 & 17. 1, 46, 47. Luke, 24. 47. If. 11. 10. Rom. 15. 9—12. ^d Mat. 10. 34. Luke, 12. 49, 51. Ch. 14. 4. & 21. 7. ^e Ch. 23. 11. Ver. 23. Ch. 5. 42. Eph. 6. 19, 20. Phil. 1. 13. & 4. 22.

strongest and clearest proofs of them to the Jews. The length of the present conference shews how zealous a desire St. Paul had for the conversion of his countrymen. It was undoubtedly a very curious and important discourse, and every believer must have wished to have been favoured with it, as well as with that of our Lord, of which we have only a general account, Luke, xxiv. 27. But as God, for wise reasons no doubt, has thought fit to deny us that pleasure, let us acquiesce in this, that we know enough to confirm our faith in the gospel, through his grace, if we discover a teachable temper; and if we do not, the narration of other discourses and facts would probably have occasioned new cavils for those who are determined not to believe. For there is hardly any argument in favour of truth, from which a prejudiced and captious wit cannot draw an objection, and frame a sophistry to maintain error. See on ch. xx. 21.

Ver. 25. Well spake the Holy Ghost] The apostle could not refer to them all, because some believed; but it is probable that most of them rejected the gospel. With respect to this passage from Isaiah, which he applies to them, we observe that it is quoted oftener than any other text of the Old Testament, that is, *six times*, in the New; yet in such a variety of expression, as plainly proves that the apostles did not confine themselves exactly either to the words of the original, or of the Greek version. See the marginal references, and the *Inferences* at the end of the preceding chapter.

Ver. 30. And Paul dwelt two whole years, &c.] Before he was heard by Cæsar, or his deputy, upon his appeal. As St. Luke concludes his history with St. Paul's abode at Rome, before his journey into Spain, we may infer, that he wrote both his gospel and the *Acts* while the apostle was living. Dr. Lardner proves from Ulpian, that the proconsul was to judge whether a person under accusation was to be thrown into prison, or delivered to a soldier to guard, or committed to sureties, or trusted on his parole of honour. It appears from this passage, that the persecution against the Christians at Rome was not then begun: the Romans had not yet made any laws against the dis-

ciples of the Lord Jesus; for what is here related, happened within the first ten years of the reign of Nero, before his cruelty against the Christians broke out; and it is most likely that St. Paul's friends in Nero's family (Philip. iv. 22.) used their interest with the emperor, to procure him the liberty which he now enjoyed.

Ver. 31. Preaching the kingdom of God,] In consequence of St. Paul's sermons and instructions, many converts were doubtless made under divine grace; and this confinement, which seemed to have so discouraging an aspect, was on the whole a means of promoting the gospel. Many of his retired hours were also employed in corresponding with the Christian churches, and writing several of those excellent epistles, which have proved so great a blessing to the most distant ages. The Epistle to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, and Philippians, as well as that to Philemon, were written from Rome during this imprisonment; and that to the Hebrews, as there is reason to believe, in or quickly after it; but as for the second to Timothy, it appears to be of a later date. It seems highly probable, that about the end of the two years here spoken of, St. Paul was set at liberty. Some have questioned, whether he ever returned into the east again; which yet from Philemon, ver. 22. and Heb. xiii. 23. he seems to have expected. Clemens Romanus (Epist. i. *ad Cor.* cap. v.) expressly tells us, that he preached in the west, and that to its utmost bounds; which must at least include Spain, whither he intended to go. Rom. xv. 24, 25. Theodoret adds, that he went to *the islands of the sea*; and elsewhere he numbers *Gaul*, that is, France, and *Britain*, among the disciples of the tent-maker. But in what order he visited these places, (if he did at all visit the last-mentioned place,) or how long he remained in any of them, cannot be determined. We are told, however, that about the year of Christ 65, or 67, he returned to Rome. Chrysostom tells us, that he here converted one of Nero's concubines, which so incensed that cruel prince, that he put him to death; probably after an imprisonment, in which the second Epistle to Timothy was written. It seems to have been universally agreed among all ancient writers who mention

teaching those things which concern the Lord forbidding him.
Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man

tion his death, that he was beheaded at *Aque Salvie*, three miles from Rome; for being free of that city, he could not be crucified. It is said, (and there can be no doubt of it,) that this glorious confessor gave his head to the fatal stroke with the utmost cheerfulness; and that he was buried in the *Via Ostensis*, two miles from Rome, where Constantine the Great erected a church to his memory, in the year 318, which was successively repaired and beautified by Theodosius the Great, and the empress Placidia. But his most glorious monument remains in those his immortal writings, which, with the assistance of God's grace, we now proceed to consider.

PROOFS OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY, ARISING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

There are many and strong proofs of the truth of our divine religion, arising from this sacred book, which we have now gone through by the assistance of God; and,

1st, "The general doctrine contains nothing but what is obviously most excellent." It teaches us, that there is one only living and true God, who made heaven and earth, and all things that are therein; that we are his offspring; that his providence extends to all ages and nations; for he has never left himself without witness, in that he has given men rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with joy and gladness; and, above all, in drawing them by the influences of His Spirit, who is the Light and Life of the world;—that this universal Creator, and wise Governor cannot possibly be confined within such narrow limits as temples built by men, nor be represented by any image or picture,—for he is omnipresent, and in him we live, move, and have our beings; that, as he is infinite in wisdom, and abundant in goodness, he loves all his creatures that do not finally reject him, and is no respecter of persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him: that he requires of every man only according to his ability, according to the measure of Divine Light bestowed upon him or offered to him, and the opportunities which he enjoys; and therefore, the times of former darkness he winked at, and did not then expect so much spiritual knowledge and divine experience among men, because they were placed in less advantageous circumstances: but that, when the world was over-run with ignorance, idolatry, and the most amazing wickedness, God sent his own eternal Son, to call mankind to repentance, and to assure them of mercy, if they did sincerely repent, and believe in him for pardon, holiness, and glory. That as the eternal Son of God so infinitely condescended as to appear in our nature, and to live among men for a number of years, in order to instruct them both by his doctrine and example, and then to lay down his life for their redemption;—therefore God hath raised him from the dead, and exalted him to his own right hand, and made him the *Anointed King*, and *Lord over all*; having also constituted him Judge both of the living and the dead. In consequence of which,

men are commanded to invoke his sacred name; to be initiated into his holy religion by the plain and significant rite of baptism, which entitles them to all the privileges, and charges them with all the obligations of the members of his church and kingdom: and after that, they are frequently, and with great thankfulness, to commemorate his dying love, by eating bread, and drinking wine, in remembrance of him; thereby professing themselves his disciples, and repeating their resolutions to love him, imitate him, and obey him, through the influences and inspiration of his Holy Spirit.

This infinitely glorious personage, while upon earth, conversed chiefly in Judea and Galilee, commencing his high dispensation among the Jews, who had then the fittest notions of God and religion; though they also were fallen into an amazing degeneracy. After he had duly prepared those among the Jews who were willing to be saved by grace, he himself returned to heaven, and left the great work to be carried on by persons whom he had instructed, and to whom he had not only given a commission, but communicated a fulness of the Spirit. And when they had reaped the harvest of what he had sown among the Jews and brought many to glory, who yielded to be saved by grace, they, according to his express order, addressed themselves to the Gentiles, teaching them the folly and wickedness both of idolatry and every vice; and recommending it to all men, every where, to repent, and be reconciled to God through the Blood of the great Atonement, and be made meet for heaven, through the alone power and efficacy of divine grace. Towards God, they enforced the great duties of love and fear, adoration, and obedience: towards men, justice and charity, truth and sincerity, love and beneficence; and, as to their own personal conduct, sobriety and temperance, chastity and universal purity; frequently inculcating upon their converts the necessity of patience, and a contented mind; to get above this present world, and to have their affections so fixed on a better state to come, as rather to suffer difficulties, persecutions, and death itself, for the sake of Christ, than betray or give up his sacred cause. And all these excellent rules they enforced by the weighty argument of a righteous judgment to come, when the eternal Son of God shall descend as universal Judge, and raise all mankind out of their graves; and will shew the highest favour to the righteous, but will punish the wicked with a dreadful, exemplary, and eternal destruction. Is there any thing in this doctrine, which is not most highly worthy of God, and admirably suited to the state of men? Such is its intrinsic worth and excellence, that one would be ready to ask, "What need could there be of miracles, to propagate a doctrine, which is in itself so reasonable, so infinitely good? Would it not have been sufficient barely to have proposed it, and then left it to recommend itself by its own worth and beauty?" But, if we take a closer view of the depth of the fall—that man is by nature dead in trespasses and sins,—if we consider the prejudices of mankind, the difficulty of breaking off wicked and inveterate habits, the fondness of men for the religion in which

which they have been educated, be it ever so bad, the love of pomp and pleasure, and whatever strikes upon the senses, more than of such a simple and spiritual doctrine as that of the gospel, though founded upon the most solid truth, and recommending the purest, noblest virtue, yea, the whole image of God,—we shall no longer wonder, that infinite wisdom should grant the power of working miracles, and the attestation of the gifts of the Spirit, to propagate a doctrine which is in itself so infinitely excellent and good,—we shall see the absolute necessity of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God for every good thought, word, and work.

2dly, “The particular doctrines taught by the apostles were, with infinite propriety and wisdom, suited to the state of the persons to whom they preached.” The Jews did already speculatively believe in the one true God, and therefore they proceeded directly to prove to them that Jesus was the great Messiah, that they might believe in him for the forgiveness of their sins, and love him, and obey him. The profelytes of the gate had forsaken idolatry, and believed in the one true God; and therefore they likewise were exhorted to believe in Christ with the heart unto righteousness, as necessary for the complete enjoyment and service of God here, and to their being meet for the happiness of the world to come, in that triumphant *church of God which he hath purchased with his own Blood*. But as the idolatrous Gentiles trusted in false gods, and did not acknowledge the one only living and true God, they began with persuading them to forsake their idolatry, and believe in him who is God alone; and then they enforced on them the necessity of believing in Jesus his eternal Son, through whose death and intercession only they could draw near to God with acceptance, and find through him who is over all, God blessed for ever, pardon, holiness, and heaven.

The apostles never attempted to set men free from social duties, or to abridge them of any of their civil rights and privileges. No; though they brought them over to a new, even to the true religion, yet they often intimated that Christianity alters nothing in men's civil affairs. The Christian converts therefore continued under the same obligations as formerly, to obey the laws of the several countries where they lived, and had as good a claim as ever to all the privileges and advantages of civil society. The moral law is of everlasting obligation, and cannot possibly be abolished; but Christians are required to obey the moral law, not only from the fitness of things, which would prove only vain philosophy unaccompanied with the grace and Spirit of God, but from gospel motives, and with the freest offer of power and grace to all those who will accept of it. The ceremonial law of the Jews was abolished or vacated by the death of Christ, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world. However, such of the Jewish Christians as could not shake off their fondness for it, were indulged in the observation of it; though they who understood and were convinced of their Christian liberty, were no longer in subjection to it. But the Gentile converts were warned not to submit to that yoke of bondage; for they could plead no prejudice in favour of it: they therefore were assured, that if they added the observation of the law of Moses to that of the gospel as necessary to salvation, they would cast the highest contempt on the gospel, and render it to them of none effect.

3dly, “The proofs and evidences which the apostles

“gave of their mission and doctrine were abundantly sufficient, both as to their strength and number.” Besides the reasonableness of what they advanced, they appealed to prophecies and miracles, and the various gifts of the Spirit. They did indeed always found their doctrine upon facts; but prophecy was a confirming evidence, both among the Jews and the profelytes of the gate. As to the argument drawn from ancient prophecy, I would observe, that some of the prophecies mentioned in the Acts, and other books of the New Testament, were express predictions, and have been shewn by many writers to have been literally accomplished. See Dr. Sykes, Dr. Chandler, Bishop Chandler, Mr. Jefferys, Dr. Bullock, and several others of modern date. As therefore the Jews and profelytes of the gate were acquainted with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and acknowledged their authority, when the apostles preached among them, they of course argued from those ancient prophecies, shewing their accomplishment in the adorable Jesus.

Let us now, in the 4th and last place, sum up the whole argument. As both the general and particular doctrines contained in the Acts of the Apostles are so perfectly reasonable, and the proofs and evidences were so many and strong, as well as wisely suited to all sorts of persons, certainly Christianity, pure, primitive, original Christianity, was true, and sufficiently attested to have come from God. And, “if it was once true, what pretence can any man now have for rejecting it?” Will he allege, “that he cannot believe the history?” But, for what reason will he allege such a thing? It is mere perverseness to reject any history without some sufficient objections against its truth and validity. Are all histories to be rejected? and no facts credited but what we ourselves have seen, and been personally acquainted with? I never knew any man so hardy as to assert this, and stand to it. Will it be objected, that “this history was written by a friend to Christianity, and one that was himself a party concerned?” To this I would reply, that it is hardly possible (nay, morally speaking, it is not possible) that any man should write such a history fairly and honestly but a friend to Christianity. Can it be thought that an enemy to Christianity would have given us a faithful history of such remarkable and uncommon things, and yet continue an enemy? Would not the whole thread of such a history condemn such a man? and would not all the world be ready to say, “Do you know this doctrine to be so excellent, and that so many, and such great and surprising miracles were wrought in confirmation of it? And yet do you yourself disbelieve this doctrine, and deny the truth of this religion?” Surely no man that had any value for his reputation, would have written such a history, to condemn himself of the greatest perverseness; and one who had no value for his reputation, would certainly deserve no credit or regard: but supposing that a man, upon considering Christianity, together with its evidences, had turned Christian, and after that wrote such a history,—why then he was a friend, and in some measure a party concerned, as well as St. Luke. And if a friend to Christianity be the only person than can be reasonably supposed to give a fair and full account of the doctrine, together with its grand attestations, “who could be more proper than a companion of the apostles? who not only conversed with those that were eye and ear-witnesses of the

“facts,

“ facts, but was personally concerned in many of the things which he relates ?” There are few historians so immediately acquainted with the facts about which they write ; and yet we generally give credit to their accounts, unless we have some reasons to the contrary.

Shew the marks of forgery, or the ancient and credible history which contradicts what is said in the Acts of the Apostles, and then you may, with some reason, talk of rejecting this book. There are no inconsistencies nor contradictions in the history itself. Even the miraculous and extraordinary facts there related, were not impossible to the divine power, to which they are constantly and uniformly ascribed ; neither are they improbable, considering the grand design and occasion of them. For, planting a new religion among men, in a time of such universal darkness and degeneracy, must have required an extraordinary divine interposition ; and great and striking evidences were in a manner necessary to conquer men’s great prejudices, and make them attentive. The plainness and simplicity of the narration are strong circumstances in its favour ; the writer appears to have been most honest and impartial, and to have set down fairly the objections which were made to Christianity both by Jews and heathens, and the reflections which enemies cast upon it, and upon the first preachers of it. He has likewise, with a just and honest freedom, mentioned the weaknesses, faults, and prejudices both of the apostles and their converts. There is a great and remarkable harmony between the occasional hints dispersed up and down in St. Paul’s epistles, and the facts recorded in this history ; insomuch that it is generally acknowledged, that the history of the Acts is the best clue to guide us in studying of the epistles written by that apostle. The other parts of the New Testament do likewise exactly harmonize with this history, and give great confirmation to it ; for the doctrines and principles are every where uniformly the same ; the conclusions of the gospels contain a brief account of those things which are more particularly related in the beginning of the Acts. And there are frequent declarations and intimations in other parts of the gospels, that such an effusion of the Spirit was to be granted to the church ; and that with a view to the very design which the apostles and primitive Christians carried on, (as related in the Acts,) by virtue of that extraordinary effusion which Christ poured out upon his disciples after his ascension : and finally, the epistles of the other Apostles, as well as those of St. Paul, plainly suppose such things to have happened as are related in the Acts of the Apostles ; so that the history of the Acts is one of the most important parts of the sacred history ; for neither the gospels nor the epistles could have been so clearly understood without it ; but by the help of it the whole scheme of the Christian revelation is set before us in an easy and manifest view.

Even the incidental things mentioned by St. Luke, are so exactly agreeable to all the accounts which remain of

the best ancient historians among the Jews and heathens, that no person who had forged such a history, in later ages, could have had that external confirmation, but would have betrayed himself by alluding to some customs or opinions since sprung up ; or by misrepresenting some circumstance, or using some phrase or expression not then in use. The plea of forgery therefore, in later ages, cannot be allowed ; and for a man to have published a history of such things so early as St. Luke wrote, (that is, while some of the apostles, and many other persons were alive, who were concerned in the transactions which he has recorded,) if his account had not been punctually true, could have been only to have exposed himself to an easy confutation and certain infamy.

As therefore the Acts of the Apostles are in themselves consistent and uniform, the incidental things agreeable to the best ancient histories which have come down to us, and the main facts supported and confirmed by the other books of the New Testament, and by the unanimous testimony of so many of the ancient Fathers,—we may with the utmost justness conclude, that if any history of former times deserves credit, the Acts of the Apostles ought to be received and credited ; and, if the history of the Acts of the Apostles be true, Christianity cannot be false : for a doctrine, so perfectly good in itself, and attended with so many miraculous and divine testimonies, has all the possible marks of a true revelation.

I will therefore conclude with most earnestly praying that Christianity may be embraced by all mankind, according to its intrinsic worth, abundant evidence, and spiritual power and efficacy ! that the purity and simplicity of the original institution, as it was left by Christ and his apostles in the scriptures, may be more attended to !—and that all who believe Christianity to be true, may manifest it, through grace, by such a holy life as this most excellent religion does every where recommend. And it will be so. The word of prophecy cannot fail. The Lord Jesus is riding on prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness ; and his right hand teaches him terrible things. He has drawn his glittering sword. He is pouring the vials of his wrath upon the earth ; and he is also pouring out his Spirit. Soon will the beast and the false prophet be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. Great have been the events which but a few years have produced ; and greater still are approaching. The souls under the altar are crying out with a loud voice, “ How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?” And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus, and establish thy great millennial reign all over the world *.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The isle of Melita, or Malta, since so famed for the noble stand that its knights made against all

* A list of the writers and books referred to or quoted in the commentary on the Acts of the Apostles :

Ablancourt, Adams, Addison, Aratus, Bishop Atterbury, Barclay, Lord Barrington, Bengelius, Benson, Bentley, Beza, Biscoe, Bishop Blackwall, Bochart, Boyce, Beckell, Brennius, Sir Thomas Browne, Bishop Burnet, Calmet, Casaubon, Chishul, Jarius, Clarke, Cradock, Cudworth, De Dieu, D’Herbelot, Dio, Ditton, Dodd, Doddridge, Drake, Drusus, Elmer, Erasmus, Eusebius, Fleming, Grotius, Gualperius, Haller, Hammond, Henius, Herodotus, Heylin, Hyde, Jefferys, Jenkins, Jortin, Josephus, Sir Norton Knatchbull, The knowledge of divine things from revelation, Lampe, Lardner, Le Clerc, L’Enfant, Lightfoot, Limborch, Lipsius, Locke, Lord Lyttelton, Macknight, Maundrell, Mede, Mill, Mintert, Miscellanea Sacra, More, Moyle, Nature displayed, Bishop Newton, Owen, Paillet, Bishop Patrick, Pearce, Pearson, Philo, Plutarch, Poole, Potter, Pricæus, Prideaux, Pyle, Quefelle, Raphaelus, Reading, Revis, Ridley, Sanderson, Scaliger, Servius, Shaw, Bishop Sherlock, Spanheim, Spencer, Bishop Stillingfleet, Stockius, Suetonius, Superille, Swift, Sykes, Tacitus, Tittemont, Archbishop Tillotson, Trucellius, Vertot, Universal History, Archbishop Usher, Bishop Warburton, Ward, Waterland, Watts, Wells, Westren, Whitby, Wilhus, and Wolfius.

the power of the Ottoman empire, was the place where the apostle and ship's company found themselves on shore.

1. They received great courtesy from the people of the island, who are called *barbarous*, not as being savage in their manners, the very contrary of which appeared; but as unpolished islanders, and unacquainted with Grecian literature. They were so far from being engaged in plundering the wreck, that their attention was taken up about the poor people who had escaped, wet and cold as they were: they therefore kindled a fire to dry them, and took them under shelter from the rain which fell heavily, and from the cold. *Note*; (1.) Shipwrecked mariners are entitled to the greatest humanity. It is a pitch of savage brutality beyond what heathens shewed, to plunder the little remains of their misfortune; yet, shocking to tell, even in a Christian land there are wretches found so destitute of every feeling of humanity, as to be more intent on the wreck, than solicitous about the lives of the people; yea, to strip and rob them, even when cast on shore, instead of helping and assisting them. Surely they will receive judgment without mercy, who have thus shewed no mercy. (2.) Fuel is as needful a charity for the poor, as food or raiment. When we hear the wintry winds blow, and feel the cold even in our warm rooms, we should remember those who shiver over the scarce-smoking embers, and through whose miserable cottages the wind and rain find a free passage.

2. St. Paul, ever active and ready to serve his fellow-creatures in the lowest offices of kindness, had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire; when a viper, which had been unobserved in the faggot, perceiving the heat, leaped out and fastened on his hand; which when these unlettered islanders beheld, they concluded this must be some notorious murderer, whom, though he had escaped shipwreck, the divine vengeance thus signally overtook, and would not suffer to live; and they expected each moment to see him swell, and drop down dead. *Note*; (1.) Though this is not the regular place of retribution, yet God is frequently pleased to make signal monuments of his vengeance even here. (2.) We must not interpret every stroke of God, or remarkable affliction, as a divine judgment: the best of men have been often most severely exercised.

3. The apostle, with perfect composure of mind, and trust on Christ's promise (Mark, xvi. 18.), shook off the venomous animal into the fire; and remaining to their astonishment unhurt, they after a while changed their opinion of him, and fancied he must be more than human, even one of their immortal gods, who could thus defy the viper's venom. So changeable are the sentiments of the populace: he that is run down as a murderer to-day, is sometimes cried up as a god to-morrow.

4. The possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius, lay near the place where the ship had been cast away, and he most hospitably entertained the apostle and his companions three days, till they could be otherwise provided for: and in return for his civility, God so ordered it in his providence, that he should not lose his reward. Publius's father now lay dangerously ill of a fever and the bloody flux; St. Paul therefore went in, and praying over him, *laid his hands on him*, and in the name of his Master *healed him* instantaneously; the fame of which miracle soon spread, and others who were diseased made their application to the apostle, and freely received

the cure of all their several maladies. *Note*; (1.) They who have large possessions, should exercise proportionable hospitality, and be generous stewards of these temporal gifts of God. (2.) Kindness shewn to God's ministers, their Master somehow or other will take care to repay.

5. This grateful people, during their stay, failed not to pay them the highest veneration and respect. The apostle, doubtless, not only healed their bodily diseases, but with his companions preached to them the gospel of Jesus for the healing of their souls; and therefore the Maltese at their departure liberally furnished them with all necessaries for the voyage. Having shared their spiritual things, they gladly in return communicated of their worldly things.

2dly, After three months' stay on the island, when the spring returned, they once more pursued their voyage, and met with no more difficulties.

1. They embarked in another ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in Malta, and bore the images of Castor and Pollux, under whose protection the wretched idolaters expected safety.

2. After a prosperous voyage, they landed at Syracuse in the isle of Sicily, where they stayed three days. Thence they fetched a compass round, and arrived at Rhegium, the first port they made in Italy. The next day, taking advantage of the south wind, they proceeded to Puteoli, near Naples, whence they were to travel by land to Rome. At Puteoli, St. Paul and his companions, to their great comfort, found some Christian brethren, who requested them to stay a week with them, that they might spend one Lord's day together, which the centurion kindly permitted them to do; and thence they set forward for the great metropolis of the world, the place of their destination.

3. The Christians who were at Rome no sooner heard of his coming from Puteoli, than they set forward to meet him on the road, to shew respect to one who had so eminently distinguished himself in the cause, and was particularly endeared to them by the affectionate epistle which they had received from him. Some of them went as far as the town called *Appii-Forum*, above fifty miles; and others as far as *The Three Taverns (Triæ Tabernæ)*, a place about thirty miles from Rome, to receive him, not ashamed of his bonds. Their presence much refreshed his heart: when he saw them, *he thanked God* for the grace which appeared in these faithful brethren, *and took courage*; his drooping spirits revived, and now he can boldly face the bloody Nero. Nothing so encourages the hearts of ministers, amid the greatest opposition of enemies, as the company and countenance of some faithful friends, who dare own and stand by them in defiance of reproach or danger.

4. On their arrival at Rome, the centurion delivered up St. Paul and his other prisoners to the captain of the guard. The latter probably were committed to close custody: but St. Paul, either through the letter of Festus, or the request of Julius, or the interest of the Christians, was left in some measure a prisoner at large, being permitted to dwell in lodgings, with a soldier chained to him as his guard.

3dly, Though by the edict of Claudius all the Jews had been banished from Rome, they returned on the accession of Nero; and many were now settled there, opulent and men of distinction. To them, after three days' rest from his journey, St. Paul addressed himself; and, since he

could

could not wait on them, begged the favour of their company at his lodgings; and, when they were assembled there, being desirous to stand right in their opinion, he,

1. Relates his case to them, as to men of humanity, his brethren after the flesh, and worshippers of the true God, from whom he might expect friendship and affection. Though he appeared in bonds, it was not for any crime that he had committed, nor for any violation of the sacred rites and institutions delivered by Moses to their fathers, that he had been sent a prisoner to Rome. The Roman governors, both Felix and Festus before whom he had been examined, were sensible of his innocence, and would have discharged him; but some violent persons of his own countrymen, filled with prejudices against him, objected to his release, and urged the governor Festus to bring him back to Jerusalem; so that he was obliged to appeal to Cæsar, merely for his own preservation; not that he meant any accusation of his countrymen before the emperor, but only to defend himself, and obtain his liberty. He therefore called them together to assure them, that the chain he wore, was purely for preaching the hope of every Israelite, even the coming of the divine Messiah, who had appeared according to the prophecies; and for declaring the resurrection to eternal life and glory, as the privilege of all who believed in him. *Note;* Christ is the only hope of the Israel of God. A sinner who knows his real state, sees nothing out of Jesus but black despair and wrath to the uttermost, but in him there appears grace abounding to the miserable and the desperate.

2. In reply, the Jews said to him, *We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spoke any harm of thee;* so that they own they had no crime to charge him with. Probably his accusers dared not appear before the emperor, conscious of the danger to which they might expose themselves. *But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest,* and would impartially examine into the new opinions that you hold forth; and are willing to know how you can prove, that Jesus of Nazareth is that hope of Israel, of whom the prophets have spoken: for this seems to us highly improbable; and as concerning this fact, which he has founded, *we know that every where it is spoken against,* as maintaining heretical opinions, and disturbing the peace of mankind. *Note;* (1.) Christianity is no sect, built on narrow opinions, aiming at secular advantages, or tending to sow division in the world: no: just the very contrary: it embraces all mankind who acknowledge Jesus as the Saviour, directs us to seek our happiness and true interests in another world, and breathes nothing but peace and love. (2.) We must not wonder if the true gospel of the grace of God be still every where spoken against: it must be so, while the generality rest in the form, and deny the power, of godliness.

4thly, Though naturally prejudiced, as Jews, against the doctrines of Jesus, they consented to appoint a day, and met at the apostle's lodgings in great numbers, to hear what he had to say on the subject. Hereupon,

1. St. Paul expounded to them the nature, doctrines, and privileges of that kingdom of God which he preached, and explained to them all the prophecies and types of the Old Testament, shewing how they centred in Jesus of Nazareth, and received their full accomplishment in his life, death, and resurrection; testifying from his own and

others experience the power of this divine Saviour's grace upon the heart; and persuading them, with the warmest affection and zeal, to submit to this Redeemer, and embrace this divine Messiah, to whom both the law and the prophets bore witness, that they might partake of that spiritual salvation which he had obtained for all who perseveringly believe in him. As the matter was of such vast importance, he reasoned with them from morning until evening, answering probably all their objections, and proving at large, by the most convincing arguments, that Jesus is the Christ.

2. His discourse produced different effects on his hearers. Some believed the truths that he preached, and others remained hardened in their prejudices, and believed not; which occasioned a disagreement in their sentiments, the infidelity being incensed against the gospel word.

3. Before they parted, the apostle gave them one faithful warning. *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet,* even that glorious Jehovah who inspired the sacred penmen, saying, *Go unto this people, and say, Hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and not perceive;* amid the clearest preaching of the gospel-word, and the fullest discoveries of gospel-grace, they were abandoned of God, for their obstinacy to judicial blindness and obduracy. *For the heart of this people is waxed gross;* stupid, senseless, and obstinate, through pride, prejudice, and passion: *and their ears are dull of hearing,* inattentive to the preaching of the truth: *and their eyes have they closed;* wilfully blind against the evidence of miracles performed, of prophecies fulfilled, and the divine attestation given to the character of Jesus as the Messiah; *lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.* Be it known therefore unto you, that, since ye thus with determined obstinacy reject the counsel of God against your own souls, and exactly fulfil this prophecy in your present rejection of Christ and his gospel; *the salvation of God, which you neglect and despise, is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will bear it,* and partake of the invaluable blessings and privileges of the Messiah's kingdom. *Note;* They who refuse to hearken to God's word, and wilfully harden their hearts against his warnings, are justly given up to a reprobate mind, and left to the ruin which they have chosen.

4. The assembly hereupon broke up, and warm debates ensued on the subjects concerning which he had spoken; some vindicating what they had heard, as righteous, just, and good; others exasperated against the preacher and his doctrine, and unable to think of the Gentiles being admitted into the Messiah's kingdom without the utmost indignation.

5thly, The apostle had already been near three years a prisoner, and still longer is permitted to wear the honourable bonds of Christ. It was, however, a consolation to him at Rome, that he was so much his own master, as to be able to dwell in his own hired house, and to have all the company whom he chose admitted: the years, therefore, during which he abode at Rome, we are told, were profitably spent.

1. He received all that came in unto him; his doors were ever open; and whosoever would, might hear him. *Note;* (1.) Every minister's house should be readily accessible to all who seek instruction for their souls. (2.) Our houses, by

godly conversation and discourse, by prayer and praise, should be consecrated to God's service; and where two or three are met in his name, he will be in the midst of them.

2. The subject of his preaching to those who came to hear, was concerning the kingdom of God, and the things which related to the Lord Jesus Christ, the alpha and omega of all his discourses. His person, offices, character; his incarnation, sufferings and glory; with all the great and inestimable blessings and privileges derived thence, were the delightful themes on which he insisted. Happy were it, if all who call themselves Christ's ministers followed so bright an example. How dry and unassuming is that discourse where Jesus is not exalted as all and in all!

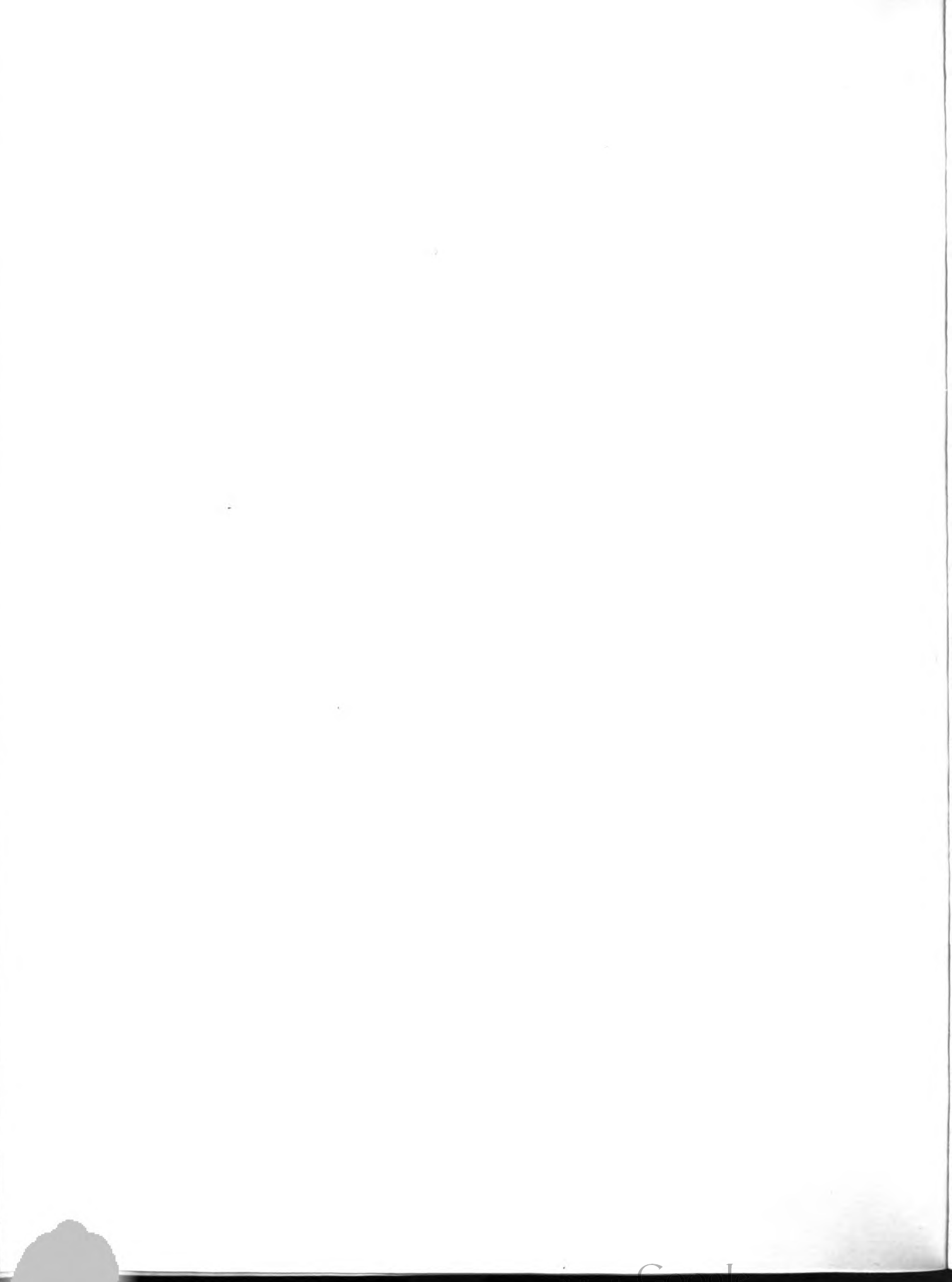
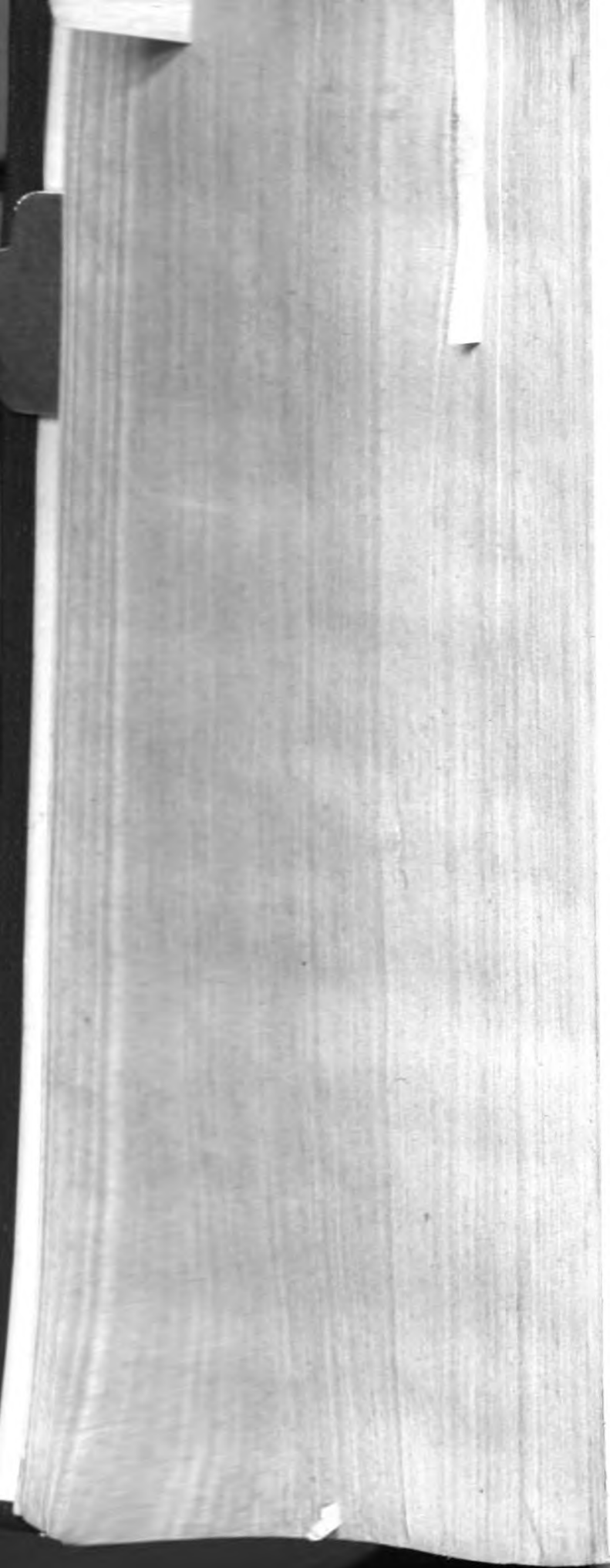
3. He preached *with all confidence*; with the greatest liberty and freedom in his own spirit; most fully assured

of the doctrines which he taught; using all plainness of speech with the most undaunted courage; *no man forbidding him*; neither the Roman emperor restrained him, nor could the Jews hinder him: so that, though a prisoner, God made him eminently useful in his bonds; and there were saints converted by his ministry even in Cæsar's household. (Phil. iv. 22.) Here also he wrote those epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and the Philippians, wherein, though dead, he yet speaketh, and we in them enjoy the most blessed fruits of his prison labours.

The historian leaves him in this confinement. After two years he regained his liberty. Concerning his future labours we have nothing absolutely certain: the received tradition is, that after visiting Spain and other parts of the world, he came to Rome the second time, where he suffered martyrdom, and went to receive the crown of glory which fadeth not away.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





1870
1871
1872
1873
1874
1875
1876
1877
1878
1879
1880
1881
1882
1883
1884
1885
1886
1887
1888
1889
1890
1891
1892
1893
1894
1895
1896
1897
1898
1899
1900