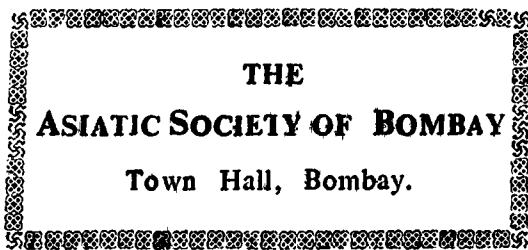




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Robert Wallerforce
THE
FAMILY EXPOSITOR:

OR, A
PARAPHRASE AND VERSION
OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT;
WITH CRITICAL NOTES,
AND A PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF EACH SECTION.

BY
PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D.D.

IN SIX VOLUMES.


VOL. III.

CONTAINING
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES;

WITH ADDITIONAL NOTES ON
THE HARMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS;
AND TWO DISSERTATIONS,
ON SIR ISAAC NEWTON'S SYSTEM OF THE HARMONY.
II. ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

TENTH EDITION—CAREFULLY CORRECTED.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,
BY ANDREW KIPPIS, D.D. F.R.S. AND S.A.

*Τὰς γὰρ γράφαι, ἵνα πιστευθῆτε ὅτι ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς
θεοῦ; καὶ ἵνα πιστευοῦντες, ζῶντες ἐχθῆτε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ. JOHN XX. 31.*

LONDON:

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P R E F A C E.

THE nature and design of this work, and the principles on which it hath been undertaken and conducted, have been so largely represented in the preceding volumes, that it is unnecessary here to enlarge upon them. But, as what I now present to the reader concludes the *Historical part* of the *New Testament*, this seems a very proper place to recollect the promise which I long since made, of offering *some remarks on the excellence and usefulness of that history*, which may dispose the reader more frequently to review it, and to study it with the greater application.

It must be universally granted, that the *excellence* of any performance is to be estimated, by considering its *design*, and the degree in which it is *calculated to answer* it. The *design* of the *gospel history* is summed up in the words which I have placed for my *motto*; which, though they are taken from the conclusion of *St. John's gospel*, are applicable, not only to all the other *Evangelists*, but likewise to the *Acts of the Apostles*, that invaluable appendix to them. *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

I shall beg leave to shew, how admirably the *history* before us is *calculated to answer* both these ends; *viz.* to produce a *conviction* of the *truth of Christianity*, and to make those *good impressions* on the heart, which may secure the *eternal life* and happiness of the reader; which no speculative conviction, even of the most sublime, comprehensive, and important truths, will itself be able to do. I apprehend, that, in proportion to the degree in which these *two promises* can be illustrated, the *excellence* and value of *this history* will immediately appear: for no man is so far infatuated as to dispute, whether obtaining *life, eternal life*, be an end of the highest importance: how light soever he may in fact make of it, and how wantonly soever he may barter it away for every trifle, that strikes his imagination; or fires his passions. Obvious as the hints are which occur on these heads, I will touch a little upon them; that we may more evidently see, how much we are indebted to the Divine Wisdom and Goodness in giving us so invaluable a treasure as *these books* contain, and how highly we are concerned to attend diligently to the contents of them.

First, Every intelligent reader of this *evangelical history* must have seen, that it is admirably adapted to produce and support in all attentive and impartial minds a strong *conviction* of the truth of Christianity, and by consequence of the divine glories of *Jesus the Christ*, as the *Son of God*.

It is evident, that our most material arguments for the demonstration of the *truth of Christianity* are drawn from *miracles*, from *prophecies*, from the *character of its founders*, and from the *genius of the religion itself*. Now though all these receive great illustration from the *epistolary parts of the New Testament*, and some of them, especially the second, from the *Old*; yet it is certain, that the grand basis and foundation of them all, is what we read in the *History of Christ and his Apostles*. There we are informed of the *miracles* which they wrought, of the *character* they maintained, and of the *system of religion* which they published to the world; and the application of *Old Testament prophecies to Jesus of Nazareth*, is beyond all controversy to be justified chiefly from what we find there.

These books do in the most authentic manner, as we have demonstrated elsewhere, shew us, who *Jesus of Nazareth* was, and what he *professed himself to be*. They give us an account of the very high pretensions he made to an immediate mission from God, and to a most intimate relation to him as his Son, in a peculiar and appropriate sense not communicable to any other. They give us also, as in this connection it is very fit they should, a very large and circumstantial narration of a *variety of miracles which he wrought*. Their number appears to be very great; so that a late writer, who had considered them very accurately, reckons up *sixty nine* relating to particular persons, besides *twenty* other instances, in all of which several, and in most of them multitudes, yea, frequently *great multitudes*, are mentioned, not merely as the spectators, but as the objects of his miraculous power, which must on the most moderate computation arise to *many hundreds*: not to mention those yet *more numerous miracles* which were performed by his *apostles* in his name, wherever they came, especially after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them; or the variety of supernatural gifts and powers with which they were endowed, and which in many thousands of instances they communicated to others.

It is farther to be recollected here, that these *miracles* were not of such a kind as to leave any room for a doubt, whether they lay within the natural efficacy of second causes, or not; since the most hopeless and inveterate *diseases* gave way, not merely to some trivial application of means, whether internal or external, but to a *touch*, or a *word*; and *Death* itself obeyed the voice of *Jesus*, and of his servants speaking by his authority.

Now I could wish, that any one who feels himself inclined to *scepticism* with regard to *Christianity*, would sit down and read *any one of the evangelists* in this particular view: That he would take the stories of the several miracles in their succession, and after having carefully weighed them, would ask his own heart, whether, if he had seen such facts as these, he would not immediately have believed, as he is convinced in his own conscience, that

this was indeed the *seal of heaven* set to the commission of the person who performed them; and consequently, whether if these things were really done by *Jesus*, and his *missionaries* in his name, he must not be compelled to acknowledge, that *Christianity is true*. Let any impartial and rational man in the world judge, whether if an *impostor* had arisen, falsely and blasphemously arrogating to himself the high titles of the *Son of God*, and *Saviour of men*, God would have honoured his lips with this wonderful power over diseases, and death, or his dead body after a public execution with a resurrection: that is, in one word, whether he would have interposed to give such credit to him, as it is not pretended he hath ever given, in any other instance, to the best of men in the best of causes. Every man's heart will surely tell him, with the circumstances of such facts full in his view, that the only question is, whether they be themselves credible; and that, if this be allowed, the *divine attestation* to the authority of *such a teacher* follows, by a connection which can never be broken, and which probably few men living will have an inveteracy of prejudice sufficient to gainsay.

The *historical books* of the *New Testament*, do also admirably illustrate that argument in favour of *Christianity*, which is drawn from the *accomplishment of prophecies*; and this, in a variety of respects. Many very important passages of this kind are *expressly quoted*; not merely by way of *allusion*, but by a *literal and exact application* of them, according to their genuine sense, and agreeably to the connection in which they stand. The application of some others, in themselves more dubious, will upon strict examination appear just, and may prove a key to the sense of many more, on the truest principles of *analogy*; as many writers have shewn, and perhaps no one, since Eusebius wrote his *Demonstratio Evangelica*, more judiciously than Mr. Jeffery in his controversy with Mr. Collins. Nay, the *texts* quoted by way of *allusion and accommodation*, of which there are such numerous instances, have consequentially tended to the establishment of the *argument from prophecies*, however under injudicious management they may seem to have perplexed it; as they have had their share in recommending the *Jewish Scriptures* to the perusal of *Christians*, and so in guarding them more surely than any *possibility of corruption*, if the Jews themselves [v] have been wicked enough to attempt it.

For it, besides these various views in which the *citations* may be considered under this head, I must farther observe, that when not this or that *particular passage* of the *evangelical history* alone, but the *whole series* of it comes to be compared with correspondent representations in the *Old Testament*, it fixes upon the mind the strongest impression that can well be imagined, of the reference of the *prophets* to *Jesus* as the *Messiah*. The ingenious Earl of Rochester, whose story is so celebrated, was deep-

ly sensible of this with regard to the liid of Isaiah, as illustrated by all the story of *our Lord's passion*; and there are many other sections of that *prophet*, and of several others, to which the remark may be applied; which indeed extends to all the general representations of the Messiah's character, conduct, and circumstances.

The account which the *New Testament* gives us of the *temper and character of our Divine Redeemer*, is a topic of argument on this head by no means to be forgotten. We do not indeed there meet with *any studied encomiums* upon the subject. The authors deal not in such sort of productions; but, which is a thousand times better, they shew us the character itself. The sight of what is great and beautiful has another kind of effect, than the most eloquent description of it. And *here* we behold the *actions of Christ*; we attend his *discourses*, and have a plain and open view of his *behaviour*. In consequence of this, we see in him every thing *venerable*, every thing *amiable*. We see a *perfection of goodness* no where else in the world to be seen or to be heard: and numberless arguments plead at once, to persuade the heart, that it is absolutely impossible *such a person* should be engaged in a design founded in known falsehood, and tending only to mislead and ruin his followers.

And though, it is true, the character of his apostles does not fully come up to the standard of their Master, nor is entirely free from some small blemishes; yet we see so little of that kind in them, and on the contrary *such an assemblage* of the human, divine, and social *virtues*, that we cannot, if we thoroughly know them, if we form an intimate acquaintance with them, entertain with patience the least suspicion that they were capable of a *part so detestable* as theirs must have been, if they knew Jesus to have been an *impostor*, and the *gospel a fable*; with which they must be chargeable, if *Christianity* were not indeed *authentic and divine*.

The series of *sufferings* which they endured, the gentle, humble patience with which they bore them, the steady perseverance and invincible fortitude with which they pursued their scheme, in the midst of them all, and with no earthly prospect but that of a continued hardship and persecution, till it should end in death, furnish out an important branch of this argument, which the book of *Acts*, especially taken in connection with the *Epistles*, does almost continually illustrate, in the most artless, and therefore in the most forcible manner.

To conclude this head, the *history* before us represents, in the most clear and convincing light, the *genius of that doctrine* which *Christ* taught, and of the *religion* which he came to settle in the world. When we view it as exhibited in *human writings* we may mistake; for it is too often tinctured with the channel through which it has passed. Men of bad dispositions have

warped it, to make it comply with the corruption of their own hearts, and to subserve, in many instances, the schemes of their ambitious and worldly interests. Good men, insensibly influenced by a variety of prejudices, which under fair and plausible forms have insinuated themselves into their breasts, have frequently mistaken, not the *essentials of Christianity*, (for no good man can mistake them,) but the *circumstantials* of it; and have propagated the various, and frequently contradictory mistake, with a zeal which nothing but an apprehension that they were *its fundamentals* could have inspired; and thus its original purity and beauty have been debased and obscured: But *here* we drink *this water of life* at its fountain-head, untainted and unmixed; and with that peculiar spirit which at a distance from it is so apt to evaporate. *Here* we plainly perceive there is nothing in the scheme but what is most worthy of God to reveal, and of his Son to publish to the world: *Here* we see not as in the *heathen writers*, some detached sentiment, finely heightened with the beauty of expression and pomp of words, like a scattered fragment, with the partial traces of impaired elegance and magnificence; but the elevation of a complete temple, worthy of the Deity to whom it is consecrated: so harmonious a system of *unmingled truth*, so complete a plan of *universal duty*, so amiable a representation of *true morality* in all its parts, without redundancy, and without defect, that the more capable we are of judging of *real excellence*, the more we shall be prepossessed in its favour: And if we have a capacity and opportunity of examining together with it *the books* which the followers of *other religions* have esteemed sacred, and *the systems of doctrines and manners* which their respective founders have published to the world, we shall find how much the *gospel* is credited by the comparison; we shall indeed find the difference much like that of a coarse picture of *sun-shine*, from the original beams of that celestial luminary. This I have so deeply felt in mine own heart while reading *these books*, and especially while commenting upon them, that it has been matter of astonishment as well as of grief to me, that there should be any mind capable of resisting evidence so various, so powerful, and so sweet.

But this leads me to the other branch of the argument; in which I shall remind my reader,

Secondly, That *these books* are admirably adapted to make those *good impressions on the heart* which may prepare it for *eternal life*, through the name of the *Redeemer*, of whose divine mission they contain such incontestible proofs.

Now the most effectual demonstration of this would be, an attentive perusal of *these books*, not so much with a view to criticise upon them, as to give up the soul to their genuine influences, and to leave the heart to be (if I may so express myself) carried away with the torrent whither it will; and the impulse being

fail of being in some happy direction, and, amidst all its varieties, will undoubtedly *bear us forward* towards that perfection of goodness and of happiness which is the great end of all our pursuits.

For surely the breast of every well-disposed reader, under the influences of that *blessed Spirit* which guided the *sacred penman* in these lively and well-chosen narrations, must by every page of them be inflamed with some devout passion; and his progress must often be interrupted with tears of holy delight, or with warm and perhaps rapturous aspirations of soul. Surely *this adorable Saviour* cannot be heard, cannot be seen, without admiration and love. Surely the heart must often, as it were, *go out to meet him*, with its cheerful *hosannahs to him that cometh in the name of the Lord*. Often must it rise in affectionate praises to the *God and Father of all*, who blessed this earth of ours with *such a visitant*, who enriched it with *such an unspeakable, such an inestimable gift*. A thousand times must it congratulate, and almost envy, *the happy lot of those*, who dwelling on earth, though in the meanest cottages, when it was *blessed with the presence of such a teacher, of such a friend*, had daily opportunities of conversing with him; and as often may it exult to think, that he is *still near by his spiritual presence*, carrying on the kind purposes of his appearance in mortal flesh, and waiting, by the dictates of his divine philosophy, to train up the immortal spirits of men for their proper and complete happiness. Under the impression of that thought, how strongly must the soul be disposed to *inquire after Christ*, to form an acquaintance with him, to commit itself to his discipline and guardianship, to trace his steps, and as far as possible to *imbibe his spirit*. What will appear so desirable, as to secure his friendship, to be honoured with his high approbation, and enriched with the blessings of his patronage and care? Receiving the *divine oracles* from his lips, what incomparable advantages have we for learning every thing truly great and lovely? What powerful inducements diligently to labour, ardently to pray, liberally to dispense good, calmly to endure injuries, patiently to support the heaviest afflictions, and resolutely to meet the most dreadful death, if called out to encounter it in the way of our duty.

Among many other *good affections* which the perusal of *his history* may naturally inspire, and which I have endeavoured often to suggest in the *improvements* which conclude each section, I cannot forbear mentioning one more; I mean, *a generous and cordial love to our fellow-Christians of every rank and denomination*. I never reflect upon the *New Testament* in this view, but I find it difficult to conceive, how so much of a *contrary temper* should ever have prevailed among such multitudes, who have professed religiously to receive it, *yea*, whose office hath been to interpret and enforce it. To have listed under the

banner of *Jesus*, to have felt his love, to have espoused his interest, to labour to serve him, to aspire after the enjoyment of him, should methinks appear to every one, even on the slightest reflection, a *bond of union* too strong to be broken by the different apprehensions that one or another of us may entertain, (perhaps too after diligent inquiry,) concerning the exact sense of some of the doctrines he taught, or the circumstantial forms of some of his institutions. An humble sense of our own weakness, and of the many imperfections of our character, which will never be more deeply felt than when we consider ourselves as standing before our divine Master, will dispose us to mutual candour, will guard us against the indecency of contending in his presence, and will, as St. Paul with admirable spirit expresses it, dispose us *to receive one another as Christ hath received us*. Yea, our hearts will be so eagerly desirous of employing our life in serving him to the best purpose we can, that we shall dread the thought of mis-spending, in our mutual animosities, accusations and complaints, the time that was given us for ends so much nobler, and which is capable of being employed to the honour of *our common Lord*, and for the benefit of the church and the world.

I hope I have not forgot, in the ensuing work, *this lesson* which I have on every occasion been so solicitous to inculcate on others. It would have been almost impossible, on some texts which have fallen before me, especially in this *third volume*, not to have shewn my sentiments on *some points of discipline*, in which, if they were not different from those which generally prevail, my known conduct in continuing among the *Protestant Dissenters* would be equally foolish and wicked. Yet, in handling these texts, I have not only conscientiously abstained from all reproaches, to which indeed I am on no occasion inclined, and which I should esteem peculiarly indecent where the *religious establishment* of my country is in question, and above all where a body of men would be affected, many of whom have been, and are, among the ablest advocates and brightest ornaments of *our common Christianity*: but I have also been careful to adjust *my expressions* with as much tenderness and respect, as inte-

But that reverence which an honest man would owe to the *whilom* of his own conscience, were it much more singular *Secumine*, would admit. On these principles I have chosen to content myself, with giving what I take to be the true and genuine sense of the scripture in question, rather than to point out any society or body of men that seem to have mistaken it.

I have also been obliged, in many of my interpretations, to *differ from writers* of various countries, and of various denominations in our own, whom I greatly esteem, and from whom on other passages I have received much light; but I have in such cases been careful *not to drop any severe word*: as indeed I think

where we have reason to believe that a *writer* sincerely intends to illustrate Scripture, and to inform the world, he has so far at least a *title to our candour and respect*; though we may imagine him to be *much mistaken* in his judgment, and may think it our duty to endeavour to point out his mistake, and to guard others against it. I hope such a conduct will need no apology to the *living writers* with whom I have taken such a liberty; nor shall I take it amiss to be animadverted upon by any of them, with the same spirit: and, if I may by this means be led to rectify *any mistakes* into which I may have unwarily fallen, I hope I shall be duly sensible of the obligation: For I esteem an endeavour to *set a man right in religious opinions*, which we ourselves apprehend to be important, the second office of Christian friendship, as that of attempting to *reform his morals* is undoubtedly the first.

No offence will, I hope, be taken at the method I have thought myself obliged in honour and conscience to have recourse to, for solving some of the difficulties which have occurred, and which I knew not how to account for candidly any other way, than by supposing, that here and there *our received reading* hath varied from the *original*. I believe it will be allowed by every competent judge, that there is *no one manuscript* now in the world *unexceptionably exact*. And it is some satisfaction to me to reflect, that critics of the first character for modesty, piety, and orthodoxy, have not only made use of this expedient, but have abundantly justified it in their writings: among whom I cannot forbear mentioning those two justly celebrated critics, as well as accurate divines, Calvin and Beza: the latter of which has expressed his sentiments on this head in so judicious, correct, and elegant a manner, that I cannot forbear inserting his own words at the bottom of the page, though I have had obvious reasons in this work for taking care not to load the margin with quotations from the learned languages.*

* Beza in his note on Acts vii 13, when he proposes the conjectural emendation of *prophete* instead of *propheta*, adds, "Neque vero hujus erroris observatio quinquam debet offendi, vel in dubium revocare verbi divini auctoritatem; quam et ex *Hebraeo* veritate, ut diximus, emendatur, & salva nihilominus, tam doctrina, tam otiam historia ipsius, fides permaneat: & res ipsa clamet, non uno loco, temporis injuria, persecutionum acerbitate, adversariorum veritatis fraude, hereticorum audacia, pastorum denique inscitia & oscitantia, numerorum notus lapsifactori, & alia periculosa in tantis libris invehi potuisse: Quae tamen eruditi & sancti homines, tum ex aliorum locorum collatione, tum ex fidei analogia, partim animadvertunt, & emendant; partim etiam posteris observanda, & corrigenda reliquerunt: Sic prospiciente sum ecclesiae *Domino*, ut quamvis integri non pauci libri intercederint, & errata de quibus dixi irreperint, tamen salutis doctrinam totam his ipsis libris certissime & verissime comprehensam habeat ecclesia, et ad finem usque saeculorum sit habitura."

Calvin on Mat. xxvii. 9. Harm. Evang. pag. 354, speaking of the insertion of Jeremiah's name (as he thinks) for Zechariah's, says roundly, "Quomodo *Hieremias* nomen obreperit, me nescire fator, nec anxie laboro. Certe *Hieremia* nomen in errore positum esse pro *Zecharia*, res ipsa ostendit, quia nihil tale apud *Hieremiam* legitur, vel etiam quod accedat." And on Acts vii. 16. where the name of *Abraham* seems to be put for that of *Jacob*, he says, "In nomine *Abraham* erratum est: palam est: Quare hic locus corrigendus est."

I am sensible, how much I am indebted to the public for the *kind reception* it was pleased to give to the *two former volumes*. I hope they who favoured them with their patronage and encouragement, and have an opportunity of perusing this, will find by what I now offer them, that the indulgence shewn me, far from making me indolent, hath rather quickened my diligence. If God grant me life and health, I purpose concluding the whole in *three volumes more*; in which I shall still endeavour, by the divine assistance, uprightly to illustrate what I in my conscience believe to be *the true sense* of the *sacred writers*; and shall at the same time labour, to the utmost of that ability which God may give me, to elevate, to animate, and to unite the hearts of *my fellow Christians*, that I may subserve the grand plan of the *gospel*, and give the most substantial proof that I have not studied its doctrines in vain. May I ever reap the first fruits of the attempt in my own soul! And if the slender and precarious thread of my life be cut short, before, in the midst of so many other necessary employments, such a work can be completed, may God graciously accept a *purpose* with which I trust he has inspired a breast unfeignedly devoted to his service! And may he in that case raise a *much abler hand* to execute a task, at the prospect of which, though after the preparation of more than twenty years, I feel a secret kind of terror, mingling itself with all the delight with which I am springing forward to undertake it!

NORTHAMPTON, Dec. 11, 1745.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE I first published the two former volumes of the *Family Expositor*, I have taken the *Harmony* under an attentive review; but though the publication of this volume, which has long since gone through the press to the end of the Chronological Table, has been delayed so many months beyond my expectation, yet during all this time I have not met with any convincing reasons for transposing one section of it. A variety of necessary engagements have prevented my taking the new and elaborate work of the Reverend Mr. Pilkington on this subject under that accurate examination which the learning, ingenuity, and candour apparent in it on the slightest view may well demand. I hope I shall soon have the pleasure of doing it, and shall receive much light and benefit from it. In the mean time, as a specimen of the readiness with which I shall make my acknowledgments on any such occasion, for farther instruction on subjects on which I have publicly delivered my own thoughts, I cannot but mention the great pleasure with which I have traced the illustration which the account of our *Lord's resurrection* has received, from those very weighty and accurate observations which have been made upon it, with so much sagacity, delicacy, and candour, by Gilbert West, Esq.

It is a great satisfaction to me, to find that we agree in several very important circumstances of the story, in which some late very ingenious writers on this subject have differed from us both; as it likewise is to see, that several of those versions and criticisms which I had proposed and pleaded for, have the sanction of Mr. West's concurrence in them. But as this gentleman has advanced several very material things relating to this very important part of the *Harmony of the Evangelists*, which were wholly unthought of by me or any other commentators that I have perused, and which also seem to carry along with them a very high degree of probability, in the happiest manner to agree with each other, and greatly to illustrate other scriptures, I shall here give my reader a brief view of Mr. West's scheme, referring to his invaluable work itself for a more particular account of it, as well as for a variety of most solid and important remarks relating to the evidences of this great fact, and of the truth of Christianity in general, which is so inseparably connected with it.

The scheme proposed there, so far as I can recollect it from an attentive perusal, is this: That during the time of our blessed

Redeemer's lying in the grave, several of the pious *women* who had attended him from Galilee, together with some of their female friends and acquaintance at Jerusalem, agreed to meet at his sepulchre, early on the morning of the third day, to embalm the body. Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, Salome, and Joanna, were principal persons in this appointment: The chief care of *preparing*, that is, pounding, mixing, and melting the *spices*, was left to Joanna and her company, who were to be there about sun-rising; whereas the two Mariés, and Salome (of whom Matthew and Mark chiefly write) came thither πρῶτα before the appointed time *early in the morning*, or as the day dawned, in order διεγρησάτωσαν to view the sepulchre, that they might judge whether they and their companions could be able to remove the stone which closed it, or whether it would be necessary to call in other assistance, as they then knew nothing of the guard which was set upon it. While these three *women* last mentioned, were on their way, Jesus arose, when the angel had opened the sepulchre and struck the *guards* into amazement and consternation; the consequence of which was, that some of them went to the Jewish rulers, and joined in contriving and propagating the senseless falsehood of *the body being stolen*, and others went into other parts of the city, and told the matter as it really was. In the mean time the angel disappeared, and Mary Magdalene approaching the sepulchre, discerned from some distance that the very large stone that stopped it *was rolled away*, and concluding from thence that the body was removed, left the other Mary and Salome to wait for Joanna and her company, while she herself ran to Peter and John to acquaint them with what she had discovered. While she was gone, these two, (the other Mary and Salome) went toward the sepulchre, and entering into it, *saw*, to their great astonishment, *an angel*, who told them, that Jesus, whom he knew they sought, *was not there*, but was *risen* from the dead, and gave it them in charge to go and acquaint *his disciples* with it, and to let them know that he would give them a meeting in Galilee. The greatness of their consternation prevented them from saying any thing immediately to any one, even to some of their own company, who might pass and repass within their view at least, and so occasioned a delay which left room for some other circumstances. Just as they were on their return, Peter and John came, (perhaps passing by them at some distance,) and Mary Magdalene following them. John at his first arrival only looked into the sepulchre; but when Peter came and entered it, John went in too, and from the circumstances in which he saw things, *believed* that Jesus was risen; though the angel (who could appear or disappear at pleasure) did not render himself visible to either. They returned to the city, and Mary Magdalene, who was now alone, stooping down to look into the

sepulchre, saw two angels: but (perhaps imagining they were young men, whom curiosity or accident might have brought thither,) took little notice of them, and continued weeping in deep thought and distress, till Jesus appeared, and made himself known to her in those very remarkable words, John xx. 17. which Mr. West illustrates with some very peculiar observations.* Leaving her very suddenly, our Lord appeared to the other Mary and Salome, whom he permitted to embrace his feet, comforted them under their fear, and renewed the assurance the angel had given them, that he would meet his disciples in Galilee. While these things were passing at some distance, and the scene at the sepulchre was clear, Joanna and the women who brought the spices, (and of whom Luke only writes) came, and entering into the sepulchre, at first saw no one in it, till the two angels, who a few minutes before had appeared to Mary Magdalene, made themselves visible to Joanna and her attendants, and assuring them of the resurrection of Jesus, reminded them how it had been foretold by himself, with the previous circumstances of his sufferings, but gave them no charge concerning the information to be carried to the apostles; that having been committed to the others. Yet (as it was natural to suppose they would) some of this second company ran to the city, and, by whatever accident it happened, reached the eleven, and some other disciples who were with them, before the two Maries and Salome arrived, telling them, (which was all they could tell them, (that they had seen a vision of angels, who asserted that Jesus was alive. Peter on this ran a second time to the sepulchre, (Luke xxiv. 12.) and not entering as before, but only stooping down and looking into it, he saw no angels, or any thing else but *in alio loco suspensa parva* only the linen clothes lying there, on which he returned; and just on his making that report, the two disciples who went that day to Emmaus, or some from whom they received their information, (Luke xxiv. 22--24.) left the place before the arrival of the two Maries

* Our author observes, that this text, *I am not yet ascended*, &c. comprehends in a few words a variety of most important hints, which have not commonly been taken notice of in them; particularly that our Lord intended by them to recal to the minds of his disciples the discourse he had with them three nights before, in which he explained what he meant by going to the Father; (see John xvi. 28.) and by twice using the word *ascend*, designed to intimate, that he was to go up to heaven, not merely in spirit, as the pious dead do, but by a corporeal motion and translation, and that it would be some time before he took his final leave of earth by this intended *ascension*: All which weighty expressions and predictions concur with a thousand other circumstances to shew, how impossible it was that such an apprehended appearance should have been merely the result of a disordered imagination; a consideration, which Mr. West illustrates at large, as he also does the mistaken apprehension of the disciples, who, when some of their companions, whose veracity they could not suspect, testified they had seen the Lord, thought his body was not risen, but that it was only his spirit that appeared to them; which hint I mention as a key, by means of which many passages in the Evangelists are explained in this work.

and Salome; who, retarded, as was hinted above, by some unknown accident, (perhaps by guessing wrong as to the place where they might find the largest company, together,) at last, however, reached them, and made abundant satisfaction for the little delay, (for all might perhaps have passed in an hour,) by assuring them, not only that *they* also had *seen an angel* who informed them of *their Lord's resurrection*, but that Jesus himself had appeared to them, and had even permitted himself to be touched by two of them.

This is Mr. West's scheme of this important story; and the reader will easily perceive, that it chiefly differs from mine in these two circumstances:—That it supposes the *women* to have made *two different visits* to the sepulchre, and in consequence of that, *two distinct reports*; whereas mine unites them (though I do not suppose they all came together, but that they met there:) And that it also makes Peter to have *run to it twice*, of which I now think, there can be no reasonable doubt, though I before incorporated Luke's account with that of John, relating to his *running thither with John* on Mary Magdalene's first report.

On the whole, whatever embarrassments some may apprehend, I am fully convinced, that the scheme I have offered in my Harmony, will fully acquit the Evangelists from any charge of absurdity or contradiction; and I think it far preferable to any other method of adjusting them, which I ever met with, before or since the publication, till this piece of Mr. West came into my hands: But his plan, though not altogether clear of some difficulties, (especially from the connection of the 1st and 10th verses of the xxivth of Luke with the intermediate,) yet seems on the whole to have so many advantages, that I am inclined to acquiesce in it. I doubt not but those of my readers, who have not read the ingenious piece from which this extract is taken, will be glad to find it here, and will take the first opportunity of perusing the book itself, in which they will find a variety of other excellent remarks. I cannot conclude without recommending it to the divine blessing, and declaring my joy, that so able and worthy a defender of Christianity is risen up, in a rank of life which leaves no room for insinuating any suspicion of those *secular views* to which some, who may perhaps judge of others by what they know of their own low principles of action, may be ready ungenerously, and in many instances ridiculously, to impute those efforts, which the ministers of the gospel are so frequently making for its vindication.

Since all the preceding part of this Postscript was written, the world has been blessed with another admirable production of this kind, from the pen of one of the politest of writers and worthiest of men, who is lately become the public advocate of that religion, to which he hath much longer been a distinguished ornament. Many of my readers will undoubtedly know,

that I refer to the Observations on the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul, by the Honourable George Lyttleton, one of the Lords of the Treasury; a piece, if I may presume to give my opinion of it, as perfect in its kind as any our age has produced. I cannot but greatly regret, that I have not the opportunity of enriching my notes on the Acts with several of this gentleman's judicious and entertaining remarks, which I shall not fail to attempt, if a second edition should be required. In the mean time, I mention it here, that no one who has it in his power may lose the pleasure and benefit of perusing that masterly treatise; in which he will find a most compendious yet unanswerable *demonstration of Christianity*, proposed in so clear, elegant, and nervous a manner, with such intermingled traces of the author's excellent heart, that he must surely be among the most perfect, or the most unteachable of mankind, who is not greatly instructed and edified by it.

Oct. 28, 1747.

THE
FAMILY EXPOSITOR.

THE ACTS OF THE HOLY APOSTLES,

WRITTEN BY ST. LUKE.

SECT. I.

St. Luke connects this history with his gospel, by a more particular account of the ascension of Christ than he had there given.

Acts I. ver. 1—12.

ACTS I. ver. 1.

ACTS I. ver. 1.
THE former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.

THE former treatise, which I lately composed,^a and inscribed to thee, O Theophilus, contained a faithful narrative, as far as might be necessary for the confirmation of a Christian convert, concerning all the most considerable things which Jesus began both to do and to

SECT.
I.

Acts I. 1.

^a The former treatise I composed.] This former treatise is undoubtedly the Gospel, which was written by St. Luke, and dedicated by him to Theophilus: and, as this history of the Acts was written by the same person, it is allowed by all antiquity, the author of it was St. Luke, whom the apostle Paul styles the beloved physician, (Col. iv. 14.) and speaks of as his fellow-labourer, (Philem. ver. 24.) who was with him at Rome, when he wrote his Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon, and again afterwards; when he wrote his Second Epistle to Timothy; (2 Tim. iv. 11.) and so continued an associate and companion to the apostle Paul, as it is evident, from his manner of expression, the penman of the Acts had been, in several of his travels, and in his dangerous voyage when he went first to Rome. This book is generally thought to have been written about the year of our Lord 63, at which time the history ends, which is reasonable to suppose, would have proceeded further, if it had been written later; and probably as Mr.

L'Enfant and others have observed, it made as it were, a second Part of St. Luke's Gospel, which in all copies has the author's name prefixed, while this is left without a title in the oldest manuscripts; though in the Syriac Version it is expressly ascribed to Luke, whom the translator seems to call his master. Not to mention the supposed allusions to this book in Barnabas, Clemens Romanus, Merinas, Ignatius and Polycarp, it is certain that Irenaeus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius, bear the most express testimonies to the genuineness of it, in a multitude of passages, which I need not here insert, as they are produced at large by Dr. Benson, in the first part of the Appendix to his History of the Plantation of Christianity, Vol. II. p. 295—310; and, since the publication of that by Mr. Biscoe, in his learned Discourses at Boyle's Lecture, chap. xiv. xv. where he has shewn in a most convincing manner, how capable these ancient writers were of judging in this matter; and how universally it was owned by the Chris-

ver. teach,⁹ and gave an account of the manner in which Christ opened the gospel, and in which he confirmed it, from his first appearance on earth to the last period of his abode upon it; *Even to the very day in which he was taken up into heaven again, after he had by the influence and assistance of the Holy Spirit,⁸ with which he himself was so abundantly anointed, given a proper charge to the apostles, whom he had chosen to be the prime ministers of his kingdom, and the great instruments of extending it in the world: To whom also, in order to fit them more completely for the discharge of their important office, he presented himself alive after his suffering, with many most evident testimonials of the truth of his resurrection; while, though he declined appearing publicly among the Jews, he often shewed himself to his disciples, being seen by them at various times for no less than forty days, and speaking to them of the things concerning the kingdom of God, which was then shortly to be erected by their means.*

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.

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

tians of the first ages as a sacred book. How incontestably it demonstrates the truth of Christianity, is shewn at large in both these useful treatises, and every attentive reader must needs observe it for himself.

⁸ *Begin both to do and to teach.* To begin to do a thing, as Heinsius and many other critics have observed, is a common Greek idiom for doing or undertaking a thing. Compare Mat. xii. 1; with Luke xii. 1; and Mark vi. 2; with Mat. xiii. 54. See also Gen. ii. 3; Septuag. Numb. xxv. 7; Judg. xiii. 5; xx. 31; Luke iii. 8; xxi. 28; and Acts ii. 4. Yet in most of these places it refers to some of the first actions or events of the kind. Accordingly I apprehend, with Chrysostom, that the phrase here refers to the account which Luke had given of Christ's ministry, from the beginning, and first cure of it, (as he speaks, Luke i. 2, 5.) to the ascension, with which he concludes his Gospel.

⁹ *By the Holy Spirit.* It is certainly much more agreeable to the order and construction of the words in the original, to comment and explain them as above, than to refer them, as the Syriac and Ethiopic Versions do, to his choosing the apostles by the Spirit, or with Elder, (Ob-

serv. Vol. I. p. 853.) to his being taken up by it. It is no wonder, considering how short a history we have of what passed between Christ's resurrection and ascension, that this should be the only place which speaks of his acting by the Spirit after he rose from the dead: nor can I, with a late learned and ingenious writer, think that a sufficient reason for adhering to the version mentioned above. (See Benton's Plantation of Christianity, Vol. I. p. 14, 15.) His breathing on the apostles, and saying, *Receive ye the Holy Spirit*; (John xx. 22.) seems also to agree very well with this interpretation. To render it, *the orders they were to execute by the Holy Spirit* (as in the translation of 1727,) is altogether arbitrary, and is substituting a quite different truth instead of what was written by Luke. I have before inserted the remaining verses of this section in the two last sections of the second volume, to complete the History of our Lord to the time of his ascension) (See note 4, Vol. II. sect. ciii.) But notwithstanding this it will be easily excused, that I have not omitted them here in their proper place, that the whole History of the Acts might stand together, and the work be kept entire.

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, with me, ye have heard of me.

5 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

And, on the fortieth day after his resurrection, having assembled them together with peculiar solemnity,^a he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem directly,^b though he was now to stay no longer with them, and they knew of no immediate business which they had there; but ordered them to wait there for the accomplishment of that promise of the Father, to send the Spirit, which [said he,^c] you have so often and so lately heard from me. (See John xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7; and Luke xxiv. 49.) For John 5 indeed baptized with water only, when he was sent to call men to repentance; but, as he then declared, (Mat. iii. 11.) there is a nobler baptism you may expect from me; and to prepare and furnish you for the great work to which I have commissioned you, of preaching repentance and remission of sins in my name, you shall be baptized with an abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit, far beyond what you have ever yet received: And this I assure you, shall be done within these few days; which proved by the event to be but ten.

But now, as the appointed time was come for his returning to the Father, Jesus withdrew with his apostles from the city, and led them out, as was observed before, unto the mount of Olives, as far as to the boundaries of Bethany. (See Luke xxiv. 50; Vol. II. note^a p. 631.) They therefore being come together, full of expectation that he had brought them thither with a view to some remarkable transaction, asked him, saying,

^a Having assembled them together.] Though some considerable ancient as well as modern critics and particularly Chrysostom and Bepphyllact, understand the word συναξασαντες as expressive of Christ's eating with his apostles during the forty days spoken of above; the notes of Elsner, (Observ. Vol. I. p. 355.) and Raphaelus, (ex Xen. p. 146, et Herod. p. 320, & seq.) seem abundantly sufficient to justify the version here given.

^b Not to depart from Jerusalem.] This seems a plain intimation, that, after our Lord had met his disciples in Galilee, he appointed the apostles to meet him at Jerusalem, or perhaps accompanied them thither, and spent his last days on earth there; doing this last honour to the place, where God had chosen to dwell; and

where the most solemn ordinances of his worship were administered.

^c Said he.] These words, though omitted in the original, are plainly implied. Raphaelus, (ex Xen. p. 146, 147.) has produced many examples of such a change in the person speaking in the best Greek writers. Many others occur in the sacred authors. Compare Luke v. 14; Acts xvii. 3; xxiii. 22; Gen. xxvi. 7; Deut. 2. 43. See also 1. sal. ii. 3, 6; and xci. 14. And I rather mention it, 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 unusual, especially in modern and western Writers.

4 He checks their curiosity about a temporal kingdom,

LECT

1.

Acts

I. 6.

Lord, wilt thou at this time break the Roman yoke from our necks, and after all this confusion restore the kingdom to the ungrateful people of Israel, who have been thus shamefully abusing and crucifying thee? Is the empire of the Messiah immediately to be erected? and wilt thou begin it from Jerusalem; a place that, of all upon the face of the earth, seems to be the least worthy of such a distinguished honour?

wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

- 7 But he, waving a direct answer to this curious question, and leaving it to the Spirit, which was shortly to be given, to rectify the mistaken notions on which they proceeded in it, only said to them, Cease your inquiries at present on this head; since it is not convenient for you now to know those times or seasons in which many remarkable prophecies concerning my kingdom shall be fulfilled: For the Father hath reserved them in his own power, under his own direction and disposal, and hath not expressly determined them in those predictions which certify the events themselves. And he hath taken this precaution, on purpose that the minds of his people might be kept in an humble, dependent, resigned frame: It will therefore be your wisdom always to cultivate such a temper, applying yourselves diligently to the duties of your office, and leaving all events to be determined by his infinite wisdom and goodness. But for the present let it suffice you to be told, that ere long, though I say not exactly when, you shall receive an extraordinary power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you; and, in consequence of that, shall be abundantly qualified to be my witnesses both in the city of Jerusalem, and in all the land of Judea; and not only so, but in Samaria too, though you have never yet addressed yourselves

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

- 8 But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Sa-

6 Restore the kingdom to Israel.] They seem to have expected, that, when the Spirit was in so extraordinary a manner poured out, and the world, 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 shake off its subjection to the Romans, but itself rise to very extensive, and perhaps universal dominion. The word

αποκαταστασις intimates the shattered and weakened state, in which Israel now was. And I cannot but think, our Lord's answer may intimate, it should at length be restored, though not immediately, or with all the circumstances they imagined; which concession seems the most satisfactory answer to Rabbi Isaac's objection against Christianity, from his mistaken sense of these words. Chissuel Enunah, Part II. p. 59

and having blessed them, ascends to heaven in their sight. 5

maria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

to the Samaritans in any former mission, (see Mat. x. 5. and compare Acts viii. 5, 14, 25.) and even to the remotest parts of the earth; the barbarous nations of which you shall visit, with a success which shall gloriously illustrate my Father's promise, of "giving me the heathen for mine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for my possession." (See Psalm ii. 8.)

SECT
1.

Acts
1. x

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

And having said these things, he lifted up his hands and blessed them; (Luke xxiv. 50.) and while they beheld him with great earnestness, and high expectation of some extraordinary event consequent on this solemn preparation, he was lifted up from the ground in a miraculous manner, and rose gradually higher and higher, till at length a bright cloud, conducted by the ministry of angels, who joyfully attended their returning Lord, received him out of their sight, and they saw him no more.

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

This marvellous event was so astonishing to the apostles, that they continued with their eyes fixed the way that he was gone: And while they were stedfastly looking up to heaven after him, as he went on in his triumphant ascent, behold, two angels in the form of men, in white and shining raiment, came and stood near them: Who also spake to them, and said, Ye men of Galilee, why do ye stand thus gazing up to heaven, with so much surprise and amazement? This Jesus, who is now taken up from you into heaven, is gone to that world from whence he came, and in which he is to make his final abode: Nevertheless there will be a time, when he shall visit your earth once more, and so come in a visible form, riding on a cloud as his triumphant chariot, and attended by angelic guards, in the same manner as you have now beheld him going into heaven: Depart therefore in peace, and pursue the interest of his kingdom, with a firm assurance that his cause shall prosper amidst all opposition, and that while you are engaged in the service of this ascended triumphant Lord, you can never be losers by your fidelity and your zeal.

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

Then were the hearts of the apostles filled with joy by what they had seen and heard; and having worshipped their ascended Lord, (Luke

6 *The apostles return from mount Olivet to Jerusalem.*

SECT. xxiv. 52.) they returned to Jerusalem, from the they unto Jerusalem, from the Mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey.
 1. *mount called Olivet, which is but a sabbath-day's journey, or about a mile distant from Jerusalem.*ⁿ

Acta
 1. 12 And there they employed themselves in a daily course of public and private devotion; rejoicing in what they had seen, and firmly believing some extraordinary event was at hand, whereby they should be more fully qualified for the great work assigned them; which, whatever the hazard of it might be, they were firmly determined to undertake and prosecute.

Verses

IMPROVEMENT.

- 1 If we have ever seriously considered the contents of this excellent history on which we are now entering, we must surely see abundant reason to adore that gracious providence which hath transmitted it to us, to confirm our faith, and animate our
- 2, 9 hope in the gospel. The account of our Lord's ascension, with which it begins, relates to a fact of so great importance, that we may well bear the repetition of what we have read concerning it in the former history.
- 6 We see the apostles still dreaming of a temporal kingdom to be restored to Israel: So hard is it for the best of men to be entirely crucified to the world, even by the cross of Christ! (Gal. vi. 24.) Our Lord does not set himself at large to combat that error; nor is it necessary that we should be eagerly solicitous on the like occasions, where mistakes do not affect mens' characters or their eternal state. Prudently does he direct them to waive the indulgence of their curiosity. Let us learn to moderate ours, and refer times and seasons to him who hath reserved them in his own power. Let a sense of the perfect wisdom and goodness of the Divine Being silence and compose us, amidst all the darkness which veils our prospects of futurity.
- 10 With the apostles let us look up after an ascending Saviour, and send our wishes and our souls to heaven; where he now is, and where he must remain, till that important day in which he shall
- 11 descend to the final judgment. Behold, he then cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him! (Rev. i. 7.) May we view him to our joy, and not to our terror! and lift up our heads with a se-

ⁿ *A sabbath-day's journey from Jerusalem.* For the extent of a sabbath-day's journey, see vol. II. Luke xxiv. 52. note 9. The easiest manner of reconciling this text with Luke xxiv. 50, and John xi. 18. may be seen in the note on the former of these passages; vol. II. sect. cxi. note 2. And it is with pleasure that I see it confirmed and illustrated by the learned Mr.

Biscoe, in his Sermons at Boyle's Lecture, p. 391—394. An elaborate and valuable work; by referring to which I shall have an opportunity of saving myself and the reader a great deal of trouble in these notes; for which therefore I gladly take this opportunity of making my acknowledgment to the worthy author.

renity and cheerfulness, becoming those who see the approach of their complete redemption! (Luke xxi. 28.) In the mean time, may his cause and service be ever dear to us! and while he is attending to our concerns in the world above, may we, with grateful and joyful alacrity, pursue that which he graciously condescends to own as his interest here upon earth.

SECT. I.
Acts I. 12.

SECT. II.

The apostles being returned to Jerusalem, and assembled with the rest of the disciples, Matthias is chosen to succeed Judas in the apostolic office. Acts I. 13. to the end.

ACTS I. 13.
AND when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

ACTS I. 13.
NOW the apostles being returned from the mount of Olives to Jerusalem, immediately after the ascension of Christ, (as was observed in the conclusion of the former section; when they were entered [into the city] they presently retired for devotion, and went up into an upper room,^a where they usually held their assemblies. And as this was the place where the apostles commonly abode, all the eleven were there, both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James [the son] of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas, or Jude, [the brother] of James.^b But Judas the traitor was now dead, as was observed towards the close of the preceding history; (Vol. II. sect. xciii.) and the vacancy occasioned by his death gave rise to that important business to which they quickly proceeded.

SECT. II.
Acts I. 13.

¹⁴ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of

These all unanimously persevered in prayer and supplication, with great intenseness and ardour of soul, together with the pious women, who were formerly mentioned as attending the

^a Into an upper room.] I can see no sufficient room for saying, as many have done, that this was in the temple. (Compare note^d, on Luke xxiv. 55. Vol. II.) Epiphanius says, it was on mount Sion, and that a Christian church was afterwards erected on the spot of ground on which it stood. (See Hammond in loc.) Perhaps they might the rather choose it, as giving some advantage for looking to the temple. But it is plain from many

other passages, that upper rooms were often large, and fit for containing a considerable number of persons. (Compare Mark xiv. 15. and Acts xx. 8.) See Bos Exercit. p. 64. & seq.

^b The brother of James.) The expression in the original is ambiguous, and may signify either son or brother: But Jude himself expressly determines it, that he was his brother, in ver. 1. of his Epistle.

SECT. cross of their Lord, and particularly *Mary*, so Jesus, and with his
 11. celebrated as the *mother of Jesus*; and also with brethren.
 his brethren and near kinsmen after the flesh,
 of whom there were some others besides the
 apostles, whose prejudices, though once strong,
 were now happily worn off. Compare John vii. 5.

Acts
 1. 14

15 And in these days, while they were waiting for the promise of the spirit, *Peter*, rising up in the midst of a full assembly of the disciples, spake as follows: Now the number of persons^c that were met together in that place, was about an hundred and twenty; the greater part of the five hundred to whom Christ had appeared (1 Cor. xv. 6,) continuing in Galilee, during this interval between the feast of the passover and that of pentecost. And he said,

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

16 O ye men that hear me this day, [and] whom I regard as my brethren, in the bonds of religion, as well as of friendship! it was necessary in the righteous judgment of God, that this awful passage of scripture should be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spake, long before the event by the mouth of David,^d and which God intended with a particular regard to Judas; who was so wicked a wretch, that in contempt of all the

16 Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which

^c Number of persons.] It is literally the number of names; but it is well known that *onoma* often signifies *personae*. (See Rev. iii. 4, xi. 15, and Raphael. ex Polyb. p. 297.) And it best suits the English language, to render it so.

^d This scripture should be fulfilled, &c.] Two prophecies are afterwards quoted for this purpose, (ver. 20.) from Psal. lxi. 25. and cix. 6. and it has been matter of much debate, whether they do in their original sense refer to Judas, or to the enemies of David. Mr. Jeffery (in his Review, p. 179, & seq.) maintains the former, and Dr. Sykes (on the Truth of Christianity, pag. 271, 272.) the latter. It is certain, the sixty-ninth psalm is not to be confined to Judas; for St. Paul (Rom. xi. 9, 10.) has quoted the 22d and 23d verses of it, as applicable to the unbelieving Jews in general. There are so many passages in both the psalms in question, more applicable to David than to Christ, that I was very inclinable to render the words before us, *The scripture which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David, must necessarily have been fulfilled concerning Judas, &c. and to have explained them as if the*

apostle had said, "That vengeance, which David foretold as to be executed on his enemies, must much more fall on Judas, whose peridious and cruel attack on Christ himself rendered him so much more criminal." But it is certain, the order of the Greek words will not so naturally admit this; nor do I remember to have seen the phrase *ἡ ἀποκρίσις αὐτοῦ τοῦ κυρίου*, the particle *καὶ*, or *et*, with the *dative case*, being much more proper in that connection. (Compare Mat. xiii. 14. and Luke xxii. 37.) I therefore conclude, that while David prophesied of the calamities which should befall his persecutors, it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, that the enemies and murderers of the Messiah should inherit those curses in all their terror, and be yet more miserable than the persons on whom they were more immediately to fall. This fact (in itself exceeding probable) I take to be asserted in these words, and what was revealed by the same spirit to the apostle Peter. And I hope, the reader will excuse the length of a note, which may serve as a key to many other passages of the New Testament.

was guide to them
that took Jesus.

17 For he was num-
bered with us, and
had obtained part of
this ministry.

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

most solemn and endearing obligations to dis-
tinguishing duty and fidelity to his Divine Mas-
ter, he became the guide of those that seized on
the blessed Jesus, and marked him out to them
by a traitorous kiss. (Mat. xxvi. 47, 48.) And

indeed he well deserved to be made a monu-
ment of vengeance to succeeding ages, con-
sidering the near relation in which he stood to
Christ, and to us; for he was once numbered
with us his apostles, and for a while had obtain-
ed part of this ministry, with which our Lord
was pleased to honour us, as the principal offi-
cers in his kingdom. The calamitous end of
this unhappy man is therefore fresh in your me-
mories; and it is known to all of you, that in-
stead of enriching himself by his crimes, and
securing those worldly advantages he so eagerly
pursued, he only purchased (that is, was the oc-
casion of purchasing) a field^e with that money,
which was the reward of his iniquity: For his
conscience would not suffer him to keep it; but
he threw it down, as you know, in the temple,
and then going away, he hanged himself. (Mat.
xxvii. 5.) But that which should have support-
ed the weight of his body breaking, he could
not fully execute his horrid design; and falling
down on his face, he burst asunder in the mid-
dle,^f and all his bowels were in a miserable man-
ner poured out upon the ground; so that he ex-
pired in the utmost agonies both of body and
mind, to the horror of all that beheld him.

^e Purchased a field.] It is worth ob-
serving, that an action is sometimes said
in Scripture to be done by a person, who
was the occasion of doing it. (Compare
Gen. xlii. 38; Exod. xxiii. 8; 1 Kings
xiv. 16; Isa. vi. 10; Jer. xxxviii. 23; Rom.
xlv. 15; 1 Cor. vi. 16; and 1 Tim. iv.
16.) But some would render *excoelo*, he
possessed the field, supposing Judas was
buried there. (See *Bren.* and *Jeins.* in loc.)
Dr. Lightfoot thinks, he was strangled in
the air by the devil, and thrown down
headlong in this field; and so might he
said to possess it, and occasioned his be-
ing called, *The field of blood.* (Hor. *Hebr.*
on Mat. xxvii. 5. and in loc.)

^f Falling down on his face; he burst asun-
der, &c.] Thus Matthew's account is re-
conciled with Luke's above. (See note ^b

on Mat. xxvii. 5. Vol. II.) I find the
learned Casaubon has taken the same meth-
od; nor can I see any reason to recede
from this interpretation, on the most at-
tentive review of the various solutions
proposed by Mr. Biscoe; (Hoyle's Lect.
p. 637—644.) But, were I to change it,
I should prefer to any other that of Lim-
boreh; that some Jew, who would have
concealed the suicide, cut Judas down,
and threw him into some pit or valley,
where he was afterwards found lying on
his face, with his bowels gushed out.—
That *νεκρῶν γαστρῶν* should be rendered,
not falling headlong, but falling down on his
face, see proved by Raphelius, (ex Polyb.
p. 109, & seq. and Elser, *Observ.* Vol. I.
p. 359, 359.)

SECR.
II.
Acts
I. 10

10 *He advises that another apostle should be chose in his room.*

SECT.

II.

Acts I.

19

(And by the way, this was a fact so public and notorious, that it was known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem,^a who could not but take notice of such an extraordinary circumstance; so that that field which was so purchased is to this day called in their language, which is the Syriac dialect, *Aceldama*, that is, *The field of blood*, as being bought with money, which was in more senses than one, the price of blood; having been the cursed hire for which Judas sold the blood of his master, and in effect his own.)

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

20 Now, said Peter to the disciples, I observed to you, that the scripture speaks something of this remarkable event; for it is written in the book of Psalms, (Psal. lxxix. 25.) "*Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man inhabit it;*" and again, (Psal. cix. 8) "*Let another take*" (that is, another shall take and discharge) *his office.*" The former of these clauses is already awfully verified, as he is become such a spectacle of horror, that men will detest the very place where he lived; and the other must be

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

21 now accomplished. *It is necessary therefore, that of the men who have conversed intimately with us, and have attended during all the time in which the Lord Jesus was going in and coming out among us, and so can testify of all he did*

21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 and said, *Beginning from the baptism of John, when he first entered on his ministry, even to the day in which he was taken up from us into heaven, one of these should be chosen to the apostolic office, to be made a witness with us^b of that great and fundamental fact, his resur-*

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 witness with us of his resurrection.

^a It was known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Aringlius (in his Rom. Subterranean, p. 456.) mentions a funeral inscription dug up in the *Via Nomeniana*, by which it appears, that the fate of Judas became a proverbial form of cursing. — The reader will perceive, that with many of the best critics I take this verse to be a parenthesis, to be considered, not as the words of Peter, but of the historian; which effectually answers the objection from the fact having happened but a few days before the speech was delivered. This also accounts for his calling the Syriac, which was spoken by the Jews at that time, their language; for *Hakeldama* is the Syriac dialect.

^b One of these should be made a witness with us.] They might reasonably and modestly conclude, that it was fit the number of apostles which 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 should at this distance of time be able to assign a reason, why the two that are 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.

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

24 And they prayed, and said, Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.

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

26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was

rection from the dead, upon which the proof of his being the Messiah so evidently rests.

The apostle had no sooner spoke, but immediately the whole assembly assented to the reasonableness of this proposal; and accordingly they set up two men; the one, Joseph called Barnabas,¹ who was also surnamed Justus, on account of the remarkable openness and integrity of his temper; and the other, a person of no less eminent note for his piety, who was called Matthias.

And they prayed with great solemnity, answer-24 able to the importance of the occasion, saying, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all, and perfectly discernest every secret sentiment of the soul, and all the future circumstances of life! we humbly intreat thee to shew, which of these two, whom we esteem thy faithful servants, thou hast chosen to be advanced to this distinguished honour; That he may take part of this ministry, and share with thine other servants in the apostleship, from which Judas is fallen by [his] transgression to his eternal ruin; that he might go to his own place,² to that miserable world, which in thy righteous judgment is appointed for the reception of such heinous offenders, and the due punishment of such enormous crimes.

And after this prayer they gave out their lots, 26 for each; and the lot fell upon Matthias, on which they concluded, that he was the person whom God had appointed: And the rest of the

¹ Joseph called Barnabas.] The Cambridge Manuscript reads, Barnabas; but Dr. Benson seems to have assigned solid reasons for concluding, this was not Barnabas the Cyprian, (Acts iv. 36.) of whom we read so often in this history, whose name was also Jesus or Joseph, (which are both the same;) but rather the Joseph mentioned Mat. xxvii. 56, and Mark vi. 3, the son of Clopas or Alphaeus, and brother to at least two of the apostles, James the Less, and Jude.

² To his own place.] Occumenius, Hammond, and Le Cene, seem to interpret this phrase very unaturally, when they explain it of a *suæ cæcæ* going into the place of *Hadæ*. That *suæ cæcæ* signifies a place proper and suitable for such a wretch, and therefore by God's righteous judgment

appointed for him, many writers have shewn, and particularly Dr. Ben on in his History of the first Planting of Christianity, page 25. (Compare Mat. xxvi. 24; John vi. 70, 71, and xvii. 12.)

³ They gave out their lots.] This was, no doubt most impartially adjusted, though we know not in what particular method. The honour God best conferred on inquiries by lot, (Josh. vii. 14, 15; 1 Sam. x. 20, 21.) and the custom of fixing the officers 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. Grotius has shewn in his note here, that such a designation to sacred offices prevailed also among some pagan nations.

2 Reflections on the end of Judas, and choice of another apostle.

ECT. 11. Apostles accordingly gave him the right hand of fellowship, so that for the future he was numbered with the eleven apostles,^m and made the twelfth of that venerable society of men.

Acts
I. 26.

IMPROVEMENT.

Verse 13, 14 It was wisely and well determined by the apostles, to spend this interval of time in devotion and in Christian converse; for never have we more reason to expect the communication of the Holy Spirit of God to us, than when we are sharing our time between the one and the other, so far as Providence affords us leisure from our secular affairs. With their devotions they properly joined a care for the future edification of the church, and therefore chose another apostle, to complete the number which our Lord had appointed.

25 It is dreadful to think how the vacancy happened, and by what a horrible transgression it was, that one of this sacred society fell from his office. The hand of God's righteous vengeance was heavy upon him, and brought him in a few hours to public infamy and irrecoverable destruction. So that his example, dreadful as it is, shews us at once, that no dignity of office can secure men from sin, and that when they break through the solemn bonds of a remarkably high and eminent profession, they must expect a punishment proportionably signal.

18 *Riches profit not in the day of wrath: (Prov. xi. 4.)* The time is swiftly approaching, when *ill-gotten gain* will prove a burthen and a terror, and the *wages of unrighteousness* will appear as the price of an *Aceldama, a field of blood*; even in that dreadful day when impenitent sinners go to their own place; to those abodes of misery, which are so properly prepared for them, and so justly assigned to them; assigned especially to those whose business (like that of Judas) it was, to preach repentance unto others, to shew them their transgression, and to warn them of their danger, and who were more especially obliged to have enforced their admonitions and their precepts, by the peculiar lustre of their own examples.

21, 22 But the badness of the man, who in some instances may be advanced to bear the most sacred office, is not to be interpreted to keep up the honour of theirs by seeking out a more proper person, who might do his part towards taking away the reproach which Judas had brought upon it, and might approve himself

^m *Matthias*—was numbered with the eleven apostles. [Though Nathaniel and Matthias both signify the gift of God, I cannot think, that this will prove them, (as some have supposed,) the same person.

Nor can I see, that the question of the right of choosing church-officers can receive much light from so singular a story, in which so peculiar an act of God was expected.

worthy witness of the resurrection of Jesus, on the knowledge of which depended the salvation of millions. After all, they refer the matter to the determination of Providence, to which they make a very instructive appeal. Let us always remember the universal and intimate inspection of the Divine Being. *Thou, Lord, knowest the hearts of all!* All their treachery, and all their integrity, is manifest in thy sight: And, in persons of equal sincerity, thou discernest what renders one more fit than another, for this or that situation and service! Let it be our desire to follow Providence ourselves; and let us pray, that God will set over all his churches *pastors after his own heart, who may feed them with knowledge and understanding.* (Jer. iii. 15.)

The lot is cast into the lap; but, casual as the determination may seem, the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord. (Prov. xvi. 33.) Let us own his hand in the determination of every circumstance which befalls us, and especially in those by which any solemn and important trust may be committed to us: And may the consideration of it be an additional engagement upon us, to discharge it with becoming diligence and entire fidelity!

S E C T. III.

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, with the former part of the speech which Peter made to the multitude on that great occasion. Acts II. 1—21.

ACTS II. 1.
AND when the day
of Pentecost was

THE disciples of Jesus, after the choice of Matthias, employed their time in devotion, and continued the same course of religious exercises as before, for several succeeding days. *And when the day of Pentecost^a was completely*

ACTS II. 1.

S E C T.
III.
Acts
II. 1

^a *The day of Pentecost.*] It has often been observed, that, as our Lord was crucified at one of the great Jewish feasts, it was so that he should be glorified at another. And this of Pentecost was chosen with peculiar propriety, as next succeeding that of the pas over, 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, and 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; as Brennius has well observed. (See also Miscell. Sacra. Essay I. p. 113—115.)—The solemnity of the feast, the general expectation of the Messiah that prevailed among them, 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 greater regard to the apostles, when they came to the places where these people dwelt.

16. *The Spirit in the form of eleven tongues descends upon them.*

ACTS
II. 1

arrived,^b that is, when the morning of the fiftieth day after the passover was come, it being then the first day of the week, the apostles with the rest of the hundred and twenty disciples were together; and they were all assembled with the most unanimous affection in the same place, in the upper room which was mentioned before, where they had used to meet. And on a sudden there was a very extraordinary and surprising sound from heaven as of a rushing violent wind, which shook the very place, and came with such a mighty force, that it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them at the same time a number of divid'd tongues, made as it were of fire,^c i. e. bright flames in a pyramidal form, which were so parted as to terminate in several points, and thereby to afford a proper emblem of the marvellous effect attending the appearance, by which they were endowed with a miraculous diversity of languages: and it was ordered so, that one of these tongues rested upon each of them,^d who

fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 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 cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

^b Was completely arrived.] The first day of unleavened bread, that is, the fifteenth of Nisan, began this year on Friday evening; and this was the day on which they were to offer the wave-sheaf; and from the morrow after that day, that is, from the Saturday evening, they were to count seven weeks, or forty nine days, which would bring the fiftieth, that is the day of Pentecost, then to begin on Saturday evening; so that on the Lord's day morning, it might properly be said to be fully come. See Lev. xxiii. 15, 16. The word *evening* does not signify, that the day was ended, but that it was fully come. Compare Luke i. 37, ii. 21, and see *Heza* in loc.

^c Divid'd tongues as of fire.] This wonderful appearance in the form of fire, might be intended to signify the quickening and purifying influences of the Spirit, as well as to illustrate John the Baptist's prediction, that Christ should baptize in the Holy Ghost and with fire. (Mat. iii. 11, and Luke iii. 16.) But I will not venture to affirm with Mr. Fleming, (Christol. Vol. I. p. 224.) and Blener, (Observ. Vol. I. p. 504.) that it was to signify, that the Shikimoth, (which appeared in a glorious daim, surrounded with a cloud,) was now passed from the Jews to the disciples of Jesus. The Jews (as Voltaire tells us) have a tale among them, relat-

ing to the appearance of some flashes of fire, which fell on an assembly of their doctors, while they were studying the law; which probably was invented, to slur, or imitate this important history. — Bos (Exercit. p. 67.) thinks, each tongue appeared complete, and that they are said to be divid'd, on account of the distribution that was made of one to each person. But it seems, that the division of each might aptly represent the variety of languages, with which each person was endowed; and some have thought that the form of the mitres worn by bishops, (according to the Roman ritual,) bears some allusion to the supposed form of these cloven tongues. — It is observed by Dr. Lightfoot and others, that as the division of tongues at Babel once introduced confusion, and was the means of casting off the Gentiles from the knowledge of the true God; so now there was a remedy provided by the gift of tongues at Zion, to bring the Gentiles out of darkness into light, and to destroy the veil which had been spread over all nations. (Isa. xxy. 7.) See Lightf. Hor. Hebr. and Grot. in loc.

^d Upon each of them.] I agree with the learned Dr. Benson, (Fant. of Christianity page 28, 29.) who thinks, (as Jerom and Chrysostom did) that it is probable, each of the hundred and twenty shared in this miraculous donation. (See also Miscell.

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

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

6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

were then present in the room. And as soon as ever these lambent flames appeared to touch them, *they were all* in a most sensible and extraordinary manner *filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues* than they had ever used or understood before, with light and fervour, and a most ready flow of language, according as *the Spirit gave them a power and facility of expressing themselves.*

Now as this happened at one of the three ⁵ grand yearly feasts, and at that in which the days were longest, *there were sojourning in Jerusalem* at that time a great number of *pious men*, [*that were*] by their descent or by profession Jews; who were come thither out of all parts of the known world, *from every nation under heaven* where any of that people dwelt, or any that were proselytes to the Jewish religion.

And when this strange report came to be noised ⁶ abroad, as it presently did, *the multitude soon gathered together, and were quite confounded and amazed: For every one* of this various assembly *heard one or another of them* as they addressed themselves by turns to people of a different language, *speaking to each of them in*

SECT.
III.
Acts
II. 4.

Sacra, Remy I. p. 101, 109.) The hundred and twenty, mentioned chap. i. 15, are plainly referred to, ver. 1, as the persons here assembled: And as this would best illustrate the pouring forth of the Spirit on the handmaids, as well as on the servants of God, (ver. 18,) so it is certain, that the manuscripts, which would confine this effusion to the apostles, are of very small authority. Nor do Beza's arguments on the other side of the question appear to me by any means conclusive. Compare Acts x. 44—46, and xi. 15—17.

[*From every nation under heaven.*] Should this be taken for an hyperbole, we have other instances in Scripture of the like way of speaking; as where we read *of cities walled up to heaven*, (Deut. i. 28, 31, 32) and of the dread of the Jews *filling upon every nation under the whole heaven*, (Deut. ii. 25.) See also Gen. xi. 4; Judg. xxi. 16; and Psal. cvii. 26.—But not to insist upon it, that the Jews were then so numerous, as to have spread through every country, so that, as Scrippa in Josephus says, "There was not a people

upon earth who had not Jews inhabiting among them;" (Bel. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 16. § 4. p. 191. Flavercamp.) the expression here can signify no more, than that there were some at Jerusalem at that time from all the several nations among whom the Jews were dispersed. (See Lightfoot, and Whitby in loc.) It would be very absurd to argue from hence, that there must be natives of Britain and America at Jerusalem, when this great event happened. And many arguments, drawn from such universal phrases elsewhere, seem as weak as this would be.

[*When this report came abroad.*] De Dieu concludes, this must signify thunder; which, he too confidently says, is always the import of *kol* and *goren* in the Hellenistic language, and argues from hence, that the *ushay* wind (ver. 2.) was attended with thunder. But the following clause, which refers the assembly to the different languages spoken by those on whom the Holy spirit fell, plainly shews, that it was not thunder which brought them together; which indeed could hardly occasion their assembling in one place.

his own proper dialect. And they were all astonished at it beyond measure, and wondered at this marvellous event, saying one to another, Behold, how unaccountable is this! Are not all these that speak, by birth and country Galileans?

ACTS
11. 7.

8 And how then do we every one of us hear them, as they direct their speech to so many different people, who are here come together out of so many nations, speaking to each of us in his own

9 native language? For while there are among us Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites or Persians, and those that inhabit Mesopotamia,⁸ and those that dwell too in Judea, where the dialect is so different from that of Galilee; and likewise the natives of Cappadocia and Pontus, and of the country more properly called the procon-

10 sular Asia; as well as the inhabitants of the neighbouring provinces of Phrygia and Pamphylia, of Egypt and the parts of Africa which are about Cyrene, and the many sojourners in this city [who are] Romans, some of us native Jews, and others of us proselytes to the Mosaic

11 religion;^h Together with those of both these sorts who use the language of Crete, and those who are Arabians; we do every one of us hear them speaking in our own native tongues! the wonderful works of God, in the surprising testimonies he has given to the mission of Jesus who was lately crucified, not only by the miracles he wrought, but by his resurrection and ascension: And while they are discoursing of these marvellous events, they run through such a great variety of languages, which no one can suspect they have ever been taught, with so much readiness and propriety, as among the

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

8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9 Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

10 Phrygia, and Pamphilia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

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

⁸ [Elamites, and those that inhabit Mesopotamia.] Bishop Chandler takes these to be the remainder of the Jews, who had been carried captive into Assyria, first by Tiglathpileser, (2 Kings xv. 29.) and afterwards by Salmanneser, and placed in the cities of the Medes. (2 Kings xvii. 6.) See Comb. Orig. Genl. page 225.

^h [Romans, Jews, and proselytes.] It appears from Josephus, Suetonius, Tacitus, the Roman satirists, and other writers of this age, in a variety of passages well known to the learned, that great numbers of Jews dwelt at Rome about this time, and made many proselytes to their religion. See Mr. Biscoe, at Boyle's Lectures, p. 85.

ⁱ [We hear them speaking in our own tongues.] Cyprian, and Erasmus, and some later critics, have thought, (particularly from ver. 8.) that the miracle was not in the speakers, but the hearers; so that, while the apostle spoke his own native Syrian, it would appear Latin, Greek, and Greek to another, &c. But this must be a mistake; for we read of their speaking with tongues, ver. 4; before any foreigners came in upon them. (Compare chap. x. 46. and 1 Cor. xiv. 2.) Nor could what they said, on this supposition, have appeared a jargon to any; which yet we find to have been the case, ver. 13. See Castalio, on ver. 4.

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

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

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lift up his voice, and said unto 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.

most learned of mankind is perfectly unequalled. SECT. III.

And they were all in a mixture of amazement and perplexity, and said one to another, What can this unaccountable appearance possibly mean? Or what can it be designed to effect? But others of them, and particularly those who were native Jews, and understood none of these foreign languages, hearing the sound of their words as a kind of barbarous jargon, derided them, and in a mocking and contemptuous manner said, Surely these men have begun the festival betimes, and are undoubtedly filled with sweet intoxicating wine,¹ and therefore make this unintelligible noise. Act. II. 12

But Peter standing up with the eleven, who were then in company with him, and who had each of them before been speaking in different languages, raised his voice so loud that those who had been reproaching them might hear it, and said to them, in the tongue that was commonly used among them, O ye men of Judea, and especially all you that inhabit Jerusalem, whom I would be solicitous in the first place to inform and convince, let this be known unto you as to the cause of this extraordinary appearance, and listen to my words with an attention becoming the importance of the occasion on which I speak. For these men are not drunken, as you, who do not understand them, rashly suppose; and it is indeed very uncharitable for you to imagine it, considering that it is now but the third hour of the day,¹ that is, about nine o'clock in the morning, the hour of morning sacrifice; before which, you know, none, who have any regard for their character, will allow themselves so much as to taste wine, and much less to drink any large quantity of it, whereby they would be rendered incapable of attending the service of the temple on such a solemn festival as this.

¹ Filled with sweet wines.] There was no new wine, or must, at the feast of Pentecost, as Beza and many others observe; but *phloxos* properly signifies sweet wine. We are informed by Plutarch, that the ancients had ways of preserving their wine sweet a great while; and such wines are known to be very intoxicating.

¹ The third hour of the day.] Josephus tells us, that on feast-days the Jews seldom eat or drink till noon; (*de vita sua*, § 54, p. 26. Haverc.) which if it were fact, would (as Grotius observes.) render this calumny the more incredible. As to the computation of the Jewish hours, see sect. 6, note^b, on Acts iii. 1.

SECT. III. *But this which has occasioned so much admiration, and which you know not how to account for, is that great event which was spoken*

Acts H. 16
17
18
19
"of by the prophet Joel,^m chap. ii. 28—32. where it is written, "And it shall come to pass in the last days," or in the times of the Messiah, saith the ever blessed God, I will pour out an extraordinary effusion of my Spirit upon all flesh, that is, upon some of all ranks and orders, of all ages and nations of men: And as the wonderful effect of it, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,ⁿ and your young men shall see prophetic visions, and your old men shall dream significant and divinely inspired dreams. Yea in those days I will, in a most extraordinary manner, pour out the gifts of my spirit upon my servants, and even upon my handmaids: and they shall also prophesy, and shall not only publish and proclaim the riches of my grace, but shall foretell the judgments that are coming upon those who shall continue hardened in their sins. And this effusion of my Spirit shall be followed with a most awful revolution; for I will give you to see prodigies, in heaven above, and signs upon the earth beneath; And such destructive

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

17 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 hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath;

^m By the prophet Joel.] Some have explained this prophecy, as referring, in its original sense, to the pouring forth the Spirit on the Jews at their last general conversion; and think Peter's argument is, as if he had said, "You need not wonder at such an event as this, since so much more is at length to be expected." (See Jeffer's True Grounds, p. 126.) But from attending to the context I am led to conclude, for reasons too long to be here stated, that the prophecy is here applied in its most direct sense, and that the event of this great day, and the destruction of the Jews for rejecting the gospel so confirmed, were originally referred to in it.

ⁿ In the last days.] Every one knows, that the last days was a phrase commonly used to denote the times of the Messiah, when the gospel should be published, which is the last dispensation of divine grace; but here it seems to have a more particular view to the days immediately preceding the destruction of the Jewish nation, or the last days of that people, when the extraordinary means which were in use employed for their conviction, would

fully justify God in the severest vengeance he should execute upon that hardened people.

^o Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.] Compare Acts xxi. 9. If this miracle had not been foretold, the argument for the truth of Christianity from it would, no doubt, have been conclusive; but, as it was referred to in the Old Testament, it might dispose the minds of the Jews still more readily to regard it, as it was indeed the more remarkable.

^p Prodiges in heaven above, and signs upon the earth beneath.] This doubtless refers to the prodigies and signs which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem; (such as, the flaming sword hanging over the city, and the fiery comet painting down upon it for a year; the light that shone upon the temple and the altar in the night, as if it had been noon day; the opening of the great and heavy gate of the temple without hands; the voice heard from the most holy place, Let us depart from hence; the admonition of Jesus the son of Ananias, crying for seven years together, War, War, War! the vision of ascending armies in the air, and

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

“ 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. Yea, there shall be such confusion and misery, and all regular government both in church and state shall be so entirely dissolved, that the *sun shall* as it were be turned into darkness, and the *moon into blood*, before that great and illustrious day of the Lord shall fully come, in which he will take ample vengeance on every unbeliever. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall, with humble submission to my method of saving grace in my Son, invoke the name of the Lord, shall be saved from this terrible destruction, and brought into a state of security and happiness.”

SECT. 111.
Acts 11. 19

20

21

These premises the apostle Peter afterwards applied, to the conviction of those who had rejected and slain our Lord; and the argument wrought most powerfully upon them. But the prosecution and success of this address must be referred to the following sections.

IMPROVEMENT.

WITH how much attention and delight should we read the history of this glorious event, so frequently referred to in the predictions of our Lord, and of so great importance to the Christian cause; the miraculous descent of the Holy Spirit! He came down as a mighty rushing wind, to signify the powerful energy of his operations, whereby the whole world was to be shaken. He fell upon them in tongues of fire, cloven or divided

Verse 2.

of intrenchments thrown up against a city there represented; the terrible thundings and lightnings, and the dreadful earthquakes, which every one considered as portending some approaching evil: All which by the singular providence of God are recorded by Josephus, (Bell. Jud. lib. vi. cap. 5 [al. vii. 12] § 3; & lib. iv. cap. 4 [al. 7.] § 5,) in that history of his, the truth of which the emperor Titus attested under his own hand: (See Joseph. Vit. § 65. p. 33. Haverc.) And accordingly the greatest part of these circumstances, are inserted in Tacitus, (Hist. lib. v. cap. 13,) and happily preserved, though most of his account of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem be lost.

9 *Whoever shall invoke the name of the Lord, &c.*] This context being quoted thus, was a strong intimation, that nothing but their acceptance of the gospel could secure them from impending ruin. Bronnius has proved by an ample collection of texts, (in his note on this place,) 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 Christian character, (Compare Acts 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!

into several parts, to denote the most celebrated effect to be immediately produced, in causing them to speak with the utmost readiness and propriety, languages they had never learnt. An astonishing miracle! which was intended, not for pomp and ostentation, but to render them capable of propagating the gospel to the most distant nations, to which the grace of God had determined to send it.

1 It is observable, that this divine gift fell upon them while they were unanimously gathered together; perhaps to intimate, that the influences of the Spirit are most to be expected where there is the greatest unanimity, and the greatest devotion. Thus did the blessed Jesus accomplish what had been foretold concerning him, (Mat. iii. 11.) that he should baptize his disciples with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. And surely the sacred flame did not only illuminate their minds with celestial brightness, but did also cause their whole hearts to glow with love to God and zeal for his gospel. To this purpose may he still be imparted to us, whether we hold public or private stations in the church; and may our regards to him be ever most dutifully maintained: Especially may he be poured out upon the ministers of it, to direct them how they should speak the wonderful things of God, and may their hearers, under his gracious energy, gladly receive the word.

Let us not wonder if the more common operations of the Spirit on mens' minds be derided by profane ignorance and folly, when there were some, even on this glorious day, who were stupid or malicious enough to ascribe the amazing event we have been surveying, to the supposed intoxication of the apostles, and to say, they were full of sweet wine. But let us observe, how well Peter vindicated himself and his brethren, with words, not of satire and reproach, but of meekness and sobriety, as well as of truth; shewing at once the most perfect command, both of his reason and of his temper. Justly did he apply on this occasion that celebrated prophecy of Joel, in which this grand event is so exactly described. Let us adore the divine goodness, which has poured forth the Spirit like a refreshing dew upon his church. Let us pray that we may all receive it, in such degrees as may suit the present state of things: And let us deprecate those judgments, which the contempt of the Spirit, has too evident a tendency to produce.

Justly might God have made our land gloomy and horrible with blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. Justly might he have turned our sun into darkness, and our moon into blood. Let us adore his patience, that these national judgments, which are so well deserved, have been thus long withheld. But let us also remember, that the great and notable day is approaching, in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey

not a gospel so gloriously attested. (2 Thes. i. 7, 8.) Then shall these figurative expressions be literally fulfilled. Then shall the heavenly luminaries be quenched in their orbs; the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up: (2 Pet. iii. 10.) But even then, all those that have believed in Christ, and with obedient love have called upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved with an everlasting salvation. May that be through grace our happy portion; and may its prospects be daily brightening upon us, till it shall open in its full lustre, and shine beautiful and glorious amidst the flames of a dissolving world!

SECT. III.
Verse 21

SECT. IV.

Peter continues his discourse to the people just after the descent of the Holy Spirit, and shews that Jesus, whom they crucified, was risen from the dead, and was the true Messiah. Acts II. 22—36.

ACTS II. 22.

YE men of Israel, hear these words; 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:

WHEN Peter had quoted the passage in Joel, mentioned above, as referring to the days of the Messiah, he added, *Ye men of Israel, let me charge it upon you, that ye hear these words with an attention proportionable to the importance of them: You cannot but remember, that there hath lately appeared amongst you a celebrated person, called Jesus the Nazarene; a man who was approved and recommended to you by God himself, by those powerful operations, and wonders, and signs, which God wrought by him in the midst of you, in your most public places and assemblies; as ye yourselves have seen, and cannot take upon you to deny but that ye also know: Yet you were so far from paying him any becoming regard, that you entered into an impious and ungrateful conspiracy against his life; and have in prosecution thereof seized him, even this illustrious prophet, being given up into your hands by the determinate counsel and prescience of God,*^b who well know what treatment he would meet with from you, and for wise and good reasons permitted it to be: Him, I say,

SECT. IV.
Acts II. 22

^a Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands

^a Recommended to you.] *Αποδεικνυμενος υμιν*, pointed out to you as the object of your most respectful regards.
^b Prescience of God.] Grotius, as well as Beza, observes, that *προγνωσις* must here signify decree; and Elaeus has

shewn, it has that signification in approved Greek writers. And it is certain *οδοι* signifies one given up into the hands of the enemy. See Elaeus, and Raphael in loc.

DECT. IV. *by the hands of Gentile sinners,*^c with public ignominy you *have fastened [to the cross] and slain,* have crucified and slain.
 Acts II. 21 *as if he had been the meanest and vilest of malefactors.* But he it known unto you, that God hath abundantly vindicated the honour of this his dear Son, whom you had 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:*^d as indeed it was impossible, all things considered, *that he should finally be held under the power of it.*

25 *For David saith concerning him,*^e when he is speaking in the person of the Messiah, (Psal. xvi. 8. & seq.) *"I have regarded the Lord as always before me,"*^f with an assurance that in "the greatest trials I am called to he will con-

24 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, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on

^c *By the hands of Gentile sinners.*] That is, by the hands of the wicked and idolatrous Romans, 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. Some copies read it, *ἐν χερσὶν ἁγίων* by the hand of the ungodly.

^d *The pains of death.*] Beza conjectures, (I think with great probability,) that as the Hebrew word, with the variation only of one little point may indifferently signify *pains or bonds*, the former is here used for the latter, which to be sure agrees best with the connection. Else it must necessarily signify the state of confinement to which the pains of death had brought him, by an Hebraism, which sometimes occurs. Compare Mat. xxiv. 21, and Rev. xvii. 1.

^e *David saith concerning him.*] It is plain, that *ὁ κύριος* here signifies *or concerning him*. The particle *ὁ* has the same import, Eph. v. 32, and *αὐτός* is likewise used in the same sense, Heb. i. 7, as the prefix *ὁ*, and the particle *αὐτός*, is sometimes in Hebrew put for *quod*. Compare Gen. xx. 13; xxvi. 7; Esth. iii. 2; Psal. iii. 1; xxxv. 19, 24; xxi. 11; and Job xlii. 8. (See *Plasner*, in loc. and *Gataker* on the Title to Antoninus.) Mr. Jeffrey (in his *True Grounds*, p. 221.) 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.

^f *I have regarded the Lord as always before me.*] The sixteenth Psalm, from whence this quotation is taken, cannot without great difficulty be wholly explained as spoken in the person of the Messiah; and yet it is very hard to say, on that supposition, where he is first introduced as speaking. We might have imagined the sense of the tenth verse to have been, "I am persuaded thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, because thou wilt not suffer Christ thine Holy One to see corruption, in the grave; and, by what thou wilt do for him in raising him up, thou wilt give me a security of my own resurrection." This, I say, might have seemed an easy solution, did not the apostle, in the 31d verse, refer both the clauses to Christ. I therefore suppose the transition to be made immediately after the 7th verse of the psalm; and to express the instruction which David received from God, in a revelation concerning the Messiah made to him in the night-season; when, perhaps, he had some vision, in which he heard him speak the following words.—The passage is here quoted in the words of the Greek translation, something different from the Hebrew; but the sense is much the same.

my right hand, that I should not be moved.

26 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 thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 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 of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and

continually be ready to appear in my behalf; because I know that he is at my right hand, in the whole series of my labours and sufferings, that I might not be moved by any of them. And for this reason, upon account of the firm confidence I have in him my heart is glad, and my tongue exulteth in the most cheerful manner; yea, and moreover too, even my mortal flesh, while it lodges in the sepulchre, shall rest in a joyful and assured hope; Because I am fully satisfied, that thou wilt not leave my soul, while separated from it, in the unseen world; neither wilt thou permit even the body of thine Holy One, thy peculiar favourite, whom thou hast set apart to such honourable and important services, so much as to see corruption in the grave, or to lie so long there as in the course of nature to be in danger of putrefaction. Thou hast made me to know the ways of life, to which thou wilt assuredly conduct me; and after all my sufferings here, thou wilt fill me with joy, in those upper and more glorious regions to which thou wilt raise me, making me glad with the light of thy countenance, and taking me to dwell in thine immediate presence, where there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand, where there are everlasting and uninterrupted pleasures."

And now, continued Peter, when he had recited these words at large, Ye men of Israel, whom I respect [and] love as my brethren, permit me to speak freely to you concerning the patriarch David who wrote this, and to open a hint, which if pursued will lead you into the true sense of many other scriptures, which you and your teachers are far from understanding. As for the royal psalmist, you well know that he is long since both dead and buried; and that his

a Thou wilt not leave my soul in the unseen world.] Beza (to guard against the Popish doctrine of Christ's descent into hell) would render the words as they stand in the Hebrew, my corpse in the grave: And it is certain, that nephesh and soul have sometimes these significations; (see Whately and Beza in loc.) and the phrase of *laying a person's life down to the grave, or up from it*, often occurs. (Compare Psal. xxx. 3; xlix. 15; lxxxvi.

13; lxxxviii. 3; lxxxix. 48).—But as ψυχη, which is the word here used, can hardly be thought to signify a dead body, and νεκρος is generally put for the state of separate spirits, (see note c on Mat. xvi. 18, Vol. I.) the version here given seemed preferable to any other; nor can any just inference be drawn from it, in favour of Christ's descent into the hell of the damned.

sepulchre in which his dust remains is here among us in Jerusalem, even unto this day;^h He therefore could not say, this of himself: but being a divinely inspired prophet, and knowing that God had, in a special revelation from heaven, solemnly sworn to him with an oath, that of the fruit of his loins, or out of his descendants, he would, according to the flesh,ⁱ when he should send his Son into the world in the human nature, raise up the promised Messiah, to sit on his throne, and to inherit universal empire; (Psal. cxxxiii. 11;) He, with a firm reliance on the faithfulness of God, foreseeing [this] great event, by divine inspiration spake the words which I have now been repeating; not meaning them of himself, or intending they should be taken in any lower sense, but referring them to the resurrection of the Messiah; thereby plainly signifying, that his soul shall not be left in the unseen world, nor his flesh be suffered to see corruption.

- 32 This very Jesus then, whom we assert to be the true Messiah, God hath now raised up according to the tenor of this promise; of which resurrection, astonishing as it may seem, all we his apostles are witnesses, on our own personal and certain knowledge; having seen him with our eyes, and examined into the truth of the matter with all possible care. And more than this, we solemnly assure you, that mean and contemptible as this Jesus once appeared among you, he is invested now with sovereign dominion; and being exalted therefore to supreme

his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, 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:

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

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Therefore being by the right

^h His sepulchre is among us unto this day.] Jerom mentions the remains of David's sepulchre as extant in his time; (Hier. Epist. x. ad Marcell.) and a large account of other testimonies concerning it may be seen in Fabricius. (Cod. Apoc. Vet. Test. p. 1063—1070.) It is strange, that this sepulchre should have survived so much barbarous rage, as we know Jerusalem was often subjected to; but perhaps it was rebuilt in later days. As for the treasures which Josephus so often mentions as found in this sepulchre by Hyrcanus and Herod. (Antiq. lib. vii. cap. 15. [al. 12.] § 3;—lib. xiii. cap. 8. [al. 10.] § 4;—lib. xvi. cap. 7; [al. 11.] § 1;—Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 2. § 5 Haverc.) I think with Beza, the stories have an air of fable.

ⁱ According to the flesh.] This is expressed in the original in such a manner, with an article prefixed, (το κατὰ σαρκά αναγεννησεν τον Χριστον,) 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 with 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. (Compare Rom. i. 3, 4) It was with a view to this, that Clarus and some others suppose these words to be inserted here by the apostle; and I have therefore so disposed them in the version, as to leave no room for any ambiguity.

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

35 Until I make thy foetly 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.

majesty and glory at the right hand of God, and having, as the great anointed of the Lord, received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, he hath, agreeably to the notices he gave us before his ascension, which happened but ten days ago, shed forth this miraculous effusion of it, which has produced the wonderful effects that you now see and hear, and which is given us as an holy unction from above, by which he constitutes us ministers in his church below.

And indeed it appears from other passages of his writings, that the great patriarch, whom I mentioned before, had some views to this kingdom of the Messiah; for David, who has never yet been raised from the dead, is not himself ascended into heaven in the body, to be advanced there to the highest dignity and power; but plainly intimates, that this belonged to one superior to himself, when he says, (Psal. cx. 1.) "The Lord Jehovah said unto my Lord, that is, God the Father said unto the Messiah, (whom though in one sense he is to be my son, I honour as my Lord,) Sit thou exalted on a throne at my right hand, Until I make all thy enemies thy footstool" and lay them prostrate at thy feet, so that thou mayest trample upon them at pleasure, as entirely subdued."

Therefore upon the whole, from this concurrent evidence both of prophecy and miracle, and from the testimony God has given to that Jesus whom we preach, not only by his resurrection from the dead, but by the effusion of the Holy Spirit on his followers, let all the house of Israel assuredly know, how contrary soever it may be to their former apprehensions and rooted prejudices, that God hath made this Jesus, whom you rejected and crucified, that Lord and that Messiah whose kingdom you profess so eagerly to desire, and who will surely come to execute his wrath upon you, if you are still so obstinate as to continue in your sins.

[Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.] This text is quoted on this occasion with the happiest address, as suggesting, in the words of David, their great prophetic monach, how certain their own ruin

must be, if they went on to oppose Christ. — Blsner has a fine collection of ancient passages referring to the custom of trampling upon the vanquished, dead or alive.

SECT.
IV.
Acts
II. 33

ACT. Thus Peter concluded his discourse, and God
 IV. blessed it as the means of awakening and con-
 Acts verting thousands, as we shall see in the follow-
 II. ing section.

IMPROVEMENT.

- VERS^o LET us firmly believe the wisdom of the divine counsels, and
 23 humbly adore the depth of them; according to which, without
 the least violation of that human freedom on which the morality
 of our actions depends, those events happen which the wicked-
 ness of men as really effects, as if Providence were wholly un-
 concerned in them.
- 24 Let us thankfully own the riches of that grace which gave our
Lord Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice for us; and then raised him
triumphant from the grave, to reign at the right hand of the Ma-
gesty on high, far above all principality, and power, and might.
 (Heb. i. 3; and Ephes. i. 21.) In him the prophecies are ac-
 31 complished: *His soul was not left in hell, nor did he so much*
as see corruption in the grave. And we may consider his re-
 surrection as a pledge given us for our assurance, that God will
 not abandon us in that ruinous state, to which his righteous sen-
 tence for a while brings our bodies. He will at length *redeem*
 28 *them from the power of the grave:* (Hosea xiii. 14.) He will
 shew us also the path of life, which our redeemer hath trodden,
 and, by treading, has marked out for us; and will conduct us to
 his right hand, where Jesus reigns, and with him everlasting
 26 pleasure. In him therefore *let our heart be glad,* and in him *let*
our tongue rejoice; and when it is thus employed, it will indeed
 be the *glory of our frame.* (Psal. xvi. 9.) *In this hope let our*
flesh rest; nor let our faith stagger at the promise of God, as if
 any thing could be hard to Omnipotence. (Rom. iv. 20, 21.)
- 33 In the mean time, beholding this wonderful effusion of the
 Spirit as the blessed consequence of the ascension and exaltation
 of Christ, let us, with that affection which becomes his disciples,
 take our part in his glory and joy. Let us triumph in the
 34, 35 thought, that God hath now said unto him, *Sit thou at my right*
hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. And while we re-
 joice in the security which we have as his friends, let us pray
 that the blessed time may come, when every opposing power
 shall be brought down, and when we shall see that sight for which
 our eyes so long have been waiting, even *all things put under his*
feet. (1 Cor. xv. 23, 27.) Hasten, O Lord, that glorious day, and
 whatever our station or furniture is, may we be honoured as
 the happy instruments of doing something, whether by life or
 by death, in subserviency to this great design!

SECT. V.

Great numbers are converted by Peter's discourse, and being immediately baptized, signalize themselves by their piety and mutual affection, which produces a farther increase in the church. Acts II. 37, to the end.

ACTS II. 27.
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?

ACTS II. 37.
THUS Peter addressed himself to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, arguing from the miraculous communication of the Spirit, that Jesus, being risen from the dead, was declared by God to be the promised Messiah, and charging them on this incontestible evidence with the aggravated guilt of being his betrayers and murderers. Now when they heard [these things] they were pierced to the heart with deep and lively sorrow, and felt such a conviction of their enormous guilt, in the injuries and indignities which they had offered to this glorious, this divine person, that with the utmost eagerness and solicitude they cried out, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men [and] brethren, what shall we do to free ourselves from that guilt and danger, which our own folly and wickedness have brought upon us?

SECT.
V.
Acts
II. 37.

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remis-

And Peter said unto them, Through the divine goodness still continued to you, your case is not yet desperate: Repent therefore of this aggravated crime, and in token of your desire to be washed from the guilt of that blood, which you have so rashly imprecated upon yourselves and your children, (Mat. xxvii. 25.) be each of you baptized^a in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,^b in order to the forgiveness of that and all [your] other sins; and you not on-

^a Repent, and be each of you baptized.] They are not only called here to repent, but a submission also to the ordinance of baptism is required of them, in order to the forgiveness of their sins: 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.

^b In the name of Jesus Christ.] The learned Vitringa has taken a great deal of pains to shew, that the phrases βαπτισθητε εν Χριστω, εν ονοματι Χριστου, εν ονοματι Χριστου, and εν ονοματι Χριστου, have different signification; and labours to prove, that the last phrase (which is here used) signifies, not only (as Le Clerc understands it,) being numbered among those who are called by his name, but professing

ly shall obtain the free and full remission of them all, but also shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which he will own the work of his grace upon your hearts, and qualify you for serving that Lord whom you have crucified.

tion of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts
11. 38.

39 For the promise of the Spirit is made, as you see in the forecited passage from Joel, (ver. 17, 18.) to you, and to your children, whom God is ready to admit to the same privilege with you; and not only so, but it extends to the remotest nations, to all that are afar off,^d as well as to them that are near, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call by the preaching of his gospel; which shall be propagated to the ends of the earth, and receive glorious attestations every where, by the effusion of the like miraculous gifts as we have received on many, and by the communication of the inward graces of the Spirit unto all who shall become obedient to the faith.

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 Thus Peter addressed himself to the multitude, and with many other words he bore his testimony to these important truths, and earnestly exhorted them to an immediate consideration of the danger of persisting in their infidelity; saying in the conclusion of all, 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 joined with those who crucified Christ, and be ye saved from that ruin which will quickly come upon this perverse and depraved generation.

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

41 And the exhortation was not in vain; for many were awakened and wrought upon by it.

to devote themselves to the glory of it. See Vitring. Observ. Sacr. lib. iii. cap. 22.

The promise is to you, and to your children. Considering that the gift of the Spirit had been mentioned just before, it seems most natural to interpret this, as a reference to that passage in Joel, which had been so largely recited above, (ver. 17, & seq.) where God promises the effusion of the Spirit on those men and their daughters: And not admiring I have paraphrased the latter clause of this verse as referring to its extraordinary gifts; and the rather, as the sanctifying influences of the Spirit must already have been received, to prepare them for entering into the church by baptism. But if the pro-

mise be interpreted as referring to a remoter clause, the forgiveness of their sins, this whole verse must be taken in a greater latitude, as referring to the encouragement, which all future converts and their children had to expect the benefits of the gospel. In which view, I think it would much favour infant baptism, as many writers on the subject have largely shown.

^d To all that are afar off. Since Peter knew nothing as yet of the intended calling of the Gentiles, he could only mean by this, that the gospel should be preached to all the dispersed of Israel in distant nations: But the Spirit of God might have a farther view.

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

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

*They therefore who received his word with readiness, were baptized: thereby taking upon them the public profession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah: And there were added to the number [of the disciples] that very day about three thousand souls.** Nor was this only a transport of sudden passion, with which they were affected only for the present, with an impression that quickly wore off: but on the contrary, it produced the most solid and lasting effects. *And notwithstanding all the apparent danger to which they were exposed, they continued steadfast in their attendance on the word which the apostles preached, and resolutely adhered to their doctrine:†* And though many of them that believed were such as had come thither out of foreign countries, who would otherwise have returned home immediately after the feast, they staid a considerable time longer at Jerusalem, to be more thoroughly instructed in the Christian faith; and they all lived in the most endearing fellowship and intimate friendship with each other, and particularly expressed their mutual affection in breaking of bread together, and joining in

SECT.
v.
Acts
II. 41

* *There were added—that very day about three thousand souls.*] It is commonly said, that all these were converted by one sermon. But it is probable, that, while 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 surely to be imagined, that none of them but Peter should be blessed as the means of converting any soul; not to insist upon it, that he himself might deliver several discourses this day to different auditories, when the concourse of people was so great, and their languages so various.—It will not be improper to add, that ἀποστειλάς emphatically signifies to pass over to a body of men, as Bos, Raphelius, and Elsner have shown; and that Elsner has shewn at large, in a very curious note on this clause, not only, (as Gataker, Raphelius, and many others have,) that souls often signifies persons, in the Greek and Latin classics; but also, that Jamblicus in his life of Pythagoras has exactly imitated this passage, in the account he gives of that philosopher's success in Italy, as proselyting two thousand by one discourse, engaging

them to continue with him, frequently worshipping in the temples, and sharing their goods in common, as these primitive Christians did: Facts, of which we have no manner of convincing evidence, and which were probably intended to slur Christianity by an invidious comparison. (Elsn. Observ. Vol. I. p. 376, 376.) Compare Vol. II. Sect. 20. notes.

† *They continued steadfast in the apostles doctrine.*] 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.

‡ *In breaking of bread.*] Though we have great reason to believe, that the eucharist was often celebrated among these primitive converts, perhaps much oftener than every Lord's day, yet I cannot see reason to conclude with Suicer, (Thesaur. Eccles. Vol. II. p. 105.) Lightfoot, Pearson, and many others, that this phrase must here refer to it, since it may undoubtedly signify common meals, as Casaubon, Gratius, Wolfius, and several others have shewn; and in this sense the phrase is used, Luke xxiv. 35, where it is plain the eucharist could not be intended.

v. the exercise of social prayer. And many others who were not converted, when they took notice of this wonderful effect of the apostles' preaching, were mightily struck and impressed with the thought of it; so that a reverential fear and inward dread fell upon every soul, and spread itself over the whole city and neighbourhood, at the sight of so unexampled an event, which they apprehended might be the fore-runner of some public calamity, on those who had slain that Jesus, of whom it was declared by his disciples, that it was all effected by his power: And the consternation was farther increased, as many miracles and signs, which plainly shewed an extraordinary divine interposition, were wrought by the apostles in his name.

44 And all that believed were together meeting as frequently as possible in the same place,^b and such was their mutual affection and love to each other, that they had all things in common.^d

45 And this generous principle went so far, that they who had estates, or any other valuable substance, sold their possessions and effects, and readily divided the price of them to all their brethren, as every one had particular necessity. (Compare

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

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

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

^b In the same place.] Dr. Whitty pleads that, as they were at least three thousand one hundred and twenty, they could not be in the same place, and therefore would understand it of communion in the same action. He would rather render it, (as our translation does,) they were together, and produce several places from the Septuagint to this purpose, as Ezra ix. 3; Psal. xlix. 2. Isa. lxi. 17; Jer. vi. 12, &c. But, as it generally signifies an assembly in the same place, and many larger assemblies than of three or four thousand people are held, it seemed best to render it thus, only qualifying it as in the paraphrase, especially as vs. 25 only has plainly this sense, ver 1.

^d Had all things in common.] Peculiar reasons made this community of goods eligible at that time, not only as so 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, that they might get a thorough knowledge of the gospel, but as the prospect likewise of the Roman conquest, which according to Christ's known prediction were soon to swallow up all Jewish

property, would of course dispose many more readily to sell their lands. But the New Testament abounds with passages, which plainly shews this was never intended for a general practice.—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 counterbalance such advantages; and accordingly we find, the converts at Jerusalem were soon reduced to such necessitous circumstances, as to need relief by the contributions of their Gentile brethren. Candour would rather lead men to argue the incontestible evidence of the gospel, from its prevailing on the professors of it to part with their estates, to relieve persons, who, excepting the community of their faith, had no particular claim to their regards. If such instances were numerous, this argument is strengthened in proportion; and if they be supposed few, the objection is proportionably weakened.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness, and singleness of heart;

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

chap. iv. 34, 35.) *And they continued resolutely and unanimously in the temple, at the appointed hours of public worship every day: And at other times they associated, as frequently as they could, breaking bread from house to house, each family making entertainments for their brethren, especially for those who were sojourners in Jerusalem: And they partook of their common refreshment, with the greatest joy on the side of those that made the entertainments; and with disinterested simplicity of heart in those who received them and on all sides with the sincerest sentiments of devotion and friendship. Such was the effect the gospel had upon them, and in this manner they went on, praising God for the riches of his grace to them, and having in the general that favour and respect among all the people, which so amiable and benevolent a conduct would naturally secure. And the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom they had given up their names, added daily to the church considerable numbers of those happy souls who by this means were saved from the general destruction which was approaching, and from the future punishment to which they would otherwise have been transmitted by it.*

SECT.
V.
Acts
II. 46.

IMPROVEMENT.

FAITHFUL are the wounds of a friend; and far more beautiful than a jewel of gold, or an ornament of fine gold, is a wise reprovee on an obedient ear. (Prov. xxvii. 6; xxv. 12.) Happy are they who feel such an holy compunction of soul as these penitents did! *Salvation is come to their house, and though they now in tears they shall reap in joy.* (Psal. cxxvi. 5.) What reason have we for thankfulness, that when we are crying out, What shall we do? the gospel gives us so ready an answer, and directs us to faith and repentance, as the sure way by which we may obtain the remission of our sins, and at length rise to an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Let us rejoice, that the promise is to us, and to our seed; and that the important blessings of it will run down from generation to generation. And let all the ardour of our souls be awakened to secure these blessings, and to be saved from that ruin, in which we shall otherwise be involved with the crooked and perverse generation among which we live.

Glorious effect of this convincing and excellent discourse, when three thousand were in one day added to the church! three thousand, who not only expressed some present good im-

SECT. V. expressions and resolutions, but continued steadfast in the religion they had embraced, and sacrificed all their worldly interests to it. How glorious an earnest of the future success of the gospel!

Verse 42 How great an encouragement to the apostles, in all the difficulties they were to encounter; and how convincing a proof to all ages of its truth! since all these proselytes were made upon the spot, where if it had been false, it is impossible it should have been believed by any one rational inquirer, how mean soever his capacity, or how low soever his rank in life had been.

Let us reflect with pleasure on the happy change produced in the character and state of these converts: Bitter as the first pangs of their convictions were, anguish soon yielded to delight: 46 *Pardon of sin*, and the *hope of glory* added a relish before unknown to the supports of nature, the accommodations of life, 47 and the endearments of friendship. Whilst their hearts were opened in sentiments of gratitude to God, who had provided a laver for their crimson sins, which rendered them like wool and like snow; and to that Redeemer, who had saved them by that blood which they had cruelly and impiously shed; they were also 44 dilated in liberality and bounty; and they undoubtedly found a rich equivalent for all the worldly possessions which they resigned, 45 in that holy joy which sprang up in their souls, when the treasures of the gospel were opened to them, and dealt out with so generous a hand.

47 So may the kingdom of Christ spread and flourish in the souls of men! So may that blessed time come, when through the operation of the same Spirit, (for that Spirit is for ever the same,) nations shall be born in a day! Let us not despair: *the morning was glorious, and in the even tide it shall be light.* (Zech. xiv. 7.) In the mean time, let us thankfully own whatever progress Christianity may be making amongst us, or others, though by slow degrees; and acknowledge, that it is the great Lord of the church who, by his secret but powerful influence adds unto its respective societies such as shall be saved. May the additions every where be numerous, and may the great author of all good be more thankfully owned in them all.

SECT. VI.

Peter and John, quickly after the feast of Pentecost, cure a man who had been lame from his birth, at the temple-gate, which occasions a great concourse of admiring spectators. Acts III. 1—11.

ACTS III. 1.

SECT. VI. NOW while the church was in the flourishing state described above, an extraordinary circumstance happened, which tended still more to increase its numbers and reputation: For

ACTS III. 1.
NOW Peter and John went up

together into the temple, at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

on a certain day, about that time,^a Peter and John went up to the temple at the hour of prayer, [being] the ninth hour, that is, about three o'clock in the afternoon;^b which was the usual time of day when great numbers attended the evening sacrifice, and joined their prayers with those of the priest, who was burning incense before the Lord. (Compare Luke i. 10.)

SECT. VI.
Acts III.

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

And a certain man, well known among them that frequented the place, who had been lame from his mother's womb, by a weakness in his ankles, which rendered him incapable of walking, was carried thither by the help of others; whom they daily brought and laid down at the eastern gate of the temple, which is called the Beautiful gate,^c being made of Corinthian brass, and richly adorned with the most curious workmanship: and here he lay, to ask alms of those that entered into the temple to pay their devotion there, as such charitable actions seem peculiarly suitable, when men are going to make their supplications to the God of mercy; and the relief that he obtained here was the only means he had for his subsistence. Such was the case of this poor cripple, who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, applied

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

^a About that time.] Thus I would choose, with Grotius, to render the words *ἐν τῷ καιρῷ* at the beginning of this chapter, as it does not seem to suit so well with the original, to take them to imply no more, than that Peter and John went up together to the temple. I see no reason to suppose with Dr. Lightfoot, that this happened the same day, on which the Spirit was miraculously poured out, or to conclude with others, that it was not till the next year, or at least several months after. The time is no where determined; but it appears most probable, that it was soon after the feast of Pentecost. Compare note ^c on Acts iv. 4. § 8.

^b At the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.] 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. When we say therefore, (as we often do in this work,) that the third hour was about nine in the morning, the ninth about three in the afternoon, &c. we are not to be understood to speak with the

utmost exactness. The third hour was the middle space between sun-rising and noon, which, if the sun rose at five, was half an hour after eight, if at seven, was half an hour after nine, &c.—The chief hours of prayer were the third and the ninth; at which seasons the morning and evening sacrifices were offered, and incense, as a kind of emblem representing prayer, burnt on the golden altar. See Joseph. Antiq. Jud. lib. xiv. cap. 6. [at 8.] § 3.

^c Called the Beautiful gate.] This gate, which was added by Herod to the court of the Gentiles, was thirty cubits high, and fifteen broad, and made of Corinthian brass, more pompous in its workmanship and splendour than those that were covered with silver and gold. (Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. v. cap. 3. [at vi. 6.] § 3.) Josephus, as our present copies stand, says it was the outer gate; but Jand. Capellus thinks, this reading is wrong, and that it was the inner gate; between the court of the Gentiles and that of Israel; and Grotius allows of his reasoning. See Grot. in loc.

SECT. VI. ⁴ himself to them among the rest, and begged to receive an alms of them. But Peter, being then (as was observed before) with John the beloved disciple, felt at that time a strong emotion of soul, which intimated to him, that the divine energy was then to be displayed in an illustrious miracle to be wrought by his means; and turning therefore to the poor man, and looking stedfastly upon him, he said, *Look upon us.* And accordingly he fixed his eyes upon them, as expecting to receive something from them for the relief of his necessities. But Peter, under the divine impulse, intended him a far more important favour; and therefore said, *As for silver and gold, I have none of either to impart to thee;* ^d were I ever so free to do it; but what I have in my power I willingly give thee; and thou shalt find it not less valuable: I say unto thee, therefore, in the great and prevailing name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and as a proof that he is indeed the Messiah, rise up and walk. And Peter taking him by the right hand, encouraged him to do as he had said, and raised him up: And immediately on his speaking this, and touching him, his feet and his ancle bones, which had before been disabled, were in an extraordinary manner strengthened and reduced to their proper situation. And leaping up from the place where he lay, he first stood in an erect posture, which he had never before been able to do, and then walked about with strength and steadiness, and entered with them into the court of the temple, there to offer his first-fruits of thanksgiving; sometimes walking, and sometimes leaping for joy, and in a rapture of astonishment and thankfulness, praising God for so singular a mercy manifested to him. (Compare Isa. xxxv. 6.)

⁹ And all the people who were there present, saw him thus walking in the court of the temple and the cloyster adjacent to it, and heard him praising God with this uncommon ecstasy of de-

⁴ And 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, Silver and gold have I 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 lift him up; and immediately his feet and ancle bones received strength.

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

⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

^d Silver and gold I have none.] This was after the estates were sold, (chap. ii. 45.) and plainly shows, how far the apostles were from enriching themselves by the treasures which passed through their hands, as Mr. Reynolds well observes in his Letters to a Deist, No lli. p. 242.

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.

10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. *light: And they knew him perfectly well, that this was he who had sat so long at the Beautiful gate of the temple, to beg for alms of those that entered in and came out: And they were filled with awful astonishment, and felt in themselves likewise a kind of joyful ecstacy, something resembling his, at that miraculous event which had befallen him.*

SECT.
VI.
Acts
III. 10.

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.

And, upon this, while the lame man who was thus wonderfully healed, full of the tenderest sentiments of gratitude, still kept his hold of Peter and John, and walked on between them, sometimes taking them by the hand, and sometimes embracing them as his great benefactors and the means of his deliverance; all the people in the neighbouring parts, alarmed with so strange a story, ran together to them in great amazement, to the spacious and celebrated portico of the temple, which (for reasons elsewhere assigned) was called Solomon's portico. And Peter observing the great concourse of people, and finding that they were exceedingly affected with the miracle which had been wrought, took that opportunity of making a very instructive discourse to them, which will be recorded in the ensuing section.

IMPROVEMENT.

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 that friendship, which, like this of Peter and John, is endeared not only by taking sweet counsel together, but by going to the house of God in company! (Psal. lv. 14.)

If we desire 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; (1 Tim. ii. 8.) 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 that have neither silver nor gold, such as they have let them give.

* Kept his hold of Peter and John.] Perhaps fearing his lameness should return, if he lost sight of them, as Beza and others have observed.

† The portico called Solomon's.] The reason why it was so called, and what a sort

of building it was, may be seen in note b on John x. 23. Vol. II. To which we may add, that this is said to have been the only part of the temple, which was not destroyed by the Chaldeans.

ECT.
VI.

Verse

These holy apostles, we see, had not enriched themselves by being intrusted 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, sure, would the 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 mens' bodies than to enrich them, how much more advantageous is it to be the instrument 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 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: May many such friendships be formed now, 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 how 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!

SECT. VII.

Peter makes a most affectionate discourse to the people assembled in the temple, on occasion of the cure of the lame man. Acts III. 12, to the end.

ACTS III. 12.

SECT.
VII.
Acts.
III. 12

THE irraculous cure of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, was presently reported in the city, and occasioned (as we have seen before) a vast concourse of people, who ran together to the temple, and gathered in crowds about Peter and John, astonished at so marvellous a cure, and eager to behold the persons who had wrought it. And Peter seeing [this] was ready to improve it as a proper opportunity of renewing his address to them,

ACTS III. 12.
AND when Peter saw it, he an-

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 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified his son Jesus: whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

14 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

upon that important errand with which, as an apostle of Jesus, he was charged; accordingly he answered those of the people who were there assembled, and were earnestly inquiring into the circumstances of the fact, in the following manner:

Ye men of Israel, why do ye wonder so at this which has now happened, when so much greater miracles have lately been performed among you? or why do ye fix your eyes so earnestly on us, with that astonishment which your looks express, as if it were by our own power, or by any peculiar piety and holiness of ours, that we had made this poor man able to walk? We would by no

means take the honour of this miracle to ourselves, but would direct your views unto the great original of all, even the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, whom we adore and reverence as the God of our fathers;^a and would have you to consider what has now happened, as a signal proof that he hath glorified his Son Jesus, and given all power into his hands, even that Jesus whom you, kind as his design and exemplary as his life was, ungratefully delivered up to the Roman power as a criminal, and treated with such a vile contempt, as that you openly renounced and refused to accept of him in the presence of Pilate, when he was satisfied of his innocence, and determined to release him.

But you, I say, renounced the Holy and Righteous One, declaring that you would not own him as your king, nor even be contented to admit of his discharge, when it was offered by the Roman governor, and pressed upon you; and were so set against him, that with outrageous clamour you desired rather that Barabbas, one of the most infamous of mankind, a robber and a murderer, might be granted and released unto you; And while you asked for the deliverance of so vile a wretch, you inhumanly and insolently killed him who is the great author and Prince of life, the only person who had power to conduct you to it;^b Whom nevertheless God has

^a The God of our fathers.] This was wholly introduced here in the beginning of his discourse, that it might appear, they taught no new religion, inconsistent with the Mosiac, and were far from having the least design to divert their regards

from the God of Israel.—For the force of the word *γενναοδη*, which we have rendered *renounced*, see Heins. *Isacrl.* Sacr. p. 254, 255.

^b Killed the Prince of life.] Even him, to whom the Father had given to have life

SECT. VII. amply vindicated, having raised him up from the dead; of which we his apostles are witnesses, the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

upon a repeated testimony of our own senses, in circumstances in which it was impossible that

16 they should be deceived. *And God is still continuing to heap new honours upon him, whom you have treated with so much infamy; for be it known unto you, it is by faith in his name that he hath strengthened this poor man, whom you see here before you, and whom you know to have been unable from his birth to walk: [Yea,] I repeat it again, as what highly concerns you all to know and regard, It is his name, and the faith which is centered in him, and which derives its efficacy from his power, that has given him this perfect strength and soundness, which he now manifests before you all.*

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, while I am urging this for your conviction, that I may lead you to repent of your great wickedness in crucifying so excellent and so divine a person, I would not aggravate the crime you have been guilty of beyond due bounds, so as to drive you to despair; as I know that it was through ignorance of his true character that you did [it,] as [did] also your rulers;^d by whom you were led on and prompted to it: For surely, if the dignity and greatness of his person, and his divine authority and mission had been known, both you and they must have treated him in a very different*

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

18 manner. (Compare 1 Cor. ii. 8.) *But God permitted this that you have done, and overruled it for wise and gracious purposes; and hath thus fulfilled those things, which he so plainly had foretold by the mouth of all his prophets in the various ages of the world: even that Christ should suffer, as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of his people. (Compare Acts xiii. 27.)*

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

in himself, (John v. 26.) and whom he had appointed to conduct his followers to life and glory. The contrast between their killing such a person, and interceding for the pardon of a murderer, a destroyer of life, has a peculiar energy.

^d *And by faith in his name he hath strengthened, &c.]* The construction of the original, as it is commonly pointed, is so exceedingly perplexed, that Heinsius's manner of pointing seems greatly to be preferred. He places a period af-

ter *καὶ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι*, referring that verb to *ἐπέστη* in the preceding verse, and *τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι* to *ἐπέστη* in the latter clause of this.

^d *Through ignorance you did it, &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, their ignorance, being in itself highly criminal amidst such means of information, did not excuse them from great guilt.

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 res-

See to it *therefore*, that it be your immediate care to secure an interest in the benefits purchased by his death: And to this purpose let us exhort you to *repent* of your iniquities, and with a sense of what you have done amiss, to *turn* to God in the way of sincere and universal obedience *that so your sins may be blotted out*, and you may be delivered from the heavy burden of your guilt; *that seasons of sacred refreshment and delight may come upon you from the presence of the Lord.*^e And that in conse-

quence of your complying with this important counsel, you may not only be received to all the joys of a state of pardon and divine acceptance, but *he may at length send unto you this Jesus Christ, who was so long before appointed*^f by God to this blessed purpose, and represented and proclaimed under such a variety of symbols as the great Saviour of lost sinners; that having triumphed over all his enemies, and accomplished all the prophecies as to the prosperity and glory of his church on earth, he may finally receive you and all his faithful servants to complete and eternal happiness above. Sub-
mit yourselves this day then to this glorious Redeemer, *whom* you must not *indeed* expect, as immediately to appear in person among you; for *heaven must* continue to *receive* and retain him, *till the long expected and happy times of*

^e That seasons of refreshment may come, &c.] So it is that Tertullian, Luther, Houtsius, Lighfoot, De Dieu, and Raphelius, (ex Herod. p. 329.) I think very reasonably, render the words ἐπὶ αὐτῶν, &c. as the same phrase is used, Luke ii. 35, ἐπὶ αὐτῶν ἀποκαλυφθῶσιν, &c. that the thoughts may be revealed; and Mat. vi. 5, ἕως αὐτῶν φανῶσιν, that they may be seen. (See also Acts xv. 17; and Rom. iii. 4.)—Erasmus and Piscator render it, *Seeing times of refreshment are come*; and Beza, *After that, or when they shall come*: But the authorities produced in favour of this version seem not sufficient to justify it: nor was the blotting out the sins of penitents deferred to any distant time. Divine refreshment would no doubt, immediately mingle itself with a sense of pardon, and eternal happiness would certainly at length succeed; but the fol-

lowing clause seems to intimate, that Peter apprehended the conversion of the Jews as a people, would be attended with some extraordinary scene of prosperity and joy, and open a speedy way to Christ's descent from heaven, in order to the restitution of all things.—I have the pleasure, since I wrote this, to find that the learned Vitringa agrees with me in this interpretation. Vitring. Observ. Saer. lib. v. cap. 6, § 14.

^f Before appointed.] Instead of προκηρυγμένον, before preached, I here follow Beza in reading προεπιστάμενον as Tertullian and several of the fathers quote it, and the Alexandrian and several other valuable manuscripts, and ancient versions likewise, have it; and then ἐμῶν must (as in this version) be referred to ἀποστῆναι, shall send to you, &c.

SECT. VII.
ACTS III. 19.

40 *These things had been foretold by Moses and the prophets.*

SECT. VII. *the regulation of all things,*^a that is, till the great appointed day, when God will rectify all the seeming irregularities of his present dispensations, and make the cause of righteousness and truth for ever triumphant and glorious: *Concerning which [great events] (that is, that such a Saviour should be raised up, and should at length be fixed in universal dominion, and the like,) God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets from the beginning of time.*^b

- 22 *For Moses, the first of these prophets whose writings are come down to us, has in the plainest terms, described him, when he said to the fathers in his early days,*^c (Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 19.) *“ Surely a prophet shall the Lord your God in after times raise up unto you, out of the families of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear and hearken to in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you: And it shall come to pass, [that] every soul who will not hearken to that prophet, and be obedient to him, shall be cut off from among the people without mercy,”*^d and be made an example of the severest punishment due to such aggravated and ungrateful rebellion.” *Yea and those that succeeded Moses, even all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after,*
- 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*

^a *The regulation of all things.] This anouncement may so well be explained of regulating the present disorders in the moral world, and the seeming inequalities of providential dispensations, that it is surprising to find Dr. Thomas Burnet, Mr. Whiston, and other learned writers, urging it for such a restoration of the paradisaical state of the earth, as they on their different hypotheses have ventured to assert, without any clear warrant from scripture, and amidst a thousand difficulties which clog our conceptions of it. (Compare note^c on Mat. xvii. 11, Vol. II.)*

^b *From the beginning of time.] See note^b on Luke i. 70, Vol. I.*

^c *Moses said to the fathers.] This quotation from Deut. xviii. 15, & seq. does in its primary sense refer to the Messiah, as Dr. Bullock and Mr. Batory have excellently shown; he being, like Moses, not only a prophet, but a saviour, and a lawgiver too. On this Scripture does Linsbarch chiefly build in that noble controversy of his with Ordoñez, most justly called*

Amica Collatio cum erudito Judæo, which not only contains a variety of beautiful, and some of them very uncommon arguments, but is also on both sides so fine a model of a genteel and amicable manner of debating the most momentous question, as it would have been much for the credit of their religion and of themselves, if all other advocates for Christianity had followed. Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho is written with much of the same decent spirit, though by no means with equal compass and solidity of thought.

^d *Shall be cut off from among the people.] 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. See above, sect. 3, note^b.*

^e *All the prophets from Samuel.] As Samuel is the earliest prophet next to Moses, whose writings are come down to us, and as the books which go under his name,*

many as have spoken, as many as spoke any thing largely concerning the future purposes and schemes of Divine Providence, have also foretold these important days, which, by the singular favour of God to you, you are now so happy as to see. SECT. VII. Acts III. 24

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 kindred of the earth be blessed. Let us now therefore, solemnly intreat you to regard and improve these declarations in a becoming manner: for you have peculiar obligations to do it, as you are the children of the prophet, and of the covenant which God constituted of old with our fathers, saying to Abraham again and again, (Gen. xii. 3; xviii. 18; xxii. 18.)

“And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” And accordingly this Mes-

siah who was promised as so extensive and universal a blessing, has sprung from him; and to you first,^m God having raised up his child Jesus from the loins of this pious patriarch, has sent him with ample demonstrations of his divine mission, lately in his own person, and now by our ministry and the effusion of his Spirit, to offer pardon and salvation to you, and to bless you, every one of you turning from your iniquities;ⁿ in which, though by profession you are God's people, you have been so long indulging yourselves; nor are the vilest and most aggravated sinners among you excepted from the grace of such an invitation. Let it therefore be your most solicitous care, that this gracious message may not be addressed to you in vain.

and were probably begun by his pen, speak very expressly of the Messiah, (1 Sam. ii. 10; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3—5.) nothing can be more unnecessary, and hardly any thing more unnatural, than to draw an argument from this passage to support the notion of Samuel's being the author of the Pentateuch, which many texts in the Old and New Testament seem most directly to contradict. (See Lord Barington's Essay on Var. Dispensat. Appendix, No ii.) It would be trifling to argue from this expression of all the prophets, that every one of them, and particularly Jonah and Obadiah, must have said somewhat of the Messiah. It is abundantly sufficient, that it is true of the prophets in general.

^m To you first. [Accordingly the gospel was (by the astonishing 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.

ⁿ Every one of you turning from your iniquities. [That is, All those of you that torn from sin, shall be entitled to his blessing. This, which is just equivalent to Beza's, seems a natural version of the words *ἵνα το ἀποστρέψαι ἁμαρτίας*, &c. And I choose it, because it is plain, (as Orbio with his usual sagacity objects to Limborch,) that Christ did not in fact turn every one of them from their iniquities, though it must be allowed, that he took such steps as were very proper for that purpose; and the version seems farther preferable, as the apostle knew, that the Jews would in fact reject the gospel, and bring destruction on themselves as a nation by that means.

IMPROVEMENT.

SECT.
VII.
Acts III.
Ver. 12.

- HAPPY the minister whose heart is thus intent upon all opportunities of doing good, as these holy 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
- 13 whom every good and perfect gift proceeds! Happy the man who is himself willing to be forgotten and overlooked, that God
- 15 may be remembered and owned! He, like this wise master-builder, will lay this 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 Peter,
- 17 conduct the charge with tenderness and respect, and be cautious not to overload even the greatest offender.
- 19 We see 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 he may share in that refreshment which nothing but the sense of his pardoning love can afford. Blessed souls are they who have experienced it; for they may look upon all their present comforts as the dawning of eternal glory; and having
- 20, 21 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 the work he has so graciously begun, and to reduce the seeming irregularities of the present state into everlasting harmony, order, and beauty.
- 18 In the mean time, let us adore the wisdom of his providence, and the fidelity of his grace, which has over-ruled the folly and wickedness of men, to subserve his own holy purposes, and has
- 22 accomplished the promises 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
- 26 the great salvation he was sent to procure.—This salvation was first offered to Israel, which had rendered itself so peculiarly
- 15 unworthy by killing the Prince of life. Let us 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. Let us view this salvation in its true light, and remember that if we are not willing to turn from iniquity, from all iniquity, from those iniquities that have been peculiarly our own, it is impossible we should have any share in it.

SECT. VIII.

The two apostles being seized by order of the Sanhedrim, and examined by them, courageously declare their resolution of going on to preach in the name of Jesus, notwithstanding their severest threatenings. Acts IV. 1—22.

ACTS IV. 1.
AND as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them.

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

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

ACTS IV. 1.

THUS it was that Peter and John improved the opportunity of addressing themselves to the multitude, who had assembled in the temple (as we have seen before) upon occasion of the miraculous cure of the lame man; and while they were thus speaking to the people, a considerable number of the priests came upon them; and with the priests there came the captain of the temple, that is, the person who commanded the guard of Levites then in waiting; ^a and the Sadducees also joined with them: For this sect of men were greatly exasperated against the apostles, being peculiarly grieved that they taught the people, in the name of that Jesus whom they had so lately put to death, and especially that they preached the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, as exemplified and demonstrated in [the person of] Jesus; whose recovered life had so direct a tendency to overthrow the whole system of the Sadducean tenets, which denied every thing of that kind, yea even the existence of the soul after death, and any future account of the actions of life. (Compare Acts xxiii. 8.) And therefore, that they might prevent their preaching any more, they laid violent hands upon Peter and John, and seized them as seditious persons, who were labouring to incense the populace against the conduct of their governors; And they committed them into custody until the next day, that when the Sanhedrim met at the usual hour, they might consult what it was proper to do with them; for it was now late in the evening,^b and was no fit season to have them examined.

SECT. VIII.

Acts IV. 1

^a The captain of the temple.] See note ^o Luke xxi. 52. Vol. II.

^b It was now late in the evening.] As

Peter and John went up to the temple at three in the afternoon, this expression makes it probable, some hours might be

SECT.
VIII.
Acts
IV. 4.

But in the mean time, the disciples had the satisfaction to see, that the apostles had not laboured in vain; for many of those, who had heard the word preached by them, believed; and the number of the men became about five thousand, including those who had been converted before, and still attended on the instructions of the apostles.^c

5 And the next day there was a general assembly of their rulers, and elders, and scribes, which constituted the Sanhedrim, who gathered together, and formed a court at Jerusalem;

6 And there was with them Annas, who had formerly been the high priest, and Caiaphas also who then bore that office,^d and John, and Alexander,^e and as many as were of the high priest's kindred,^f who came and joined the council upon this occasion.

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

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

6 And Annas the high-priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high-priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

spent in preaching to the people, and consequently, that what we have in the former chapter is only an abstract or specimen of the discourses they held on this occasion; which I suppose is generally the case, as to the speeches recorded by the sacred historians, as well as others.

^c The number—became about five thousand, &c.] Dr. Benson concludes that five thousand were converted on this occasion, besides the three then and mentioned before, (chap. ii. 41.) Had it been said, as there, that so many were added to the church, it had determined the sense to be, as he and others understand it: (See Lightfoot and Whitty in loc.) But I think the use of the word *evangelia* here, (whereas *ya* is used chap. i. 15.) favours the interpretation I have preferred. 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. And, as for any argument drawn from the probability of more than five thousand being converted in a year's time, I must observe, that I see no proof at all, that this event was a year, or even a month after the descent of the Spirit; nay, I rather think it highly improbable the Sanhedrim should suffer the apostles to go on so long unquestioned in their public work; and to suppose they did not teach publicly, would be most absurd.

^d Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas.] As it seems evident, that Caiaphas was the high priest at this time, it may ap-

pear strange, that the title should be given to another, merely to signify that he, that is, the Annas spoken of, was that Annas who had once borne that office with great honour, and had now most of the authority, though his son-in-law Caiaphas had the name.—I would submit it to examination, whether, placing a *comma*, after *Avay*, the following words might not be joined, *τοι αρχιερα και Καιαφας*, and rendered the high priest also, that is, Caiaphas: though I confess the insertion of copulatives between each name in the following clauses does not favour such a version: and therefore I rather incline to acquiesce in the former solution; for the illustration of which, see Mr. Biscoe, at Boyle's Lect. p. 648—659.

^e John, and Alexander.] It is very evident, these were persons of great note among the Jews at that time: and it is not improbable, that (as Dr. Lightfoot and other suppose) the former might be the celebrated Rabbai 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. Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. v. cap. 5, [al. vi. 6.] § 3.

^f As many as were of the high priest's kindred.] Or as others render it, of the pontifical family. Dr. Hammond explains this of the twenty-four members of the

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

8 Then Peter, 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 good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

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,

Aronic 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. Who were properly members of that council, it is extremely difficult to say; but I cannot think with a late learned writer, (Mr. Biscop, at Boyle's Lect. p. 79.) that the presence of Alexander (though stately resident in Egypt, will prove, that this was not pro-

And having ordered the apostles to be brought before them, and set them in the midst of the assembly, (the place where criminals used to stand to be tried by their court,) they inquired of them, saying, Declare to us truly, and without reserve, what is the bottom of this affair? By what power, or in the authority of what name have you done this strange work, which has been wrought on the cripple now healed? Is it by the art of medicine, or by magic? Or do you pretend to any prophetic mission, in attestation of which this is done?

Then Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, according to the promise of his now glorified Master which was upon this occasion remarkably verified, (compare Mat. x. 19, 20; and Mark xiii. 11,) spake with the utmost freedom, and said unto them; O ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, before whom we are now brought as malefactors! We are not conscious to ourselves, that we have done any thing to deserve censure or punishment; but if we are this day examined and called to an account as criminals, about the benefit conferred upon the impotent man, and you would have us to declare by what means he is saved from his calamitous state, and healed in the manner which you now see, we are most free to tell you what we before have testified on this occasion: (Chap. iii. 16 :) Be it known, therefore to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you a few weeks ago crucified with all the marks of detestation and contempt as a criminal worthy of the most infamous death, but whom God hath owned, in that he hath raised him from the dead, and received him into glory:

perly the Sanhedrim, but an extraordinary council occasionally called, consisting of some who were, and others who were not, of that court. It is very evident, they act with authority as a court of Judicature here, and the council, expressly called Synodus, again and again in the 5th chapter, (ver. 21, 27, 34, 41.) refer to the acts of this assembly as their own: (Compare chap. v. ver. 27, 28 :) And the same word is likewise used here in this chapter, ver. 15.

[When God hath raised from the dead.] They knew in their own consciences, they

SECT. VIII. Acts IV. 7.

SECT. [Yea,] I declare it again, and will abide by it, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.
 VIII. whatever be the consequence, that it is *by him*,
 even by that illustrious name of his, that *this*

Acts
 IV. 10

poor *man*, whom you well know to have been a cripple from his mother's womb, now stands

11 *before you perfectly sound and well.* And give me leave, Sirs, to tell you, that this Jesus is a person, with whom you are all intimately concerned; for as David expresses it, (Psal. cxviii. 22.) "*This is the stone which was*

contemptuously refused and *set at nought by you*, who by your office should have been *builders* in the church of God, *that is indeed become the very head of the corner*, to which the whole building owes its strength, its union, and its

12 "*beauty.*" And *there is really salvation and healing in no other but in him; neither is there any other name under heaven, given out by God among the children of men, whether of patriarch or prophet, or priest or king, in which we must be saved and recovered:*^h For though we are not thus disabled and afflicted in body, yet there are other maladies of a much more threatening nature, for the cure of which you and I, and all that hear me this day, must, as we value the very lives of our souls, apply to Jesus, and only to him.

13 *Now when they of the council saw the boldness of Peter and John, and observed the freedom of speech with which they pleaded their Master's cause, and the high degree to which they extolled him, in the presence of those magistrates who had, so lately condemned him to the most*

11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12 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

it was so; and, though they had hired the soldiers to tell a most senseless and incredible tale to the contrary, (Mat. xxviii. 12—15.) yet it is observable, they did not (so far as we can learn) dare to plead it before Peter and John.

^h *In which we must be saved.* Dr. Whitby and some later writers have taken a great deal of pains to prove, that *σωτηρια* here signifies *healing*, and have argued for it from the connection, and from many texts, especially in the Evangelists, where it plainly has that sense, as it has likewise, Acts xiv. 9, where it is translated *to be healed*. (See Mat. ix. 21, 22; Mark v. 23; vi. 56; s. 53; Luke xvii. 19; and compare note ^d on Mark 7. 23, Vol. I.) But it is strange, that any should not have seen, that, if the most determin-

nate word for *healing* had been here used, (as *ἰσηγουσθηρια*, or *ιατρικη*;) it must have signified *spiritual and eternal salvation*; since it is plain, that, when Peter says *εἰς τὸ σωτηρια* upon he takes it for granted, that all who heard him needed to apply to Christ for this *healing*: Now there is no reason to believe, they were all afflicted with bodily maladies, nor could he have any imaginable warrant to promise them all supernatural recovery in that case.—Raphelins in a remarkable note on this text, (ex Herod. p. 329—332.) endeavours among other things to prove, that *σωτηρια*, or the name of a person, was a manner of speaking used in reference to one regarded as God, and the Author of salvation.

perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; 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, so manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let

shameful death; and understood at the same time that they were illiterate men, and in private stations of life,^l they were greatly astonished. And upon farther recollection too they knew them, and remembered of these two disciples, that they had been with Jesus, particularly the night that he was taken, and had attended him to the house of Caiaphas, where several now in court, had been present at his examination^k (Compare John xviii. 15, 16.)¹⁴

And they would gladly have done their utmost to confound a testimony which bore so hard upon themselves. But seeing the man that was cured, whom they knew to have been so long lame, now standing with them perfectly recovered, they had nothing to say against the fact, though they were most unwilling to own a doctrine which [it] tended so strongly to prove.

But as they did not choose the apostles should perceive they knew not what to say, having ordered them to withdraw for a while out of the room where the council was sitting, they privately conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do with these men? It would be neither reasonable nor safe to punish them now; for that indeed a very surprising and signal miracle hath been wrought by them, is clearly manifest to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we ourselves cannot possibly deny [it.] Nevertheless^l on the other hand, it is equally plain, that both our credit and our interest require us, to suppress the rumour of it as much as we can; and therefore, that it may not any farther spread among the people, and be a means of raising discontent, and perhaps of occasioning some dangerous insurrection among them, which may throw the

^l Illiterate men, and in private stations of life.] The original words *αγραμματοεις και ιδιωται* have literally this signification, that they were not scholars, nor in any public rank of life as the priests, and magistrates were; but they import no want of natural good sense, or any ignorance of what was then the subject of debate; so that our translation seems very unhappy here.

^k They knew them that they had been with Jesus, particularly the night that he was taken, &c.] See note ^l on Luke xxii. 57, Vol. II. — Grotius justly observes also,

that the rulers were often present when Christ taught publicly, and so might have seen Peter and John near him at other times, as well as on the occasion mentioned in the paraphrase.

^l Nevertheless.] Instances in which *αλλα* signifies Nevertheless, are numerous in the New Testament; and it is often rendered so by our translators. See Mark xiv. 36; John xi. 15; Rom. v. 14; 2 Cor. xii. 16; Gal. iv. 30; 2 Tim. i. 12; And many instances from profane writers are brought by Elmer in his note here.

SECT.
VIII.
Acts
IV. 17

city and nation into confusion, *let us severely threaten them with the most rigorous punishment, in case they persist in such bold discourses as those we have now been hearing, that so they may not dare to preach as they have done, and from henceforth may speak no more to any man in this obnoxious name.*

us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

- 18 *And the whole council having agreed to this as the most proper method they could at present take with the apostles, they called them in again, and telling them how much they were offended at the liberty they took, they charged them in a very strict and severe manner, that, upon pain of their highest displeasure, and as they regarded their own safety, and even their lives, they should not presume on any account whatever to speak any more, or to teach the people in the name of Jesus; if they would not be looked upon as seditious persons, and be dealt with as incendiaries and rebels, as their Master had been; whom they still asserted to have deserved the punishment that he had suffered.*

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 felt themselves animated in this arduous circumstance with a courageous zeal, which would not permit them to be silent, lest that silence should be interpreted as a promise to quit their ministry, and therefore answering them with an undaunted freedom, they said before them all, Whether it be a fit or a righteous thing in the sight of God, to whom we are all accountable, to obey you rather than God, judge ye.^a You cannot but know in your own consciences on which side the superior obligation lies; and you must therefore expect,*

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.

^a *They charged them that they should not speak any more—in the name of Jesus.* The very thing, that men conscious of the truth of the apostles' testimony, and self-condemned, would do; attempting by violence to stop their mouths, as they knew they could not answer them any other way.

^b *Whether it be righteous—to obey you rather than God, judge ye.* 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, [oper. p. 23.] which appears to me among the finest of antiquity. 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; [καταγωμεν θεω παραδομεν αμαρτωλοισι;] 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 a thousand times than accept the proposal." What are ten thousand subtilities of ancient philosophers, when compared with a sentiment like this!

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

that we shall act accordingly. For though we respect you as our civil rulers, and are heartily willing to yield all subjection to you so far as we lawfully can, yet since God hath charged us with the publication of this important message, on which, as we have already testified, the eternal salvation of men depends, we dare not to be silent in a case of such importance, and are free to tell you that we cannot but speak the things which we have so often seen and heard, and which God hath so miraculously impowered us to declare, not only in this city, but throughout all the earth.

SECT. VIII.
Acts IV. 20.

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

And though the apostles spake with such great freedom, the council were so confounded by the force of truth, that they did not think fit to proceed to any farther extremities at that time; but having threatened them again in severer terms than before, they dismissed them; finding nothing done by them for which they might with any shew of reason punish them, and not daring to proceed in so arbitrary a manner as they would otherwise have done, because of the people, whose resentment they feared: For such was the impression that was made upon the people by the cure of the lame man, that they had all an high esteem and mighty veneration for the apostles, who were publicly known to be the instruments of working it, and all glorified God in raptures of astonishment for that which was done: And indeed they well

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

might be affected with it, for the man on whom this miracle of healing was wrought, was more than forty years old: so that hardly any thing could have appeared to human judgment to be a more desperate case, than so inveterate and confirmed a lameness: and yet he was (as we have already related) in one moment completely cured by the word of the apostles, and the power of their divine Master operating with it.

IMPROVEMENT.

WE see, in the instance before us, the natural but detestable effects of a proud, bigotted, overhearing 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.)

Verse 1, 3

SECT. VII. On the other side, 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. (Isa. xl. 29.) The testimony they bore is well worth our regard-
 12 ing. *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! O that thousands, to whom it is yet unknown, may learn to build all their hopes of salvation upon it; and may we never be ashamed to own it, never afraid to adhere to it! May we speak of it with such a fervour, may we defend it with such a zeal, that
 13 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; never a more impudent attempt to bear down the cause of unquestionable truth
 16-18 by brutal violence. 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; always judging
 19 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!

SECT. IX.

Peter and John return to their company, and having told them what had passed, they all unite in an inspired prayer, which is attended with a renewed effusion of the Spirit, in consequence of which they all preach the gospel with new vigour and wonderful success; the number of converts, and the sales of estates, are greatly increased. Acts IV. 23-35.

ACTS IV. 23.

SECT. IX. PETER and John being dismissed from their examination by the Sanhedrim, with a strict charge that they should preach no more in the name of Jesus, no sooner were at liberty but they came to their own company, and related all that the chief priests and elders had said to them, and how severely they had threatened them.

24 And when they heard [it,] a divine inspiration came upon all that were present in an extror-

ACTS IV. 23.

AND being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lift

up their voice to God, with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God 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, 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 Holy Child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together.

28 For to do whatsoever thy hand and

dinary manner, so that they immediately lifted up their voice with one accord to God^a in the following prayer, which upon this occasion was suggested by the Holy Spirit to every one in the assembly; and they said, O thou supreme Lord of universal nature, we humbly acknowledge thou art the God who didst make heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them:

Who didst by thine Holy Spirit say by the mouth of thy servant David, (Psal. ii. 1, 2.) "Why did the heathen nations rage, and the people imagine vain things, forming projects which must certainly end in their own disappointment and ruin? Why did the kings of the earth enter into a confederacy to set themselves as it were in hostile array, and why were the rulers of it, forgetting their mutual differences, combined together in one association against the Lord, and against his Messiah, whom he hath anointed to be the great Ruler of all?"

We, O God, have now seen the literal accomplishment of these words; for of a truth here has been a most audacious conspiracy in this city of Jerusalem, where we now are, against thee, and against thine holy child Jesus, whom thou hast so visibly anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, to accomplish the glorious work of erecting thy kingdom among men; and both Herod the tetrarch, and Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, with the heathen, and the people of Israel, have combined in the impious attempt: But it is our unspeakable comfort to think, that by their utmost rage they cannot break in upon thy schemes, or prevent the efficacy of any of thy purposes; for we know that in the midst of all this impious fury they have shewn against thy Son, they have only been able to do what thine hand had pointed out be-

SECT. IX.
Acts IV
24

^a When they heard [it,] they immediately lifted up their voices, &c. It is strange they should have imagined, this was a pre-arranged form, since, besides all the other absurdities of such a supposition, it so expressly refers to the threatenings of the Sanhedrim, (ver. 29.) of which they had been but just then informed: and the words necessarily have another sense, will not allow us to imagine any interval between the report of Peter and John, and this prayer. I conclude it therefore pro-

bable, that all their voices might join by immediate inspiration; which seems a circumstance graciously adapted for the encouragement of them all to suffer the greatest extremities in this cause, and answers the phrase here used much better, than if we were to suppose one only to have spoken, and the rest to have put their cordial Amen to it; which yet would be a much more tolerable account of the matter, than that which I first mentioned.

fore, and what thy unerring counsel, to which thy counsel determined before to be done.

all future events are obvious, had before determined, that for wise reasons thou wouldst permit to be done.^b And as to what now remains to accomplish this important scheme of raising thy church on the sure foundation of his cross, we beseech thee, O Lord, to regard these their haughty threatenings, with which they are endeavouring to discourage the chosen witnesses of his resurrection; and to give unto these thy servants, and to all others that are to join their testimony, to speak thy word with all freedom and resolution,^c in the midst of the most violent

opposition that can arise: Especially whilst thou art animating them by the performance of such works of power and mercy, and art stretching out thine own almighty hand for healing the most incurable distempers; and while such astonishing signs and wonders as these are done by the name of thine Holy Child Jesus; which we hope thou wilt still continue to perform, however the rage of the enemy may be excited by them.

31 And while they were thus praying, God was pleased miraculously to declare his gracious acceptance of their petitions; for the place in which they were assembled was shaken, as the upper room had been on the day of Pentecost, (Acts ii. 2.) and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit:^d

^b Have combined to do, &c.] Limborch (Theolog. lib. ii. cap. 30, § 17.) contends strongly for a transposition of the words thus; *They have combined against thine Holy Child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed to do what thine hand and thy counsel had determined, &c.* But this transposition is arbitrary; and it is so expressly said elsewhere by Luke, when he was entering on his sufferings, that the Son of man went as it was determined concerning him, (Luke xxii. 22.) and it so plainly appears in fact, that these circumstances were expressly determined or marked out in the prophecies of the Old Testament, that I see not what end the admission of such a transposition would answer. It is much more rational (as we observed in note¹ on that text in Luke, Vol. II.) to explain this determination in such a manner, as to make it consistent with the free agency of the persons concerned. When God's hand and his counsel are said to have de-

termined these things, it may signify God's having pointed out this great event so wisely concerted in his eternal counsels, and marked beforehand as it were all the boundaries of it, (as the word *ἔταξε* may well signify,) in the prophetic writings. This seems more natural, than to suppose, (as Bishop Pearson and Dr. Hammond do,) that it alludes to the designation of the Lord's goat on the day of expiation, which was by lifting up the lot on high, and then laying it on the head of the animal to be sacrificed. See Pears. on the Creed, p. 185, and Hammond loc.

^c Give unto thy servants to speak thy word with all freedom.] Elsner has shewn here by some very happy quotations, that several of the Heathens acknowledged the [*εὐφροσύνη*] freedom of speech on great and pressing occasions, to be a divine gift. Compare Prov. xvi. 1.

^d They were all filled with the Holy

they spake the word of God with boldness.

And being animated by that strong impulse, which through his operation they felt upon their hearts, *they spake the word of God* wherever they came with all courageous freedom, and renewed their public testimony without any appearance of fear, on the very day on which they had been so solemnly forbidden by the Sanhedrim to preach any more in the name of Jesus.

ser.
ix.
Acts
iv. 31

32 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.

And that sacred agent wrought upon their souls not only as the spirit of zeal and courage, but of love, so that *the very heart and soul of the whole multitude of believers*, numerous as they were, *was all one: Nor did any [of them] call any of his possessions his own: but all things were common amongst them;* and each was as welcome to participate of them as the original proprietor could be, being in these new bonds of Christian fellowship as dear to him as himself.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

And with great power, that is, with a divine force of eloquence and of miracles, *did the apostles give forth their important testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all;* so that the energy and sweetness of the gospel was felt by the inward experience both of speakers and hearers, beyond what it was possible for words to express.

35 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,

Neither was there any one indigent person among them, though many of them were far from their habitations, and many others in low circumstances of life: *for as many as were proprietors of lands or houses, sold them as fast as they could find any to purchase them, and brought the price of the things they had sold*, whether it were more or less, *And laid [it] down at the feet of the apostles*, to be disposed of as they should direct; who discharged their trust with the strictest fidelity, and took care that distribution was made to every one according as any had need for his present relief: (Compare chap. ii. 45.) The apostles esteeming themselves suffi-

34 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

And laid them down at the feet of the apostles, to be disposed of as they should direct; who discharged their trust with the strictest fidelity, and took care that distribution was made to every one according as any had need for his present relief: (Compare chap. ii. 45.) The apostles esteeming themselves suffi-

Spirit.] I will not assert, that cloyen tongues fell upon them again; but I think it probable, with Dr. Benson, that some visible symbol of the Spirit's descent might now be given.

[*All things were common amongst them.*] See note on chap. ii. 44.—*To have one heart and soul* is a proverbial expression for the most intimate and endearing

friendship, as Elmer and others have shewn.

[*Great grace was upon them all.*] Casaubon, Grotius, and some others, understand this of the favour they had among the people on account of their charity and good conduct: But this is by no means the natural import of this phrase, which is very different from that used, Acts ii. 47.

SECT. ciently happy, while living in the same plain
IX. manner with their brethren, in the opportunity
which the divine goodness gave them of being
so helpful to others both in temporals and spi-
rituals.

IMPROVEMENT.

- THIS was indeed the golden age of the church; and it is im-
possible to trace the memoirs of it, if we love Sion, without a
secret complacency and exultation of mind. How amiable and
Verse 31 how venerable do the apostles and primitive converts appear,
in this native simplicity of the Christian character! and what a
glory did the grace and Spirit of God put upon them, far be-
yond all that human establishments, splendid dignities, or ample
revenues, could ever give to those that have succeeded them!
- 32 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 did they receive, and
how were their joys multiplied by each of their number!
- 33, 35 Thus does divine grace, when it powerfully enters into the
heart, open it in 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 com-
munity of goods among Christians, in circumstances so differ-
ent from those which we have now been surveying. Yet surely
it is always our duty, and will be our highest interest, to re-
member that we are not original proprietors of what we possess,
but stewards, who are to manage what is intrusted 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.
- 24 In the mean time, let us frequently *lift up our hearts* to the
great and ever blessed *God*, who hath *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 graci-
25, 26 ously 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 Je-
sus* his holy Child *with the oil of gladness*, and placed him *on his
throne* in heaven; and all the united malice and fury of his ene-
mies can do no more, than what shall make part of his wise and
29 gracious scheme for the government of his people. Let us pray,
that he would give freedom of speech to all employed in pleading
30, 31 his cause; and that he will plentifully anoint them with the effu-
sion of his Spirit: And let the signs and wonders which were done

by the name of Jesus in former ages, encourage us to hope that he will never totally 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!

SECT. IX.

SECT. X.

The sale of estates proceeding, Ananias and Sapphira attempt fraudulently to impose upon the apostles, and are immediately struck dead. That event, together with other extraordinary miracles wrought about the same time, promotes the increase of the church more and more. Acts IV. 36, to the end. V. 1—16.

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

ACTS IV. 36.

AMONG the rest of those primitive converts, who so generously contributed of their substance for the relief and subsistence of the poor believers in so extraordinary a circumstance, there was one *Joses, who*, on account of his great benevolence and usefulness, was much respected in the church; and by the apostles was surnamed *Barnabas*, which being interpreted from the Syriac language, signifies, *A son of consolation*:^a He was a *Levite*, who was so far from being prejudiced against this new religion, as it might seem to oppose his temporal interest, that he gladly devoted himself to its service: [and] was a native of another country, being by birth a *Cyprian*: And having an estate,³⁷ which was capable of being alienated without any transgression of the law,^b he sold it, and brought the money, as others had done, and laid

SECT. X.
Acts IV. 36.

37 Having land, sold it and brought

^a *Joses—surnamed Barnabas—a son of consolation.* 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 chap. i. 23, as a candidate for the office of an apostle. (Compare note 1, on that text.)—Nor can I see any reason to conclude with Abp. Wake, (Apost. Fathers, Introd. p. 62.) 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 to exhort, as the word also signifies.—Mr. Fleming makes it a most honourable title indeed, as signifying a son of the operation of the Paraclet, that is, of the Holy Ghost.
^b *An estate*, which was capable of being alienated, &c. He could not have sold that which was his paternal inheritance as a Levite: But this might perhaps be some legacy or purchase of land in Judæa, 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.

SECT. X. *it down at the feet of the apostles*^c desiring they would dispose of it in such a manner, as might be most serviceable to the necessities of the saints: And the addition which it made to the public stock was so considerable, that it seemed to deserve this particular mention.

Acts.
IV. 37.

Acts
V. 1.

But it is in a very different point of light, and on a very melancholy occasion, that we are obliged to mention another person before we leave this story. There was also among these early professors of the gospel a certain man named Ananias, who with the concurrence of

2 *Supphira his wife, sold an estate; And fraudulently secreted part of the price, his wife also being conscious [of it;] and bringing only a certain part of it, he laid it down at the feet of the apostles, as the rest did, pretending that it was the whole of the purchase-money; and consequently intimating, that having deposited his all in their hands, he should hope for the future to be taken care of among the rest of the brethren.*

3 *But, upon this, the Holy Spirit, under whose direction the apostle Peter acted, immediately suggested to him the fraud, and the awful manner in which the Divine Wisdom saw fit to annul 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*

the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts V. 1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2 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 hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to

^c *Laid it down at the feet of the apostles.*] Oratio insinuates, apud Limborch. Collat. p. 154. (and it is one of the weakest and meanest things I remember in his writings, that it was no small advantage to poor fishermen to be treasurers of so considerable a bank. But nothing can be more unjust and unnatural, than to suspect, that men, who were so ready to sacrifice their lives to the cause of truth and the happiness of mankind, should be capable of falsifying such a trust as this, for the sake of a little money. Their miraculous powers were joined with a thousand marks of probity in their daily conduct to warrant such a confidence, which was but a natural token of due respect. We see in chap. vi. 2, 3, 4, how

ready they were soon to transfer the management of this affair to other hands; and the following story furnishes us with an additional answer to this cavil, which is beyond all exception.

^d *filled thine heart*—[to impose on the Holy Spirit.] The Hebrews express a person's being emboldened to do a thing, by the phrase of *his heart being filled*: (Compare Eath. vii. 5, and Eccles. viii. 11.) And Bos has abundantly shown, that *שׁוֹרְרָהוּ לְפָנָיו* signifies to lie to a person, or to impose upon him, (Bos Exercit. p. 73, 74.) but I cannot recollect, that it ever signifies to belie a person, as Dr. Benson would here render it. Hist. of Christianity, Vol. I. p. 103.

keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whilst 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.

direction we are; and to secrete part of the price of the land thou hast sold, when thou pretendest to have brought the whole? While it remained unsold, did it not continue thine, notwithstanding thy profession of faith in Jesus? And when it was sold, was it not still in thine own power; to have given or not given the whole, or any part of it, into the treasury of the church, as thou shouldst think proper? Why then hast thou admitted this thing into thine heart, so meanly and so profanely to dissemble on this solemn occasion? Thou hast not lied to men alone, to us, or to the church, whose treasurers we are; but hast lied to the blessed God himself, who residing in us by his divine Spirit, is determined to make thee a terrible example of his displeasure for an affront so directly levelled at himself, in the midst of this astonishing train of his extraordinary operations.

ACTS.
x.
Acts V.

3 And Ananias hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

And Ananias, hearing these words, while the sound of them was yet in his ears, fell down and expired; that by his sad example all might learn how dangerous it was to affront that divine Spirit under whose influence the apostles acted: And it answered its end, for great fear came not only on the immediate spectators, but on all that heard the report of these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound

Then some of the young and able-bodied men in the assembly arose, and perceiving there was no room to hope for the recovery of one who

* When it was sold, was it not in thine own power? It evidently appears from hence, that no Christian converts were obliged to sell their estates. An answer to the Popish argument from hence, in favour of works of supererogation, may be collected from our paraphrase on Mat. xix. 12. Vol. II.

[Ananias—fell down and expired.] This severity was not only righteous, considering that complication of vain glory and covetousness, of fraud and impiety, which the Limboreh and Mr. Biscoe (p. 659—661.) have well proved, the action contained; but also, on the whole, 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, mere-

ly for the sake of a present aim, 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. (Compare 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, in general, of their divine mission; for none can imagine, that 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 betraying the Holy Ghost, in the whole of his pretensions to be under his miraculous influence and direction. See Cradock's Apost. Hist. p. 27. and Reynolds's Lett. to a Deist, p. 245.

- SECT. X. was struck dead by such an immediate act of the divine power, they bound him up in his mantle, without any farther circumstance of mourning or delay, and carrying him out, they buried him.
- Acts V. 6 And after the interval of about three hours, his wife Sapphira also, who was absent when this happened, not knowing what was done, came in to the place in which they were assembled.
- 7 And Peter upon this occasion, said to her before them all, Tell me freely, Sapphira, with that uprightness which becomes a disciple of Jesus, whether you indeed sold the land only for so much money, as you know your husband brought hither, naming the sum. And she said, Yes, it was sold exactly for so much. Then Peter by an immediate impulse of the same Spirit, which had before so awfully interposed, said unto her again, How is it that you have thus wickedly conspired together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, as if you had really suspected, whether he were capable of discerning the affair or not, and were resolved to bring it to a trial? Alas, unhappy woman, it will appear to be a fatal experiment to you both; for behold, the feet of those who have just been burying thy husband, whom divine vengeance has already struck dead on this occasion, are even now at the door upon their return, and they shall forthwith carry thee out, and lay thee by him in the grave.
- 10 And immediately upon this, she also fell down at his feet and expired; And the young men, who were just then coming in, found her quite dead in a moment; and accordingly they carried her out, and buried her by Ananias her husband.
- 11 And great fear came upon all the assembly, who were eye-witnesses of what had passed, and upon all others that heard the report, which was soon spread abroad of these things; who could not but acknowledge, that it was the immediate hand of God by which they both died, and that he was just in this awful dispensation.
- 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.
- 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 ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.
- 10 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.

[She also fell down—and expired.] To what is said before in vindication of this seeming severity, in note 1, we may add that such exemplary punishment of so heinous a crime was the more expedient, as Christianity was now in its first rise. So, just at the opening of the Mosaic in-

stitution, Nadab and Abihu were struck dead with lightning for a fault (as it seems) of much less aggravated guilt: (Lev. x. 1, 2.) and the wisest human governments generally act on the like principle.

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

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

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.

And many other stupendous signs and wonders were done among the people in the most public manner, by the hands of the apostles: And they continued in the strictest fellowship and union with the whole company of believers, and were frequently all unanimously together in that spacious building, which we have already mentioned by the name of *Solomon's portico*, conversing together with the most affectionate expressions of mutual endearment. And none of the rest who were not really converted to Christianity, presumed to join himself to them,^b as some mean-spirited creatures might possibly otherwise have done for a while, in a low view of some transient advantage, by a share in the distributions that were made. But all the people had a mighty veneration for the apostles, and magnified them with the highest expressions of reverence and respect, as persons who were owned by God in the most signal manner: And though the death of these two unhappy offenders terrified many from hypocritically joining their company, yet the success of the gospel was promoted rather than hindered by it, so that great multitudes both of men and women, believing their testimony, were so much the more [willingly] added in a solemn manner to the church of the Lord, and made an open profession of their faith; wisely inferring from what had happened, how dangerous it would be to oppose or suppress the inward convictions of their minds, in a matter of so great importance.

SECT. 8.
ACTS V. 12.

^b None of the rest presumed to join himself to them. Dr. Lightfoot explains this of the rest of the hundred and twenty, that they durst not join to the twelve, or equal themselves to the apostles in office or dignity: (Lightf. Comment. in loc.) But as there is no mention of that number in this chapter, so (as Dr. Whitby observes,) they never joined themselves to the apostles in this sense; nor is this any where the meaning of the word *συνάγαγαι*, which signifies to associate, or unite with, to adhere or cleave to any. (Compare Acts ix. 20; x. 28; xvii. 34.) — Heza would have it, that *συνάγαγαι* signifies here to attack or touch, and that *οὐδεὶς τῶν ἄλλων*, the rest, refers to their powerful promises as distinguished from the peo-

ple: But that signification of *συνάγαγαι* is, as he acknowledges, very unusual, and is here quite unnecessary. — L'Enfant thinks the meaning is, that persons of distinction had not the resolution to join them, whatever inward conviction they might have as to the truth of their doctrine. But after all, it is most natural to understand it, as if it had been said, "The people held them in distant admiration, and presumed not on any false pretence to join them, if not truly converted to their religion;" which yet (as it appears by the next verse,) many were, who readily came into a full and solemn profession of it, as indeed the late miracle was a glorious, though dreadful, demonstration of its truth.

SECT. X. *And they were farther animated to boldness in their profession, by the many gracious miracles which succeeded to this work of terror; insomuch that all along the most public streets they brought out the sick, and laid them at their doors on beds and couches, when they were not able to walk; that at least the shadow of Peter as he was coming by, might overshadow some or other of them: And this extraordinary faith was rewarded by the healing of many in that circumstance.*

Acta
V. 15

16 *And as the fame of these wonderful works spread abroad, multitudes also [out] of the cities round about came together to Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those that were troubled with unclean spirits; who, by the divine power of Jesus working in his humble disciples, were all healed; as persons in the like circumstances had often been by Christ himself in the days of his flesh. So that the alarm which this gave to the enemies of the gospel, grew continually more and more painful to them, and occasioned some remarkable proceedings against the apostles, which will be related in the following section.*

15 In-somuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least 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 healed every one.

IMPROVEMENT.

LET us behold, with humble reverence, this awful instance of the divine severity, 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. Let us learn, how hateful falsehood is to the God of truth, and make it our care to avoid it; and not only to shun a direct lye, but the taking undue advantage from any ambiguities of expression, and, in a word, all recourse to the arts of equivocation. God only knows how soon such treacherous lips may be sealed up in eternal silence.

How does Satan delude the heart which he fills! And how peculiarly fatal is the delusion, when he leads men to sin which especially affront the Holy Spirit of God: That Spirit rested on the apostles, and taught them to discover the hidden things of darkness; so that they who tempted it, fell in the attempt, and became a sign. *May integrity and uprightness ever preserve us* (Psal. 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 has planted.

The church is never happier, than when the sons of falsehood are deterred from intruding into it. If its members are less num-

rous, it is a sufficient balance, that it is more pure. We see what singular miracles were done by the apostles; miracles equal, and in some respects, as it seems by these instances, 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 bodies? 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 that does it by them; and that all their most assiduous applications, separate from his blessing, can effect no more than the shadow of Peter could have done, if the power of Christ had not wrought on those over whom it passed.

SECT.
X.
Verse
15, 16

SECT. XI.

The apostles continuing to preach to the people, are apprehended and imprisoned, and, after a miraculous deliverance, are brought before the sanhedrim the next day, and scourged; Gamaliel's advice prevailing, to prevent any farther extremities. Acts V. 17, to the end.

ACTS V. 17.
THEN the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation;

ACTS V. 17.
IT was observed in the preceding section, what extraordinary miracles were done by the apostles in the name of Jesus, whom still, notwithstanding all the menaces of their rulers, they continued faithfully to preach, and to assure the people of his resurrection from the dead, and of eternal life to be obtained through him. *But* this, as it might reasonably be expected, drew another storm upon them: For *the high priest arising*, as it were, with awakened and renewed fury, *and all they that were with him, which was the sect of the Sadducees,* who were especially devoted to his interest, and most offended at the doctrine of the resurrection, *were filled with zeal and indignation against*

SECT.
XI.
Acts
V. 17.

* *The sect of the Sadducees.*] There is no sufficient reason from this text to conclude with Grotius, that the high priest and his kindred were Sadducees, though it is probable they might be so, as Josephus affirms that some of the high priests were of this sect, and particularly Ananus, one of the sons of that Ananus, who was father-in-law to Caiaphas. (See Mr.

Biacoe, at Boyle's Lect. chap. v. § 4, p. 110, 111.) The Sadducees however would be most ready to exert themselves in persecuting the apostles, as they were most exasperated by their doctrine which was directly opposite to the notion they maintained. See the paraphrase on Acts iv. 2, sect. 8, p. 43.

SECT.
XI.
Acts
V. 18.

these men, who, as their enemies affected to represent it, made so dangerous an attack both on their religious and political establishment:

And in support of these unjust charges, they were determined to bring them to another trial before the Sanhedrim, and for that purpose laid their hands on the apostles, and put them into the common prison, where the vilest of malefactors were lodged.^b

19 But that God might evidently shew, how impotent all their rage was against those whom he determined to support, and that they might be emboldened with a becoming confidence to bear their testimony in the midst of oppositions and dangers, an angel of the Lord was sent to them, who, appearing in the midst of them by night opened the doors of the prison, and without giving any alarm to the keepers, or any of the other prisoners, bringing them out of that place of

20 confinement, said, as God hath thus miraculously interposed for your deliverance, neither flee, nor fear; but go, as soon as the gates are opened, and presenting yourselves boldly in the temple, as you did before you were seized, (however disagreeable the doctrine that you preach may be to those who believe nothing of a future state,) speak to the people assembled there at the hour of morning sacrifice all the words of this glorious gospel with which you are charged, on which the eternal life of men so evidently depends, and by which alone their final happiness can be secured.

21 And the apostles hearing [this] divine command, made no scruple immediately to obey it, and were so far from being discouraged by the fear of persecution, that, with an earnest zeal to carry on the work they were engaged in, they went very early into the temple, and taught the people with the same freedom as before, who assembled there to pay their morning adorations unto God.

But in the mean time, the high priest being come, and they that were with him into the room where the council was usually held, they called

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

19 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 all the words of this life.

21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning and taught—

—But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the coun-

^a Into the common prison.] That this was as the phrase expresses it, the place where the vilest malefactors were lodged, cannot be doubted. But it is not cer-

tain, the apostles were actually thrust among them; and I think ver. 23 makes it rather more probable, they were in an apartment by themselves.

eil 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, 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 priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them wherunto this would grow.

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

together all the members of the Sanhedrim, even (as we have hinted several times before, that the name signifies,) the whole senate of the children of Israel, being solicitous that there might be as full a house as possible on so important an occasion: And when they were convened, they sent proper officers to the common prison to take charge of the apostles, and to have them brought into their presence, that the court might proceed to their examination and punishment. But when the officers came thither, to their great surprise they found them not in the prison; and yet could not discover what way they had taken to make their escape, considering the circumstances that appeared on inquiry. Returning therefore to the council, they made their report, saying, We found indeed the prison shut with all possible safety, and the keepers standing without as sentinels before the doors; but having opened [them,] and gone into the place in which the prisoners had been put, and where we did not doubt but we should find them, to our great astonishment we found no one within of those whom we sought.

Now when the high priest, and the captain of the temple, and the other chief priests who were gathered together, heard these words, they doubted concerning them, and knew not what to think of it how this could be; that is, whether they had procured their liberty by corrupting the keepers, or whether there might not be something miraculous in the deliverance of persons whom such extraordinary circumstances had attended. But one, who knew their disappointment and the uneasiness it gave them, came into the court, and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put yesterday in prison, are now standing in the temple, however they came thither, and are teaching the people assembled there with as much freedom and confidence as ever; which indeed does not look like a clandestine escape, which could only have been made with a view of flight and concealment.

Then the captain of the temple went with the officers by the direction of the Sanhedrim, and having found the apostles in the temple, brought them away, but not by violence, for they feared the people, lest if they had offered any violence

SECT.
XI.
Acts
V. 23.

64 *They are taken again, and brought before the Sanhedrim.*

SECT.
XI.
Acts
V. 26

in their presence, it might have so provoked them that *they should be stoned*:^c For the people were so fully persuaded of a divine power engaged with the apostles, that they held their persons sacred, and would not have borne any open attack upon them: The apostles, on the other hand, were ready cheerfully to obey the summons, that they might repeat their testi-

they should have been stoned.)

27 money to their divine Master. And accordingly the captain and those that attended him, *when they had brought them to the place where the council was sitting, made a report of what they had done, and set them before the Sanhedrim.* And as soon as they appeared, the high priest singling out Peter and John, who had so lately been examined before them, *asked them, Say-*

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

28 *ing, Did we not strictly charge you two in particular but a very little while ago, and so in effect all the rest of your company, that you should not on pain of our highest displeasure and the utmost rigour of the law, teach any more in this name of Jesus of Nazareth? And behold, instead of regarding our admonition, or shewing any sense of the great lenity with which the court then treated you, you have been more busy and more daring than before in your seditious practices, so that you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine; and it all centres in this, that you would bring the odium of this man's blood upon us, and would incense the populace against us, as if he were an innocent person whom we had murdered: So that it is no thanks to you, if we are not stoned, or torn in pieces by them, for that act of necessary justice, for such it was, which we were obliged to do upon him.*

28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you, that you 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 *But Peter and [the rest of] the apostles, who were now all before them, answered and said, O ye senate of Israel, ye cannot but in your own consciences know, as we plainly declared before this assembly when we received the charge now referred to, (chap. iv. 19.) that it is absolutely fit and necessary to obey the almighty and ever*

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

^c They feared the people, lest they should be stoned. This may seem a surprising change in the people, considering the eagerness with which they demanded that Christ should be crucified. But it is exceeding probable, that, seeing the mighty power which wrought in the apostles, they might entertain some hope of ob-

taining temporal deliverance by their means, (compare Acts i. 6.) of which they were so exceeding fond, and a disappointment in their hope of which had turned their hosannahs into the cry, Crucify him, crucify him. See Mr. Lardner's Credibility, Vol. I. p. 179.

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

blessed God, rather than men, be they ever so great and powerful. We assuredly know, and we testify it to you as we have been testifying to the people, that the God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus his Son, whom ye slew in the most infamous manner that ye could invent, hanging him crucified on a tree, as if he had been the meanest of slaves and the vilest of malefactors: But this very person, notwithstanding all the outrage with which you treated him, hath God exalted at his own right hand [to be] a Prince and Saviour to his people; to give repentance, or to send terms of peace and reconciliation by him, even unto Israel^d, by whom he hath been so ungratefully insulted and abused, and to bestow on those that shall repent, the free and full remission of all their aggravated sins. And we are appointed his witnesses of these things, how incredible soever they may appear to you; and so is the Holy Spirit also, whom God hath given not only to the apostles, but also to many others of them who submit themselves to his government,^e most evidently attesting the same, and proving how absolutely necessary it is for every one, great and small, to lay aside prejudice and opposition, and with humble penitence to believe in Jesus.

And the high priest and the Sadducees, when they heard [this] courageous testimony and faithful remonstrance, were enraged beyond all measures of patience and of decency, so that they even grinded their teeth at them, like savage beasts that could gladly have devoured them; and with hearts full of rancour they im-

SECT.
XI.
Acts
V. 30

^d To give repentance unto Israel. } An repentance was not actually wrought in Israel by the efficacious grace of Christ, I think it evident, that *δωκεν μετανοίας* here signifies to give place or room for repentance, just as the same phrase does in Josephus, (Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 8. §al. 6. § 7.) where he says, that the Jews being up at Cesarea in a tumultuous manner, the wiser people among them went to intercede with the governor *δωκεν μετανοίας* τῷ τοῖς παραστρατοῖς i. e. to publish a pardon to those who should lay down their arms; agreeable to the turn given to the expression in the paraphrase.

^e The Holy Spirit also, whom God hath given to them who submit, &c. } The tes-

timony 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 had 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 witness to the falsehood of such a pretence, without the trouble and expence of a journey to Jerusalem, or any other distant place.

SECT. XI. mediately consulted how they might put them all to death, either under pretence of blasphemy, or for sedition and rebellion against the supreme council of the state. took counsel to slay them.

34 But a certain celebrated Pharisee then in the Sanhedrim, whose name was Gamaliel,¹ a doctor of the law, who trained up a great number of young students in the most exact knowledge of it, and was in great esteem among all the people on account of his learning, wisdom, and piety, rose up; and as he purposed to speak his mind with great freedom on a very tender point, he commanded the apostles to be

35 taken out for a little while. And then addressing himself to his brethren, the other members of the court, he said unto them, Ye men of Israel, to whom Divine Providence has committed the guardianship of this people, and the great care of their public affairs! I think it my duty, on this important occasion, seriously to advise you to take heed to yourselves as to

36 what you are about to do to these men. For you cannot but know, that several remarkable occurrences have lately happened, which have awakened a great degree of public expectation and regard; and it may not be improper to recollect some of them at this crisis. You particularly remember, that some time ago one Theudas arose,² pretending himself to be

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

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 some body, to

¹ Gamaliel.] This was the elder of that name, a man in so great honour among them, that Onkelos, the author of the Targum, is said to have burnt seventy pound weight of perfumes at his funeral. Nay, it is said, the honour of the law failed with him. If he were really, as he is reported to have been, the author of those prayers against Christians, so long used in the Jewish synagogues, he must have lost that moderation of temper which he is supposed here; perhaps incorporated at the birth of the new sect, and the tenet so boldly borne by the apostles was Paul's master; (Acts xxii. 3.) and no doubt he informed that headstrong youth (for such he then was,) of what was passed, and of many other things, which rendered his sin in persecuting the Christians so much the more aggravated. See Wits. Melitem. cap. 1. §. 13, p. 12, 13: and Mr. Biscoe, at Boyle's Lect. chap. iii. §. 9. p. 77, 78.

² One Theudas arose.] As the Theudas mentioned by Josephus, (Antiq. lib. xx.

cap. 5, [al. 2.] sect. 1.) 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,) appeared when Fadus was procurator of Judea, that is, according to Capellus seven, or according to Dr. Whitty at least ten years after this was spoken, there can be no reference to him here. I am therefore ready to conclude with Dr. Lightfoot and Basnage, (whose opinion Mr. Lardner has so learnedly defended) that among the many leaders, who, as Josephus assures us, (Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 10, [al. 11.] sect. 4—8.) took up arms in defence of the public liberties, when the grand enrolment and taxation were made by Cyrenius in the days of Archelaus, (see note on Luke 13. 2, Vol. 1.) there was one called Theudas, which (as Grotius observes,) was a very common name among the Jews.—He seems to have been supported by small

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

some extraordinary person to whom a number of men, amounting to about four hundred, adhered; who, notwithstanding this, was himself quickly slain by the Roman forces, and all who hearkened to him were scattered, and after all the boasting promises of their leader, came to nothing. After him^b Judas the Galilean arose,¹ in the days of the late enrolment, and endeavouring on the principles of sacred liberty to dissuade the Jews from owning the authority of the Romans in that instance, he drew a multitude of people after him: and the consequence was, that he also himself was quickly destroyed, and all who had hearkened to him were dispersed.^k And therefore with regard to the present affair I say unto you, and give it as my most serious and deliberate advice now in the present crisis, refrain from

SECT. XI. ACTS V. 36

numbers than the second of the name, and (as the second afterwards did,) perished in the attempt: but, as his followers were dispersed, and not slaughtered, like those of the second Theudas, survivors might talk much of him, and Gamaliel might have been particularly informed of his history, though Josephus only mentions it in general. Mr. Lardner, in his judicious remarks on this subject, has shewn, that there were many persons of the same name, whose histories greatly resembled each other. See Lardner's Credib. of Gosp. Hist. Part I. Book ii. chap. 7.

^b After him.] Bos has taken great pains in his note on this text, (Exerc. Sacr. p. 75-78.) to show, that *μετὰ τούτου* may signify besides him, and even before him in this connection with *αὐτοῦ τούτου ἡμετέρας* which he would render of late days. (Compare Acts xxi. 38.) This he observes in favour of his interpretation of ver. 36, which he supposes to refer to the Theudas of Josephus, whose insurrection he thinks must have happened before this speech of Gamaliel.—But, as Beza and many others have abundantly proved, that this would quite overturn the chronology either of St. Luke or of Josephus, I conclude, that the very indeterminate expression *μετὰ τούτου ἡμετέρας* in the preceding verse is most safely rendered some time ago, which, especially in an assembly of aged men, (as no doubt many of this council were,) might well be used in reference to an affair, which, though it happened more than 20 years before, must be fresh in most of their memories. (See Mr. Lardner's Credibility, Part I. Book ii, chap. 7.)

And, as Judas might arise after Theudas, though the same enrolment might (as is supposed in the preceding note,) occasion the insurrection of both, I see no need of departing from the usual rendering of the preposition *μετὰ* in this construction, which every body knows is generally used to signify after.—To connect *μετὰ τούτου* with the preceding verse, (as some propose,) is quite unnatural in grammar, as well as disagreeable to fact.

¹ Judas the Galilean arose.] Josephus's account of this Judas Gaulonites, as he is generally called, may be seen in the beginning of the xviii. Book of his Antiquities.

^k All who had hearkened to him were dispersed.] Mr. Lardner justly observes this does not imply they were destroyed, and imagines, that though Gamaliel would not directly assert it, yet he insinuates, (agreeably to his principles as a Pharisee,) that perhaps Judas the Galilean, as well as the apostles might be animated by some divine impulse, and that in one instance, as well as the other, the doctrine might survive, when the teachers were taken off. (See Lardner's Credibility, Part I. Book ii. chap. 1, § 3.) But the argument will be good on the common interpretation; and, as the word here used *ἀποπέτασθαι*, especially in this connection, most naturally implies a calamitous and disappointing dispersion, I apprehend, that, had it been intended in the sense my learned and much esteemed friend supposes, the present tense would rather have been used.

- SECT. XI. *these men, and let them alone to go on as they can, neither siding with them, nor violently opposing them; for if this counsel which they are taking, or this work which they have performed, be of men, if it be merely a human contrivance and deceit, which we are not capable of proving that it is, it will soon sink and come to nothing of itself; some incident will arise to discredit it, and the whole interest of this Jesus will moulder away, as that of Theudas and of Judas did, which seemed to be much more strongly supported by human force. But, on the other hand, if it be really the cause of God, which does not appear to me impossible, you cannot with all your power and policy dissolve it; but even though these particular instruments should be taken off, he will undoubtedly raise up others: And it will certainly become you in regard to your own safety to be particularly cautious, [and take heed] lest you not only lose the benefit of any deliverance which may be intended for Israel, but also be yourselves found even fighters against the power and providence of almighty God; an undertaking, which must prove infinitely fatal to all, who are so rash and unhappy as to attempt it.*
- 39 *But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.*
- 40 *And, as the council were unable to elude the force of what Gamaliel said, they yielded to him, acknowledging that his advice was safe and wise: And having called in the apostles, and ordered them to be scourged and beaten with rods in their presence, that in some measure they might vent their indignation, and might expose them to disgrace and shame, they strictly charged them, as they had done before, (chap. iv. 18.) not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, if they would not incur yet severer punishment; and, having threatened them with what they must expect, if ever they were brought before them for the same crime again, they dismissed them for that time.*
- 41 *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 *Thus were the apostles sent away, and, far from being terrified by all the cruel usage they had met with, or by the threatenings of their adversaries, they departed from the presence of the Sanhedrim, rejoicing that they were so honoured in the course of Divine Providence, as to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ, and to be parted from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy*

to suffer shame for his name.

exposed to infamy for the sake of his venerable and sacred name, rightly judging, that a punishment of this kind, though generally shameful, became a glory to them, when borne in so excellent a cause, and for the sake of him, who, though so divinely great and so perfectly happy, had submitted not only to stripes, but to death for them. Instead therefore of obeying the or-

SECT.
XI.
Acts
V, 41

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

der of the rulers, they grew so much the more courageous and diligent in spreading the gospel: And every day, from morning to night, they ceased not to pursue this great work; but took all opportunities to preach in the temple, though within sight of the Sanhedrim, and among many of its chief members, who, being obliged by their office often to resort thither, must frequently see and hear them; and at other times, between the seasons of public worship, they were engaged privately from house to house; and on the whole, one way or another, it was their constant business to teach and to preach Jesus as the Messiah, and to proclaim with unspeakable pleasure the good news of life and salvation given to sinners by him: The Sanhedrim, in the mean time, by the special providence of God, suffering them to go on, and affecting to overlook them as beneath their notice, though still with a secret rancour, which at length broke out into the extremest violence.

IMPROVEMENT.

WHICH shall we survey with the greater surprise, 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 an happy immortality. O that the folly of those who have heard it, had never converted it into a savour of death!

Yet, behold, the council renewed the attack! The same madness which instigated the Jews to seize Jesus, when they had

Verse
17, 18

19

20

21 26

sect. been struck to the ground by his miraculous power, (John xviii. 6.) animated these wretches to contrive 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 extravagancies will not prejudice hurry the mind! Against what convincing evidence will it not harden it!

Verse *Ye shall, says our Lord, be brought before councils for my sake;*
 29 and it shall be *for a testimony against them.* (Mat. 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
 30, 31 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 on the right hand of God, and urge them to seek repentance and remission of sin from him, to whom they had denied the common justice due to the meanest of men, the common humanity due to the vilest of criminals in their dying moments, giving him in the thirst of his last agonies vinegar mingled with gall. (Mat. xxvii. 34.)

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 by 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 of teeth be the eternal portion of those who thus outrageously rejected the counsel of God against themselves. (Luke vii. 30.)

34 But God raised up a guardian for the apostles, where perhaps they least expected it; and the prudence of Gamaliel for a while checked the fury of his brethren: So does God sometimes use the natural good sense and temper of those who do not themselves receive the gospel, for the protection of those who are faithfully devoted to its service. Gamaliel had attentively observed former events; which is indeed the way to learn the surest lessons of wisdom, which are not to be learned any where but 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
 35, 37 perish by it. (Mat. xxvi. 52.) 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 dissolve it, but they dash themselves in pieces against it. *Be wise therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth!* (Psal. ii. 10.)

SECT. XI. Verse 10

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 shall lead us 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 unto blood.

SECT. XII.

The choice of the seven deacons. Stephen preaches Christ, and after disputing with some of the Jewish societies, is brought before the Sanhedrim. Acts VI. 1—12.

ACTS VI. 1.
AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews

ACTS VI. 1.
NOW in those days of which we have been speaking, and some time after the fact last recorded, had fallen out, the number of the disciples being multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Hellenists or Grecians, that is, of those converts to the gospel who being foreign Jews, and coming from the western countries, used the Greek language in their synagogues and in their conversation, against the Hebrews, who were natives of Judea, and used the Hebrew or the Syriac tongue; because, as they were strangers at Jerusalem, and had not so much interest

SECT. XII. Acts. VI. 1.

^a *Grecians*, that is, —foreign Jews, &c.] This, for reasons which may be seen at large in Dr. Benson's History, appears to me by far the most probable of the seven opinions mentioned by Fabricius, (in his Biblioth. Græc. lib. iv. cap. 5, note 9, Vol. III. p. 226.) as well as that which is generally allowed by all the best commentators. (See Critic. Magn. in loc.) That of Mons. Fourmont, (Hist. Acad. Roy. Vol. III. p. 105.) that they were Syrians, depends on uncertain and improbable conjectures, either that the Acts were written in Syriac, or ελληνισμι read

for ελεμι, persons belonging to Helena Queen of the Adiabeni. (See Wolf in loc.) As there were so many Jews who used the Greek translation of the Bible, who might therefore very properly be denoted by this word, it is extremely probable, their united interest should be in question on such an occasion, and not merely that of those who came from Syria. —Beza interprets the word, as denoting only circumcised proselytes; but I think, without any reason. See Drus. in loc.

SECT.
XII.
Acts
VI. 1.

as the natives, some of *their* necessitous widows were in some degree at least neglected,^b in the daily ministration of the charities that were distributed to the poor members of the church. And as the apostles were concerned, though not alone, in that distribution, (the money raised as above by the sale of estates having been brought to them,) they were solicitous to obviate all those reflections which might fall upon them on this occasion, as they might otherwise in some measure have affected their usefulness.

because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

- 2 *And the twelve apostles having called the multitude of the disciples together,*^c communicated the matter to them, and said, *It is by no means proper or agreeable, that we,* who have an office to discharge of so much greater weight and consequence, *should leave the important care of dispensing the word of God, to attend the tables of the poor, and see who are served there; and yet this we must do, in order to prevent these complaints, unless some further measures*^d *be taken by common consent. Therefore, brethren,* as you easily see how inconvenient it would be to suffer this care to lie upon us, and how inevitably it would render us incapable of attending to the proper duties of our office, it is our united request to you, that you *look out from among yourselves seven men*^e *of an attested character, full of the Holy Spirit, and of approved wisdom, whom we may by common consent and approbation set over this affair,*^f and

3 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.

^b *Their widows were neglected.]* The apostles undoubtedly acted a very faithful part in the distribution of money raised by the sale of lands: (See note^a on chap. iv. 27, § 10, p. 56.) But, as Lord Barrington well observes, (Miscell. Sacr. Abstract, p. 11.) 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 integrity of their character, and the reasonableness of their pretensions, these strangers would (*ceteris paribus*) be least capable of giving satisfaction.

^c *Having called the multitude of the disciples together.]* Dr. Whitby has solidly proved on this head, that by these we

are to understand, not (as Dr. Lightfoot imagined,) the rest of the hundred and twenty, but the whole body of Christian converts, they being the persons to whom satisfaction was then due.

^d *Seven men.]* Mr. Mede thinks this an allusion to the seven archangels, whom he supposes the great courtiers of heaven: and many other texts, produced in support of that rabbinical opinion, seem almost as little to the purpose as this.

^e *Whom we may set over this affair.]* I apprehend, the apostles speak here of what was to be the joint act of themselves and the whole church, as to be sure, after they had exercised the trust for a while, it would have been most indecent to have devolved it on any, but such as they should have approved.—It is a maxim with me in this work,^g

4 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 Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

who may make it their particular business to attend to the management of it. *And we*, in the mean time, being freed from this great incumbrance, *will constantly attend to prayer, and to the ministry of the word*, which is our grand business, and which we would be glad to prosecute without interruption.

And the speech the apostles made was pleasing to all the multitude, who were called together upon this occasion; and having deliberated a little upon the choice that was to be made, *they elected seven*, to be set apart to the office of deacons, whose names were as follows: There was *Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit*, of whose heroic character and glorious end we shall presently have occasion to speak; and *Philip*, who long continued an ornament and blessing to the church, being at length raised to a yet higher character; and *Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas*, who was not a Jew born, but a proselyte 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 insensibly have prevailed. These were the

SECT.
XII.
Acts
VI. 2.

middle as little as possible with controversies about church order and government, or any other circumstantial points that have unhappily divided the Protestant world. Yet I hope I shall give no offence by observing, that no just argument can be drawn from the opinions of the apostles, with their extraordinary powers and credentials to the rights of succeeding ministers destitute of such powers and credentials. It would however have been happy for the church in every age, had its ordinary ministers taken the same care to act in concert with the people committed to their charge, and to pay all due deference to their natural rights, which the apostles themselves, extraordinary as their commission and office was, did on this and other occasions.—The three grand canons, that all things should be done *decently, in charity, and to edification*, duly attended to, would supersede the necessity of ten thousand which have been made since, and perhaps, if rightly weighed, would be found absolutely to *create* a great part of them.

[Stephen, a man full of faith, &c.] Mr. Fleming (in his *Christology*, Vol. II. p. 166.) endeavours to prove, that Stephen

was one of the seventy, but it seems quite a precarious conjecture. The termination of most of these names makes it probable they were Hellenists; a supposition which also agrees very well with the occasion of their election.

[Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch.] Some ancient writers tell us, that he fell into error in the decline of life, and became the founder of the sect of the Nicolaitans, mentioned Rev. ii. 6, 15; (See Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. iii. cap. 29; and Iren. lib. i. cap. 26.) 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, or else (as Mr. D'Esaut conjectures,) that some of his words or actions being misinterpreted might be the occasion of seduction, under the authority of so venerable a name as his.—We may observe by the way, that it is evident the word proselyte here signifies, one who by circumcision had entered himself into the body of the Jewish people; for none imagine Nicolas to have been what is commonly called a proselyte of the gate, no uncircumcised person being yet admitted into the Christian church.

SECT
XII.Act
VI. 6

persons in whom they chose to repose this confidence; and accordingly they presented them before the apostles: And they having prayed that a divine blessing might attend all their ministrations and care, laid [their] hands upon them, that so they might not only express their solemn designation to the office, but might confer upon them such extraordinary gifts as would qualify them yet more abundantly for the full discharge of it.

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

7 And the consequence was, that the matter of complaint being thus removed, and the apostles more entirely at leisure to attend to the great and peculiar duties of their office, the word of God grew, and the number of disciples in and about Jerusalem was greatly multiplied; and in particular, what might seem very surprising, a great multitude of priests became obedient to the faith,^b notwithstanding all those prejudices, which they had imbibed against this new doctrine, from the scorn with which the great and the noble generally treated it, and the loss of those temporal advantages which they might be called to resign out of regard to it.

7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, having for some time discharged the office of a deacon with great honour and fidelity, was raised by Divine Providence and Grace to the superior honours of an evangelist and a martyr,^c and was enabled, in a very ex-

8 And Stephen

^b A great multitude of priests, &c.] We learn from Ezra, chap. iii. 36--39, that four thousand two hundred and eighty-nine priests returned from the captivity; the number of which was now probably much increased. — I see no foundation in the authority of any ancient copies, for reading with Casaubon, καὶ τῶν ἱερέων, and explaining it as if it were καὶ τῶν τῶν ἱερέων, and some of the priests. It is indeed wonderful, that a great multitude of them 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; (as it is not to be imagined, that, when Christians were cast out of the synagogues, they would be retained as temple-ministers;) But the grace of God was able to animate and support them against all. And it is

very probable the miracle of rending the veil of the temple, and the testimony of the guards to the truth of the resurrection, (which some of the chief of that order heard, and might perhaps be whispered to some others,) might contribute considerably toward 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. — Some would render πολὺν ὄχλον, a numerous body, as if it intimated, that after mutual conferences with each other, they agreed to come over in a body; which might be the case; but, as the original does not determine that positively, I have kept to what seemed a more literal version. For which reason also I cannot, with Heinsius, render ὄχλον ἱερέων, many priests of the lower rank.

^c The superior honours of an evang-

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 which he spake.

traordinary manner to confirm the doctrine he taught; for, *being full of grace and of power,*^k and eminently qualified for the performance of wonderful things, he wrought many extraordinary miracles, and great signs among the people.

But, notwithstanding all the miracles that were done by him, there arose some of the synagogue which is called [that] of the Libertines, as having been the children of freed-men, that is, of emancipated captives or slaves,^l and [some] of the Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them who were natives of Cilicia and Asia, who endeavoured to prevent the success of his preaching, by disputing with Stephen,^m and arguing with him concerning his doctrine. And though they had an high opinion of their own sufficiency to manage the dispute, yet such was the force of his reasoning, that they were not able to stand against the wisdom and spirit with which he spake, the divine Spirit itself guiding his thoughts and animating his expressions, which raised him far above the strength of his natural genius, and made him indeed a wonder

SECT.
XII.
Acts VI.
8

[that, &c.] It plainly appears from the foregoing history of the institution of the office that it was not as a deacon that he preached; but the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit he received, eminently qualified him for that work: And no doubt, many Christians, not stately devoted to the ministry, and whose furniture was far inferior to his, would be capable of declaring Christ and his gospel to strangers in an edifying and useful manner, and would not fail accordingly to do it, as Providence gave them a call and opportunity.

[Full of grace and of power.] So many valuable copies read *χαρισμα*, instead of *δυναμις*, that I thought myself obliged to follow them. See Dr. Mill in loc.

[Libertines, as having been the children of freed-men, &c.] Grotius, Salmatius, Vatrius, Vatrius, and many other illustrious writers generally agree in the interpretation given in the paraphrase; for the illustration of which most of them remind us, that great numbers of Jews, taken on captive by Pompey, and carried into Italy, were (as Philo tells us, Oper. p. 1014.) set at liberty, and obtained their freedom from their masters. Their children therefore would be *libertini* in the proper sense of that word: agreeably to this, the Jews banished from Rome by

Tiberius, (who are mentioned both by Josephus, Antiq. lib. xviii. cap. 3; [al. 5.] § 3; and Suetonius, Tiber. cap. 36.) are spoken of by Tacitus, Annal. lib. ii. cap. 85, as of the libertine race, who might easily constitute one of the 480 synagogues said to have been at Jerusalem. (See Mr. Lardner's Credibility, Part I. Book I. chap. 3; § 4.)—When no natural solution offers, it is hardly worth while to inquire after Altingius's Nethinim, or Cademan's נתינים, that is, persons speaking Hebrew, or the libertines, whom Maimi (agreeably indeed to the Syriac,) supposes to have built this synagogue. But the curious reader may, if he pleases, see a further account of their opinions, and that of some others, in Wolfius's notes on this verse.—Dr. Hammond and Mr. Biscoe, (chap. iv. § 4. p. 105.) take them to have been such Jews as were free citizens of Rome: but I do not remember to have seen the word *libertini* used in that sense.

^m [Disputing with Stephen.] As the most considerable synagogues in Jerusalem had each a kind of academy or college of young students belonging to it, instructed under some celebrated rabbi, it is no wonder such nurseries should afford disputants, like these spoken of here.

sect. to all that heard him. (Compare Mat. x. 20.
 XII. and Luke xxi. 15.)

Acts
 VI. 11
Then, as they found they were incapable of defending themselves by fair argument, they had recourse to a most mean and dishonest fraud; for they suborned men to depose and say, We heard him, even this very Stephen, speak blasphemous words against Moses, and [against] God himself,^a the great author of that religion which Moses taught us by command from him.

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

12 *And, as the law required that a blasphemer should be stoned, (Lev. xxvi. 16.) they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, especially those who were in stations of authority, against him; and setting upon [him,] they violently seized and dragged him away with them, and brought [him] to the Sanhedrim which was then sitting; and there, in presence of their highest court of judicature, they prosecuted the affair to an issue which will be described in the following sections.*

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.

IMPROVEMENT.

Verse We see how difficult it is, even for the wisest and best of men,
 1, 4 to manage a great multitude of affairs, without inconvenience and without reflection: It will therefore be our prudence not to ingross too much business into our own hands, but to be willing to divide it with our brethren, with our inferiors, allotting to each their proper provinces, that the whole may proceed with harmony and order.

1 Let us be solicitous that nothing may be done through partiality: especially let those avoid it who are intrusted with the distribution of charities: It is a solemn trust, for which their characters at least are to answer to the world now, and they themselves must ere long account for it to God. Let them therefore be willing to be informed of the truth of particular cases, willing to compare a variety of them, and then select such as in their consciences they are persuaded it is the will of God they should in present circumstances regard, and in such or such a proportion prefer to the rest.

3 In religious societies it may be highly proper, that after the example here given in the apostolic age, deacons, or persons to perform this office, should be elected by the society, in concurrence with their ministers. It is their business to serve the

^a Blasphemous words against Moses and 14. in the beginning of the next sect against God.] See note on chap. vi. tion.

bles. Happy those societies who make choice of men of an at-
tested character, and of those who appear by the virtues and
graces of the Christian temper to be in that sense full of the
Holy Spirit!

While these good men are dealing forth their liberal contri-
butions, (by which, while Christ has any poor members remain-
ing, we are still to testify our love to him,) let ministers devote
themselves with all attention to prayer, and to the ministry of
the word. Let those, who would administer the word with com-
fort and success, remember of how great importance it is, that
it be watered with prayer, falling upon it as the former and as
the latter rain; and especially see to it, that, by the constant
exercise of lively devotion in secret, in their families, and on
other proper social occasions, they keep their graces vigorous
and active; that, living continually in such a state of nearness
to God, they may be qualified to speak in his name with that
dignity, tenderness, and authority, which nothing but true and
elevated devotion can naturally express, or can long retain.

Let us adore that efficacy of divine grace, whereby a multi-
tude of the Jewish priests were made obedient to the faith!
and let us heartily pray, that, if there are any who claim a sacred
character, and yet, out of regard to worldly honour or interest,
oppose the power and purity of the gospel, they may be con-
vinced by the influence of the blessed Spirit, that they can
have no interest in contradiction to the truth, and that they are
happy in purchasing, at the highest price, that gospel which
may enrich them for ever.

In whatsoever station we are fixed, whether in the world or
the church, let us always remember our obligation to plead the
cause of the gospel, and to render a reason for the hope that is
in us. If this engage us in *disputation with men of corrupt minds*,
we must still *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*,
knowing that *he is faithful that has promised*. (Heb. x. 23.)

The vilest charge may, as in this instance, be fixed upon the
most worthy men; piety may be defamed as blasphemy, and
that which is the true love of our country, as treason against it:
But there is one supreme Lawgiver and Judge, who will not fail,
sooner or later, to plead the cause of injured innocence. And
when we read of this vile attack that was made by perjury on the
character and life of Stephen, we may take occasion to adore
that wise and powerful providence which so remarkable exerts
itself to defend our reputation and our lives from those false
and venomous tongues which, were it not for that secret invis-
ible restraint, might, like a two-edged sword, so quickly destroy
both.

SECT. XIII.

Stephen, being accused before the Sanhedrim of blasphemy, begins his vindication of himself from that charge. Acts VI. 13 to the end. VII. 1—14.

ACTS VI. 13.

SECT.
XIII.
Acts
VI. 13

IT was observed in the last section, that those Jews who had been confounded by the force and spirit of Stephen's argument and address, had brought him before the sanhedrim; and while he stood before them as a prisoner, they set up certain false witnesses, who said, *This detestable man is incessantly speaking blasphemous words against this holy place in which we now are, that is, against Jerusalem and the temple, and likewise against the divinely inspired law, as one that has no reverence at all for its authority. For we ourselves have heard him say, that this same Jesus of Nazareth, whom he celebrates so much upon every occasion as the long expected and desired Messiah, having been rejected and crucified by your authority, in concurrence with that of the whole Jewish people, shall nevertheless destroy this city, and this holy place; and, in consequence of that, shall entirely change the rites and customs which Moses delivered to us,*^a and put an end to the whole authority of his law.

15 *And, at the very instant that this heinous charge was advanced against Stephen, all that were sitting in the Sanhedrim as his judges fixing their eyes upon him, saw a surprising radiancy upon his countenance, so that it appeared like the countenance of an angel;*^b God being pleased

ACTS VI. 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 stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

^a *Shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us.*] I have 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 Paul himself many years after maintained with so much caution. (Compare Gal ii, 2.) This therefore seems to have been the inference they drew from what he taught, of the destruction 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.

^b *Like the countenance of an angel.*] Grotius, Brennius L'Enfant, and some others interpret this as a proverbial expression of the majesty and beauty of his countenance, arising from a transport of inward joy, in the consciousness of innocence and expectation of glory, though

to crown the natural benignity, sweetness, and composure of his aspect, with a refulgent lustre, like what those celestial spirits have sometimes worn, when they have appeared as his messengers to men.

SECT. XIII.
Acts VI. 15.

Acts VII. 1. Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

Nevertheless, the council proceeded against him, and the high priest, without any particular notice of it, said with an affected calmness, as to a common criminal on his trial, *Are these things indeed thus*, as these witnesses have deposed? Thou art permitted to make thy defence, and this is thy time to speak; if therefore thou hast any thing to offer in thine own vindication from this charge of blasphemy, which the witnesses have so expressly advanced against thee, plead it; and the court will patiently attend to what thou hast to say, before it proceeds to sentence.

Acts VII. 1.

2 And he said,

And upon this Stephen began a large discourse,⁹ in which, in the softest and most inoffensive manner, he solemnly declared his firm persuasion of the divine authority of that law, which he was charged with blaspheming; and proving to them from their own scriptures, that God's gracious regards to his people were not limited within the boundaries of that land, nor appropriated to those who were subjected to the Mosaic ritual; at the same time reminding them of some instances, in which they had un-

derstood the true scope of this excellent discourse, presumes to censure it, as containing many things not to the purpose, as well as many slips of memory, though it is expressly said, (ver. 35.) that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit, when he delivered it. I am persuaded, that it will be admired by all that well understand it, and hope the hints I have given in the paraphrase will lead the reader into the true design of it, and shew the propriety of the circumstances introduced. Dr. Benson has illustrated it in a large and very judicious manner, in his *History*, Vol. I. p. 123—135, which I shall leave the curious reader to consult. I only add, that had not Stephen been interrupted by their fury, it is probable, he would have added some other articles, and have summed up the discourse in such a manner, as to shew, that the main design of it was to humble that haughtiness of spirit, which occasioned their rejecting Jesus and his gospel.

dered so cruel a sentence and execution in view: (Compare Gen. xxxiii. 10 & 11; Job. xxix. 9; Eccles. viii. 1; and Ezech. i. 28.) And upon this the translation of 1727, takes the strange liberty of rendering it, *They saw an air of majesty in his aspect*. But with Dr. Hammond and Benson, I rather think there was a supernatural splendour, as on the countenance of Moses, Exod. xxxiv. 29.—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 great legislator: but, perhaps, they might ascribe it to magic; and we know how little they made of other miracles, the truth of which they were compelled to acknowledge. Compare Acts iv. 16.

[Stephen began a large discourse.] Let there with a mixture of rashness and weakness, into which he frequently falls in his reflections on Scripture, not under-

Act. 7.
 1111
 Acts
 VII. 2.

gratefully rejected those whom God had appointed for their deliverers, that they might be cautioned against repeating the fault in this instance to their final ruin. He therefore traced the matter to its original, and said, *Men, brethren, and fathers*, I beseech you all, whether old or young, whether of greater or lower rank, to *hearken* to me, while I offer these things, which may not only serve for my own vindication from this unjust charge, but may likewise remind you of some important particulars, which it is your highest interest in present circumstances seriously to consider. It is well known to all of you, that long before our law was given, or the place in which we stand had any peculiar sanctity, *the God of glory appeared to our father Abraham*, by some resplendent and majestic symbol of his presence, while he was yet with his idolatrous ancestors in Mesopotamia, (Gen. xi. 31.) before he dwelt in Charran, which for a while he did, after he had removed his abode from Ur of the Chaldeans,

- 3 which was the land of his nativity. In this idolatrous land it was, that God appeared and said to him, *Depart from this thy native country, and from thy kindred*, who are now alienated from my worship, and come away from this land, which for so long a time has been the seat of thy family, *into a pleasant and excellent land which I will shew thee* and to which, by my extraordinary interposition, I will guide thee; though thou at present dost not know either its situation or its product. Then Abraham, 4 strange as this command might seem, with all submission readily obeyed it; and departing from Ur in the land of the Chaldeans, he dwelt for several years in Charran, having been led by divine conduct thither, and not immediately receiving a signal to proceed any farther: But, by another call from God, he was directed to depart from Charran, and accordingly from thence, after his father died,^d he, (that is,

Men, brethren, and fathers; hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.

3 And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran; and from thence, when his father was

^d After his father died.] Many passages in Stephen's speech have been objected to, as contradictory to the account given of the same facts in the Old Testament. I can by no means acquiesce in the answer which some have given, that Luke's inspiration only secured to him an exact

account of what Stephen said: for it seems very unreasonable to suppose, that on so extraordinary an occasion the Spirit so expressly promised in such circumstances, (even to the seventy as well as to the apostles,) should leave him to frequent and palpable slips of memory, just

dead, he removed him into this land wherein ye now dwell.

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on: yet 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 wise, that his seed should sojourn in a strange land, and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

to which it is not probable any intelligent Christian minister would now fall in a like circumstance. It seems therefore much more honourable to Christian ξ to suppose, that, if there are any passages here which cannot be reconciled with the passages of the Old Testament to which they refer, (which most that have been objected to, certainly may,) it is owing to some error of transcribers, from which it is plain from various readings, even the copies of the sacred books have not always been secure, as without a confirmed miracle it is impossible they should. — But as for what is here urged, as if it were inconsistent with Gen. xi. 26, 32; xli. 4, from whence it is alleged that, as Terah was but 70 years old when Abraham was born, and Abraham but 75 when he departed from Haran, these make no more than 145 years; but Terah lived to be 205, and so must have lived 60 years after Abraham left Haran, whereas Stephen affirms, that Abraham

God,) by the singular interposition of his providence, caused him to remove his habitation into this land in which you now dwell. And yet upon his coming into Canaan, he gave him no present inheritance in it, not so much as the dimension of his foot, or a piece of land which he might cover with the sole of it; for the little portion of it that he could call his own, he held by purchase, and not as by any claim of divine donation: Nevertheless he promised to give it for a lasting possession to him, even to his seed after him, when [as yet,] by the way, he had no child, and humanly speaking it was not likely he ever should have one: but the faith of our pious ancestor triumphed over all these seeming difficulties, and joyfully embraced the divine revelation and promise.

And when God had brought Abraham into this country, he did not keep him and his posterity here till the time they were to enter upon the possession of it, in consequence of this divine grant, but, on the contrary, God spake [to him] thus in a vision, (Gen. xv. 13, 14.) “that his seed should sojourn and be strangers in a foreign land, and they among whom they sojourn shall enslave and abuse them; and these events, with the circumstances preparatory to them, shall extend themselves to the full

went not from thence till after his father died: In answer to this, it is well observed by Mr. Biscoe, (chap. xviii. p. 595—600.) that this objection is built upon an unproved supposition, that Abraham was Terah's oldest son, or that he was born in his 78th year; not to insist on the solution which is offered to this difficulty by Le Clerc, Keatchbull, Capellas and other, that according to the Samaritan copy, Terah lived but 145 years.— Chladenius's solution, built on the distinction between *adulescentia*, *sojourn*, and *posterior*, fixing his abode there by the purchase of a sepulchre, seems to mean a subterfuge to be particularly discussed.

[Even to his seed.] The particle *ad* so often signifies *even*, that I think it much more natural to read it thus, and to consider this clause as explaining the former, in order to avoid that express contradiction, which seems to arise from translating it as we do.

SECT.
XIII.
Acls
VII. 5

1102. " period of *four hundred years.*¹ And the
 XIII. " *nations to which they shall be enslaved,*" said
 Acts God in the same oracle, " *I will assuredly judge,*
 VII. 7. " *and punish with a righteous and tremendous*
 " *severity: And afterwards they shall come out*
 " *of that land, and serve me in this place; in-*
 " *habiting this land in which thou now dwellest,*
 " *and erecting a temple for the performance*
 8 " *of my worship here.*" This was God's pro-
 mise to him while he was yet uncircumcised,
 and in confirmation of it *he gave him*, as you
 well know, *the covenant of circumcision*, a sacred
 rite, which far from blaspheming, I revere as
 the solemn seal of this contract between God
 and Abraham: *And so being circumcised him-*
 self, as soon as God required it, (Gen. xvii.
 23, 24.) *he quickly after begat Isaac, and cir-*
 cumcised him also *on the eighth day*, according
 to the divine appointment; and Isaac [begat] Ja-
 cob, and Jacob [begat] the twelve patriarchs,
 who were the respective heads of our twelve
 tribes of Israel.

9 *And in those days the providence of God*
 began to work for the accomplishment of that
 surprising prediction which I mentioned but
 now: For the rest of *the patriarchs*, though
 their relation to such holy ancestors might have
 taught them a much better lesson, *being moved*
 with envy² at the superior regard which Jacob

7 And 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 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day: and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

9 And the patriarchs moved with

¹ [Four hundred years.] Many good critics suppose, that this is mentioned here, as well as in the text from which it is quoted, (Gen. xv. 13.) as a round sum; without taking notice of the broken number, the exact time being four hundred and thirty years, as Moses determines it, Exod. xii. 40, with whom the apostle Paul agrees, Gal. iii. 17. For Abraham was 75 years old, when he came into Canaan, (Gen. xii. 5.) which being considered as the beginning of the period, from thence to the birth of Isaac was 25 years; and Isaac was sixty years old when he begat Jacob, who went to Egypt at 130; which numbers added together make 225 years: and from thence to the time of Israel's departure from Egypt was 215 years more. (See Joseph. Antiq. lib. ii. cap. 15, [al. 6.] sect. 2.)

² But Moses, in the text quoted from Exodus, refers to the whole period of the sojourning of Abraham and his family in

Canaan and Egypt, as strangers in those lands; whereas this promise being made but a little before Isaac's birth, and the prediction taking place from that event must include only 405 years, which might in a round sum be yet more easily and properly called four hundred. See Bishop Patrick on Gen. xv. 13, and Dr. Whitty in loc.

³ [Being moved with envy.] From what Stephen mentions of the story of Joseph, it was obvious to infer, (as many good writers have observed,) that the greatest favourites of heaven might suffer by the envy of those who were called the Israel of God, and might be exalted by him after having been rejected by them: A thought worthy of their consideration with respect to Jesus; but it would not have been proper directly to insert such a reference in the paraphrase, as providence would not allow Stephen in the beginning of this finely adjusted defence

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 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction; and our fathers found no sustenance.

12 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 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred.

shewed to his favourite son, most inhumanly sold Joseph their brother into Egypt, where he became a slave, and went through a great variety of calamities: Nevertheless God was with him there, though no longer in the promised land, and made that country a scene of very glorious providence towards him. And he there delivered him out of all his afflictions which his integrity and piety had brought upon him, and gave him favour and high veneration, on account of that distinguished wisdom which appeared to be in him, in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he constituted him ruler over the land of Egypt, and in particular over all his royal house, committing all things in the palace as well as elsewhere, to his direction and management, even to the management of this despised Joseph, whom his brethren (then the whole house of Israel) had most outrageously insulted and abused, and even sold for a slave.

And according to the predictions of Joseph, which had awakened so great an attention, when seven years of plenty were past, a famine came upon all the land of Egypt, and extended itself over Canaan too; and this calamity reduced them to such great affliction and distress, that they knew not how to subsist, and even in this fruitful land our fathers did not find sufficient sustenance to support themselves and their families. But Jacob hearing that there was corn in Egypt, ordered his sons to go and fetch them a supply from thence, and sent our fathers, the ten patriarchs, thither first, keeping Benjamin with him at home. And the second time that they went, when sorely against his good father's will Benjamin accompanied them, Joseph was made known to his brethren; and as the matter was immediately made public, the family and descent of Joseph was discovered to Pharaoh, of which he had not been particularly informed before.

And upon this, with the full consent of that generous prince, Joseph sent and invited his aged father Jacob, and all his kindred to him into Egypt: who accordingly went down thither in

to say expressly what they could not have borne to hear, as appears by the manner in which they resented his application of

these premises when he was drawing towards a conclusion.

Gen. XLII.
 Ver. 9
 VII. 9

500. a company, amounting, in the whole, together with their wives, to seventy-five souls,^b without reckoning Jacob himself, and Joseph's family already there. And thus their sojourning in that land began, during which they were still under the care of Divine Providence, till the time of their return to Canaan approached, of which I shall presently speak.

IMPROVEMENT.

Acts vi. 13
 14
 vii. 2
 Thus loud may the clamour of malice and falsehood rise against innocence and truth. Incessant blasphemy is charged on one of the most pious of men; and we wonder at it the less, since it was charged upon Jesus himself; and, if they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household? (Mat. x. 25.) His disciple learns of him not to render evil for evil, but answers in the language of calm reason, and of meek though powerful conviction.

Verse 2—5
 While Stephen leads back our contemplation to so many remarkable facts of the Old Testament, let us reflect upon them with those devout affections which become the Israel of God. Let us adore the God of glory that appeared to Abraham, and called him forth to be so bright an example of faith and piety, in leaving his country and kindred, to follow the leadings of Providence, when he knew not in what settlement they should end. Let us, in imitation of him, whose children, if true believers, we

^b Amounting to seventy-five souls.] Of the various solutions which learned men have given of the seeming inconsistency between this account, and that given by Moses, (Gen. xli. 27; Exod. i. 5; and Deut. x. 22;) which makes them but seventy, (with which also Josephus agrees, Antiq. lib. ii. cap. 7, [al. 4.] sect. 3,) the most probable seems to be this. Moses expressly leaves out all the wives, (Gen. xli. 26,) whom he had said before the sons of Israel carried with them, (ver. 5,) and only speaks of those that came out of Jacob's loins, inserting in the catalogue that he gives of his children, two grand children of Judah, (to supply the place of Er and Onan, who had died in Canaan,) Hezron and Hamul, though it is probable they were not born till after Jacob's arrival in Egypt; and, having first computed them at sixty-six, he then adds Joseph and his two sons that were before in Egypt, and, reckoning Jacob with them, makes the whole number to amount to seventy. But Stephen speaks of all that went down with him, and so excludes Jacob himself, and the two afterwards born,

and Joseph and his children, which reduces the number thus: The eleven brethren with Dinah their sister, and fifty-two that had descended from them, amount to sixty-four; to which adding eleven wives, (some of the patriarchs having probably buried theirs, and but few of their children being yet married,) they amount in all to seventy-five. See Pool's Synopsis, and Whitby in loc. and B. coe, at Boyle's Lect. chan. xviii. p. 602—606. —Could the reading of *seventy* or *seventy* in stead of *seventy*, (which Beza mentions as a conjecture,) be supported by proper authorities, so that it might be rendered all amounting to seventy souls, it would make the whole matter quite easy. Grotius also supposes, that the original reading here was seventy, and that the Septuagint copy was altered to its present form, to suit with the mistaken reading of seventy-five; for in the two first texts referred to in the beginning of this note, the Septuagint read seventy-five, while in Deut. x. 22, they agree with the Hebrew, and read seventy, which is somewhat strange.

also are, sit loose to every thing in this world, that we may be ready to leave it when God shall, by one providence or another, give the signal for our remove. If the next step of duty lies plain before us, let us trust our leader to mark out all that follow, in such an order, and to such an end, as he shall think fit; secure of this, that, while we follow infinite Wisdom, we cannot wander out of the way to true happiness, and that all the divine promises shall certainly be accomplished, whatever cross event may seem to interpose and obstruct.

When God appointed that the seed of Abraham should sojourn, and suffer in a strange land, the pious patriarch acquiesced in it: nor let us be over anxious about the difficulties into which our posterity may be led. Let us adore the divine goodness, that he has established his covenant with us, and with our seed after us; and while we, in imitation of Abraham, bring our infant offspring to receive the solemn seal of that covenant, let us remember our engagements to instruct them, as they grow up, in the tenor of it, and labour to the utmost to engage their own personal consent to it; and then they will be truly rich and free, though in the penury of a famished land, or under the rod of an Egyptian tyrant.

The mysterious conduct of Divine Providence with regard to the pious Joseph, who became a slave, that he might be made a prince, and who was trained up for the golden chain in the discipline of iron fetters, may surely be sufficient to teach us to judge nothing before the time, and to wait the end of the Lord, before we arraign the seeming severity of a part of his conduct towards those, whom we might imagine the most proper objects of his regard. And surely it will appear none of the least considerable of those rewards, which Providence bestowed on the approved and distinguished virtue of Joseph, that he had an opportunity of nourishing his pious father in his declining days, of spreading a mild and pleasant ray over the evening of a life, which had been so often beclouded with storms, and of sheltering (as it were) under his princely robe, that hoary head, which had once been turned into a fountain of tears over the bloody fragments of the many-coloured coat.

SECT. XIV.

Stephen proceeds, in his discourse before the Sanhedrim, to enumerate several other facts in the Jewish history, all tending to the purpose of his own vindication, and their conviction. Acts VII. 15—36.

ACTS. VII. 15.

SECT.
XIV.
Acts
VII 15

STEPHEN, while he stood before the council with the radiancy of countenance taken notice of above, proceeded in his discourse, and said, I have observed to you, brethren, and fathers, how *Jacob went down into Egypt*; and you well know, that having been supported about seventeen years by the filial gratitude and tenderness of Joseph, *he died there: and our fathers* also, the patriarchs his children, ended their lives in the same country. And yet, by
16 the way, they were solicitous not be buried there; but as Jacob was immediately brought up, with solemn funeral pomp and procession, to be buried in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham and Isaac, (Gen. 1. 13.) so the patriarchs also, having been embalmed and put into coffins in Egypt, (Gen. 1. 26,) were, at the return of Israel from thence, *carried over to Sychem, and were laid in the sepulchre which was made in that field which Jacob bequeathed to Joseph as a peculiar legacy; he having first, as Abraham had done in a like case, purchased it for a sum of money,*^a that is,

ACTS VII. 15.
SO Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he and our fathers.

16 And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of

^a Which Abraham purchased, &c.] It is so evident from Gen. xxxiii. 19; and Josh. xxiv. 32, that the field at Sychem or Shechem, in which the bones of Joseph (and, as it should seem from this passage; and from what is asserted by Jerom, Epitaph, Pauli: those of the other patriarchs,) were buried, was purchased, not by Abraham, but by Jacob, and also that Abraham's sepulchre was purchased, not of Emmor, or Namor, the former proprietor of Jacob's ground, but of Ephron the Hittite, (Gen. xxiii. 10, &c.) that it seems demonstrable, that this passage has suffered something by the addition or omission of transcribers: for to suppose, that Stephen or Luke designedly

used the name of Abraham for Jacob, is, I think, one of the grossest affronts that can be offered to the character of either. A real slip of memory would be a trifle, when compared with such a designed prevarication. But, without supposing either, I apprehend with Beza in his admirable note on this text, that Luke probably wrote only which he (that is, as the connection fixes it, Jacob) bought, &c. which was the exact truth; and some officious transcriber, who fancied the verb wanted a nominative case, and thought he remembered the purchase of Abraham (which it is plain he did not exactly distinguish) put in his name. This solution, which is advanced

the sons of Emmor,
the father of Sychem.

for an hundred pieces of silver, of the sons of Emmor [the father] of Sychem, from whom in particular, the place was named: and the Amorites having afterwards seized it, Jacob had by force recovered it out of their hands. (Compare Josh. xxiv. 32, with Gen. xviii. 22.) And it was by their own direction the heads of our tribes were kept to be interred here, that they might testify thereby to their posterity, as long as their embalmed bodies continued unburied in Egypt, that they died in the faith of Israel's being led forth from thence and settled in the land of promise, which accordingly happened.

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

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph:

19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil intreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children,

And to make way for the accomplishment of 17 this event, as the time of the promise drew near, which God had sworn to Abraham, (Gen. xxii. 16, 17.) the people of Israel, though they had such a small beginning, grew very numerous, and multiplied exceedingly in Egypt; And 18 they continued there for many years in very comfortable circumstances, till another king arose, of a different race and family from the former, who knew not Joseph, and had no regard to his memory. (Exod. i. 8.) He therefore 19 used them in a barbarous way, and forming craftily and treacherous designs against our kindred, lest they in time should grow to be too powerful, treated our fathers most injuriously, and cruelly contrived to cut them off from being a people, by causing all their male infants, in

by the learned Bochart (Hierozol. Part I. lib. ii. cap. 43.) Dr. Benson, and others, is so natural, that I will not trouble the reader with the mention of several others, which may be seen in Dr. Whitty, Sir Norton Knatchbull, and Brennius; but shall only observe, that if this be not allowed, (which has indeed no copy to support it,) the easiest sense seems to be that which Mr. L'Enfant has given in his note, that Jacob died, he and our fathers, and they [that is, our fathers] were carried over to Sychem, and buried; he [that is, Jacob,] in the sepulchre which Abraham bought for a sum of money, and they [that is, the other patriarchs,] in that which was bought of the sons of Emmor, the father of Sychem.—That *Emmor* is very justly rendered *Emmor* the father of Sychem, (as he is declared to be in the Old Testament,) though the relation be not here expressed in the

original, sufficiently appears from other passages, in which not only the relation of a son, of which we have frequent instances, but other relations too are left to be supplied. So *Maria* *torcato* is *Mary the mother of James*; (Luke xxiv. 10, compared with Mark xv. 40) and *Isai*, *torcato* is *Judas the brother of James*; (Acts i. 13, compared with Jude, ver. 1.) Nor was this only usual with the Jews, but (as Bochart has shewn in the place cited before,) we have many instances of the like way of speaking in the most approved Greek writers. (See Dr. Whitty's note on Luke xxiv. 1.)—The other objections, which Rabin Isaac has made against this passage (Chiss. Emor. Part II. cap. 65) are so trivial, that I content myself with referring to Mr. Huet's full account and learned solution of them. Boyle's Lect. chap. xviii. p. 607—609.

SECT.
XIV.
A. D.
VII. 16.

SECT. XIV. obedience to a most inhuman order that he published, *to be exposed* or cast into the river Nile, *that in a little time their race might perish*, and be quite extinct. (Exod. i. 22.)

Acts VII. 19.

- 20 Such was the miserable state to which our fathers were reduced, *in which* afflictive persecuting time it was, that the celebrated *Moses was born*; and he was so exceeding beautiful, that his parents were struck with a peculiar desire of preserving him; and that they might, if possible, secure him from the execution of the barbarous edicts I have just now mentioned, *he was bred up* with all the privacy that could be for three months in his father's house: But as they were unable to conceal him any longer, he was committed by them to the care of Providence, and having put him in an ark of bulrushes, they laid him in the flags upon the brink
- 21 of the river Nile. (Exod. ii. 2, 3.) *And being thus exposed*, the providence of God so ordered it, that he was found by the daughter of Pharaoh, who at the sight of him was moved with pity, and took him up^c and nourished him, with a purpose of adopting him for her own son. And Moses by this means was educated in all the whole circle of arts and learning, which came within the system of the celebrated wisdom and

to the end they might not live.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished in his father's house three months:

21 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

^b Exceeding beautiful.] This our translators render in the margin, *fair to God*, which is the literal sense of the original *אֲדֹמִים כְּרוֹמָה*. Grotius and others have observed, it is a common Hebraism, being no more than an emphatical expression to denote his extraordinary beauty which might perhaps be not unfitly rendered *divinely beautiful*, the name of God being often introduced to express such things as were extraordinary in their kind. So in the Hebrew what we translate *great wreathings*, is *wreathings of God*; (Gen. xxx. 8.) *greatly colors* are *colors of God*; (Psal. lxxx. 10.) *great mountains* are *mountains of God*; (Psal. xxxvi. 6.) and an *exceeding great city* is a *great city of God*; (John iii. 3.) *אֲדֹמִים כְּרוֹמָה כְּרוֹמָה*; Septuag. And in like manner in the New Testament, (2 Cor. x. 4.) *weapons mighty through God*, *אֲדֹמִים כְּרוֹמָה כְּרוֹמָה*, might not improperly be rendered *very strong weapons*. This then agrees with what is said of Moses, (Exod. ii. 2.) that he was a *goodly child*; and, in the account Jose-

phus gives of him, he says, "that, when he was but three years old, his extraordinary beauty was such, that it struck every one that saw him; and as they carried him about, persons would leave their work to look at him." (Antiq. lib. ii. cap. 9, [al. 5,] § 6.) The fame of it had also spread among the Heathen; for Justin in his History relates, from Trogus, lib. xxxvi. cap. 2, that, besides the inheritance of his father's knowledge, (whom he takes to have been Joseph,) his beautiful appearance greatly recommended him. See Grotius and Whitby in loc.

^c The daughter of Pharaoh 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 Providence had so wonderfully interested itself in his favour.

Egyptians, and was mighty in words, and in deeds.

philosophy of the Egyptians; ^d And such was his remarkable proficiency, that *he was mighty in the solidity of his discourses,* ^e and in the prudence of his actions; ^f so that he made a very conspicuous figure, both in the counsels that he gave and the commands he executed, in that polite and justly renowned nation.

SECT. XIV. Acts VII. 22

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

But when he was arrived at the full age of forty years, he was conducted to a very different scene of life; for having been instructed in the knowledge of his real descent, and in the principles of the Jewish religion, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel; and his spirit was so impressed with it, that all the pleasure and grandeur at the court of Egypt could not make him easy, without going in person to take a survey of their state.

24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptians.

And there beholding one [of them] injured by an oppressive Egyptian task-master, who had subdued and got him down, and seemed about to take away his life, his generous spirit was not able to brook it; but he defended [him,] and smiting the Egyptian with a mortal wound, he at once rescued and avenged him that was oppressed.

25 For he sup-

(Exod. ii. 11, 12.) And as he did this action by a special impression from God on his mind,

^a Educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. [Geography, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, natural history, physics, and hieroglyphics, are all mentioned by ancient writers, as branches of Egyptian literature. As for magic in the bad sense of the word, it is not to be imagined that so good a man would have any thing to do with it. Several ancient testimonies to the extraordinary learning of Moses may be seen in the following passages: Phil. de Vit. Mos. lib. i. p. 420; Justin. Mart. Quest. ad Orthod. xiv; Orig. contra Cels. lib. iii. p. 139; Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. i. p. 343.—] I only add, it must have been a self-denial, which none but a lover of learning, and who has made some progress in it, can understand, for a person of such genius and education, in the prime of life, to leave the polite court of Egypt, and live as a retired shepherd in the Arabian desert.

^b Fig. in discourse. [It may seem absurd to reconcile this with what Moses himself says of his own want of eloquence, (Exod. iv. 10.) Some have at-

tempted to do it by explaining this expression, as importing the wisdom of the laws he gave, as they explain the next clause, mighty in actions, of the miracles he wrought. But Stephen seems rather to refer to what he was in the court of Pharaoh, than to what he afterwards proved. I conclude therefore, that it expresses such a weight and solidity in his counsels and speeches, as may be very consistent with the want of a flowing elocution; and the remarkable calmness of his natural temper would render him more entirely master of himself on great occasions, rather than others of ready speech with warmer passions.

[And in actions.] Archbishop Tillotson (in his works, Vol. II. p. 23.) and many others think, that this refers to a story mentioned by Josephus, Antiq. lib. ii. cap. 10. al. 5.) that, when Moses dwelt in Pharaoh's court, the Ethiopians invaded Egypt, and Moses, being made general in the war against them, gave them a total defeat, and drove back the small remainder of their forces in confusion to their own country.

SECT.
XIV.
Acts
VII. 25

- intimating the important work for which he was intended, so he supposed that his brethren, observing the remarkable circumstance of the fact, by which he substantially declared his readiness to venture, not only his fortune but his life in their service, would have understood that the action was expressive of what they might hope to obtain by his means, and intimated that God would give them salvation and deliverance by his hand: ^a But they were so exceeding stupid, that they did not understand it. And the next day he shewed himself again to two of them, as they were quarrelling together, and would have interposed between them, and have persuaded them to live in peace and friendship, saying, Men, my friends, consider you are brethren, descended from Jacob, our common ancestor, and now too joined in affliction as well as in religion, which ought doubly to cement your affections to each other, why then do ye injure one another? But he that injured his neighbour, unable to bear with his plain and faithful reproof, insolently thrust him away,^b saying, What hast thou to do with this controversy? Who has made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as I know thou didst yesterday slay the Egyptian? His blood may cost thee dear enough without adding mine to the account. (Exod. ii. 13, 14.) Then Moses, as he found the matter was discovered, and was apprehensive that in consequence of it the Egyptian power would be soon armed against him, while the Israelites were not inclined to use any efforts for his protection, nor to put themselves under his guidance, presently fled from Egypt at this saying, and became a so-

posed his brethren would have understood, how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.

26 And the next day, he showed 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 judge over us?

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

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger

^a He supposed that his brethren would have understood, &c.] They might have known, that the time drew near which God had prefixed in his promise to Abraham, in a prediction which might probably be delivered down by tradition, and which would be more likely to be remembered under their oppression, as the patriarchs had in dependence upon it directed, that their bones should continue unburied in Egypt; And, when they saw a person of so much dignity, authority, and influence, whom God had so wonderfully preserved, interposing in this generous and heroic manner, which plainly showed

that he in good earnest intended at all hazards to do his utmost for their deliverance, it would have been highly reasonable for them to have taken occasion from this action of his, to enter into some treaty with him relating to it.

^b He that injured his neighbour, thrust him away.] It is plain the speech of this single person is represented ver. 26, as expressing the sentiments of the whole body of the people, as their shewness afterwards to believe the mission of Moses, when attested by miracle, (Exod. x. 20, 21.) seems evidently to shew that it was

in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.

journer in the land of Midian; where, nevertheless, Providence furnished him with a comfortable settlement, though in circumstances of great retirement; for he became the chief shepherd to Jethro, the prince of the country, and marrying Zipporah, his daughter, he begat two sons, Gershom and Eliezer

ACTS.
XIV.
Acts
VII. 29

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

And when forty years more were fulfilled, in 30 which Israel had continued under this bondage, and Moses had been trained up in that humble and retired life for the great work for which God had intended him, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush, while he was feeding the flock of Jethro his father-in-law in the wilderness of mount Sinai, even of that mount Sinai which (as you know,) lay in the confines of the Midianite country, not far from the Red Sea, (Exod. iii. 1, 2.)

51 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,

And Moses seeing [it,] admired the vision, for 31 the bush burned with fire, and yet was not consumed; and as he drew near to behold and survey [it] more particularly, the voice of the Lord came unto him out of the bush, [Saying,] "I 32

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.

" am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, who led them safely through all the difficulties of life, and still manifest a friendship to them; in consequence of which, I am not even now ashamed to own that title." And Moses upon this, perceiving that it was God himself, who was there present and spake to him, trembled at this appearance of his Majesty, and did not dare to behold it; as he intended, with a curious regard. And the Lord said 33

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

unto him, " Loose thy shoes from thy feet; for 33 the place in which thou standest is now holy ground, while I thus visibly appear upon it; and it becomes thee (by that usual token of respect before princes) to express thy reve-

[Loose thy shoes from thy feet.] It was formerly in the eastern nations, and is now in the southern, esteemed a ceremony of respect, to put off the shoes when approaching a superior, lest any of the dirt or dust cleaving to the shoes should be brought near him, and that the person approaching barefoot might tread more cautiously. This, which perhaps was introduced at first in court apartments

where rich carpets might be used, the King of kings requires to be done in a desert, as a token of the infinitely greater reverence due to him. (Compare Josh. v. 15, and Eccl. v. 1.) On the same principle it seems, the priests ministered thus in the tabernacle and temple, no direction being given for shoes or sandals as a part of their dress, though all the rest of it was so particularly prescribed.

SECT. " rance for my royal presence. *I have surely*
 x.v. " *seen the evil and oppressive treatment of my*
 " *people which are in Egypt, and I have heard*
 Acts " *their groaning; and moved with pity and*
 VII. 54 " *compassion at their sufferings, I am come*
 " *down to deliver them by thine hand; And now*
 " *therefore come, and lay aside immediately thy*
 " *cares of a shepherd for others of much greater*
 " *importance, and I will send thee into Egypt,*
 " *to demand their dismissal from that proud*
 " *tyrant, who so injuriously detains and op-*
 " *presses them.*" (Exod. iii. 5—10.)

35 And thus you see, what in present circum-
 stances it will be proper for you to reflect upon,
 that *this Moses, whom they renounced,*^k saying
 with disdain, *Who has constituted thee a ruler and*
a judge? even this very person did God, by the
 36 *bush, send [to be] a ruler and a redeemer.* And
 though he hesitated for a while, he afterwards
 complied; and at length led them forth in tri-
 umph, a willing people listed under his banner,
 doing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt,
 and afterwards in the Red Sea, where Pharaoh
 and his host were overwhelmed; and working
 many other miracles in the wilderness for the
 space of forty years, where indeed they were
 every day miraculously fed by manna from hea-
 ven, and conducted by the pillar of fire and
 cloud.

34 I have seen, I
 have seen the afflic-
 tion 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.

55 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 hands of the angel
 which appeared to
 him in the bush.

36 He brought
 them out, after that
 he had shewed won-
 ders and signs in the
 land of Egypt, and
 in the Red Sea, and
 in the wilderness for
 40 years.

IMPROVEMENT.

Verbo HE is indeed faithful that hath promised; he remembereth his
 17 covenant for ever, the word which he commanded even to a thou-
 sand generations. (Psal. cv. 8.) He multiplied his people in
 Egypt, that Canaan might not want inhabitants, when the sinners
 against their own souls that then held it should be cut off: And
 when he had determined so to multiply the holy seed, vain were
 18, 19 all the attempts of the ungrateful Egyptians to destroy the kin-
 dred of him by whom, as they had formerly confessed, their lives
 had been saved: (Gen. xvii. 25.) Yet was the rod of the wick-
 ed permitted for a while to rest upon their back, that the re-

^k *This Moses whom they renounced.* As the terms of high respect, in which Stephen through the whole of this discourse speaks of Moses, tended to shew how improbable it was, that he should have spoken contemptibly of him, as the witness pretended; so this circumstance of the

Israelites having rejected him, whom God had appointed to be a ruler and redeemer, intimated how possible it was that Jesus, whom they had lately rejected, might nevertheless be constituted a Saviour by the divine determination.

membrance of the bondage and the cruelties they had there endured might, throughout all generations, be a source of joyful and grateful obedience to that God who delivered them from the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage, and an engagement to serve him who had so illustriously triumphed over idolatry, as it were in its head-quarters. The church has often had its winter season, yet Providence has over-ruled the severity of that, to conduce to the verdure and beauty of its spring, and to the fruitfulness of its summer and its autumn.

Moses was born in the midst of this persecuting time, and when exposed, was the care of divine Providence: the compassion which God put into the heart of this Egyptian princess, was to draw after it a train of most important consequences. Moses was fitted for the great part he was to act in the close of life by very different means; the learning, the magnificence, and politeness of the court of Egypt were to do their part, that he might be able to appear with honour in that court as an ambassador, and to conduct himself with becoming dignity as a prince; but they could not do the whole: They were to illustrate his generosity in seeking, in the midst of such various pleasures, and at the expence of such high prospects, to vindicate his oppressed brethren, whose sorrow touched his heart, and whose groans pierced (if I may so express it) through all the music of the court, through all the martial noise of the camp, in which he might sometimes reside and command: *Glorious triumph of faith*, that when he was come to such full age, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and chose rather to meet with affliction in the cause of Christ, than to enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin! (Heb. xi. 24, 25.)

But forty years of retirement in the desert of Midian, spent in the meditations and devotions for which the life of a shepherd gave so great advantage, must ripen him to feed God's people Israel; while they, in the mean time, justly groaned under the continuance of that bondage from which they were so backward to accept of a proffered deliverer.

At length light breaks in upon them in the midst of their darkness: Let us turn aside and behold with proper affection this great sight, the bush burning but not consumed; and therein an emblem of the preservation of the church, even amidst the fiercest flames. Let us hear with pleasure that voice which proclaims to all that hear it, so compassionate and faithful a God, which opens so glorious and lasting a hope; *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.* "Thou art not O Lord, the God of the dead, but of the living, (Mat. xxii. 32;) these pious patriarchs therefore live with thee, and their believing seed shall partake of that life and joy in the city, which because thou hast prepared for them, thou art not ashamed to be called their God." (Heb. xi. 16.)

SECT XIV. How does God manifest the heart of a parent towards these his oppressed children! I have seen, I have seen the affliction of Israel: Thus, O Lord, dost thou see all our afflictions! Let thy church, and each of thy people, trust thee to come down for their deliverance in thine own time and way; let us with pleasure behold this Moses whom they rejected, and from whom a worthless offender could not bear a reproof, made a leader and a redeemer: So is our blessed Jesus, though once rejected and despised, *exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour*. It is not in vain that we have trusted, *it is he that should redeem Israel*. (Luke xxiv. 21.) He has conquered the tyrant of hell, he has broken our chains, he has brought us forth into a wilderness, but a wilderness in which God nourishes and guides us; and he shall ere long have what Moses had not, the honour and delight of leading all his people into the land of promise, and dividing to them a joyful and everlasting inheritance there.

SECT. XV.

Stephen proceeds in his discourse, till his audience are so enraged that they rush upon him and stone him. Acts VII. 37, to the end. VIII. 1.

ACTS VII. 37.

SECT XV. STEPHEN went on, in his discourse before the Sanhedrim, to mention several other circumstances concerning Moses, which he judged important to his present purpose; and having taken notice of the commission he received from God to be a ruler and deliverer, and of the wonders that he wrought in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, he added, *This is that Moses who expressly said to the children of Israel, (Deut. xviii. 15.) "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from amongst your brethren like unto me, him shall ye hear:"* Thereby pointing out, that Jesus of Nazareth, who is to be regarded as the great prophet and lawgiver of Israel, by whom God has sent you, as he did by Moses, a new system of precepts, and new ample discoveries of his will.

ACTS VII. 37. THIS is that Moses which was 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.

A prophet shall the Lord your God, &c. As to the justice with which this prophecy is applied to Christ, in its original and literal sense, see Dr. Bullock's serm. on Deut. xviii. 15; and Mr. Jef-

fery's True Grounds, p. 128—135; whom I mentioned before in note on Acts ii. 23, p. 40; to which add Bishop Shortlock on Prophecy, p. 187. & seq.

38 This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, 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:

This Moses is he who was the chief in the assembly convened in the wilderness,^b who had the honour of conversing with the angel that spake to him there on mount Sinai, and of transacting all things with our fathers, whom he then entered into covenant with God: (Exod. xix. 3, 17; xxiv. 7, 8.) And it was he who received the lively oracles of God, to give them unto us, even those oracles of the living Jehovah, which are so full of divine life and energy, which were delivered in so awakening and impressing a manner, and which instruct us in the way to life and happiness. Yet notwithstanding this, you cannot but remember that this is the illustrious prophet to whom our fathers, even after all the proofs of his miraculous power in Egypt and the Red Sea, would not be obedient;^c but acted a part yet more stupid and ungrateful than that which I mentioned before, (ver. 27, 35.) when they (as it were) thrust him from them a second time, as in contempt of all these wonderful appearances of God by him, and returned back again to Egypt in their hearts: Saying to Aaron, at the very foot of that mountain upon which God had visibly manifested himself to them, while the sound of his voice was (as it were) yet in their ears, and though they but a few days before had seen their great leader ascending up to him by an intimacy of approach allowed to no other mortal, "Make us gods, who may march before us, and conduct us in

^b *This is he, who was in the assembly in the wilderness.* When this clause is quoted, as it has been by some very 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. the argument from thence is certainly inconclusive; for *ver. 36* here evidently answers to *ver. 35*, *ver. 36*, and to *ver. 1* *Moses*, *ver. 37*: and the following clause which expresses his being with the angel, plainly proves the angel to be a different person. But I think the doctrine itself "that Christ was the God of Israel, or the angel who appeared to Moses," a great and certain truth, capable of being evinced from many passages of the Old and New Testament, and from this paragraph in particular, though not from this clause;

and I hope in due time to shew, that the arguments which Mr. Placen has urged against it from Heb. xiii. 2, and i. 2-4, are quite inconclusive.—I follow Beza, Hainson, and the Prussian translators, in rendering *our fathers assembly*, as our translators do, Acts xix. ult. because I am persuaded it refers, not in the general 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; Exod. xix. 17, & seq.

^c *To whom our fathers would not be obedient.* This is observed by Stephen once and again, 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.

seer.
xv.
Acts
vii. 38.

- SECT. 89. "the way; for [as for] this Moses, who indeed brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him, and cannot have patience to wait for him any longer." VI. 11. And they stupidly made a calf in imitation of the Egyptian Apis, in those very days, while they continued encamped in that remarkable situation, and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands, as if, instead of a reproach and abomination, it had been an ornament and defence to them. (Exod. 42 xxxii. 1, 6.) But upon this, God was most righteously provoked, so that he turned, as it were, away from them, and, as in many other instances, punished one sin by letting them fall into another; yea, at length he gave them up in succeeding ages to the most abandoned, public, and general idolatry, even to worship all the host of heaven, with as little reserve, and as little shame, as the most stupid of the heathen nations; as it is written in the book of the prophets, and particularly in that part of the volume of which Amos was the penman, (Amos v. 25-27.) "O ye house of Israel, did ye offer victims and sacrifices to me alone, even for forty years in the wilderness? You know, that even then you began to revolt and provoke me to jealousy with your abominations. And you have ever since been renewing and aggravating your rebellions and treasons against me; for you have openly taken up the tabernacle of Moloch,^a instead of confining your-
- 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 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets. 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, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the

^a You have openly taken up, &c.] The learned De Dieu has a most curious and amusing, but to me very unsatisfactory note, on this verse. He saw, and I wonder so many great commentators should not have seen, the absurdity of imagining, that Moses would have suffered idolatrous processions in the wilderness. Therefore he maintains, that Amos here refers to a mental idolatry, by which, considering the tabernacle as a model of the visible heavens, (a fancy to be sure, as old as Philo and Josephus,) they referred it, and the worship there paid, to Moloch, so as to make it in their hearts, in effect, his shrine, and there also to pay homage to Saturn, whom he would prove to be the same with him or Romulus, who (as this critic thinks,) might be called their star, because some later

rabbies, out of their great regard to the Sabbath, which was among the heathen Saturn's day, have said many extravagant and ridiculous things in honour of that planet. Lud. Cappellus hints at this interpretation too. But the words of the prophet, and of Stephen, so plainly express the making of images, and the pomp of their superstitious processions (see Young on Idolatry, Vol. I. p. 128-131.) that I think, if external idolatry is not referred to here, it will be difficult to prove it was ever practised. I conclude therefore, considering what was urged in the beginning of this note, that God here refers to the idolatry, in which in succeeding ages they were gradually given up, after having begun to revolt in the wilderness by the sin of the golden calf; which certainly appears

star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

“selves to mine, and have carried in public procession the star of your god Chion or Remphan,^e paying a religious veneration to the emblematical figures and representations which you have made whereby to worship them; and therefore I will pour out, on this generation, the wrath that you and your fathers have been so long treasuring up, and will carry you away into captivity beyond Babylon, into countries more distant than those inhabited by the captives who were carried from Damascus.^f”

SECT.

XV.

SECT. VII

13

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

Nor can you be insensible, that their crime was far more aggravated, than the idolatry of the Heathen whom they imitated, considering the exact model of religious and divine worship which God had given them: for the tabernacle of witness,^g in which the tables of testimony were lodged, as a constant witness of the relation between God and Israel, was with our forefathers in the wilderness; a tabernacle which was made in all respects as he had appointed, who spake unto Moses, commanding him to make it exactly according to the model which he had seen in the mount. (Exod. xxv. 40.) Which also our fathers, who succeeded them in the next generation, receiving from their hands, brought in with Joshua, when he led them over Jordan

45 Which also our fathers that came after, brought in with Jesus into the pos-

45

(as Grotius has justly observed,) from its being assigned as the cause of their captivity; which it can hardly be conceived, the sin of their fathers in the wilderness, almost seven or eight hundred years before, could possibly be, though in conjunction with their own wickedness in following ages God might, (as he threatened, Exod. xxxii. 34,) remember that. Compare 2 Kings xvii. 16; xxi. 5; xxiii. 5.

^e Moloch, and — Remphan.] Probably the sun was represented by Moloch, and some star (whether Saturn, Venus, or the Moon, I cannot determine, by Remphan, which plainly is intended to answer to Chion (if that were the original reading) in the Old Testament; but neither the etymology of the name, nor the particular planet to which it referred, seems to me sufficiently evident. The learned reader will find a curious dissertation on this subject in Vitringa, Observ. Sacr. Vol. I. lib. ii. cap. I. with which he may compare Wits. Miscell. lib. ii. diss. V. § 2—17. Beza reads Remphan for Remphan, and interprets it of some gi-

gantic statue of Hercules, called Chion from his strength; and Lud. Cappellus and Dr. Hammond interpret it of an Egyptian king called Remphis: But I can pronounce nothing certain concerning so obscure a point.

^f Beyond Babylon, into countries more distant, &c.] Thus Dr. Prideaux Connect. Vol. I. p. 13, reconciles Stephen's quotation with the original in Acts, where it is said beyond Damascus; and I find no solution more natural. But Beza, observing these words to be quoted in Justin Martyr, according to the Hebrew, thinks the original reading here accidentally changed.

^g The tabernacle of witness.] As Stephen had been accused of blaspheming the temple, he with great propriety takes occasion to speak of their sacred places with due reverence, as raised by special direction from God, and yet corrects that extravagant regard for them, and abundance in them, which the Jews were ready to entertain.

- sect. into the land which had been formerly in possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, and divided the land for an inheritance to them, and this tabernacle continued to be the resort of the pious worshippers of Israel, until the days of David;
- XV. *Who found favour before God, and was made remarkably successful in the wars he undertook in defence of that kingdom over which God had placed him, upon which he made it his petition, that he might have the honour to find a more stable and splendid dwelling for the God of Jacob; and with this view he consecrated a considerable part of the spoils which he had taken from the enemy towards erecting it. But as he was a man of war, and had shed blood, the offer that he made was not accepted, (1 Chron. xxviii. 3.) nor was there any temple for the worship of God, for many years after the settlement of our fathers in Canaan, till Solomon at length, by express divine appointment, built him an house, which till the reign of that prince he never had commanded or permitted to be done.*
- Acts VII. 45
- 46 *Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.*
- 47 *But Solomon built him an house.*
- 48 *Howbeit, the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,*
- 49 *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 *Hath not my hand made all these things, and whatever splendour they have, did not I form the materials, and endow the workmen that have fashioned them with all their art and genius? Do not imagine then that you can confer an obligation upon*

^h *Made it his petition.* So *Heaven* signifies; and from the account the Scripture gives of David, it appears how much it lay upon his heart, and how greatly he longed to find out a place for the Lord: (Compare 2 Sam. vii. 2 & seq. and Psal.

cxlii. 1-5.) The gold and silver, and other costly materials he had prepared for it, amount to so vast a sum, that it is not easy to give an account of it: See 1 Chron. xxii. 14; and xxix. 2-5.

“ me by such structures as these, or by any sect.
“ act of homage which you can render in them; xy.
“ nor think that you can charm me to continue
“ my abode there, or to be a constant guard to Acta
“ you, merely because you have such edifices vii. 50.
“ amongst you.”

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

And Stephen finding, by a confused murmur 51 in the place, that they understood whither his discourse was leading them, and perceiving by the eagerness of their countenance that they would be like soon to interrupt him, applied himself more closely to his persecutors in these remarkable words, which he boldly addressed to them under the influence of the Holy Spirit, by whose immediate direction he spoke: *Oh ye stiff-necked, inflexible, and obstinate sinners, who though you have received the sign of circumcision, and boast that you belong to God as his peculiar people, yet in reality are alienated from him, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, so that you will not hearken to instruction, or be tenderly and seriously affected with it, nothing can be more plain than that ye always do resist the Holy Spirit, and set yourselves in opposition to all his gracious efforts for your recovery and salvation; even as your fathers [did] in former ages, so do ye now. Which of the prophets, 52 who were actuated by that Spirit, did not your fathers persecute? yea, they slew those who spake before, and published the glad tidings of the coming of that Righteous One, of whom you should have heard with delight, and whom you ought to have received with the most humble reverence and joyful consent; but of whom instead of protecting and honouring him, you have now become the perfidious betrayers, and the cruel murderers: For by you his death was*

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

[Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?] I see no reason to conclude from hence, that many scriptures containing the history of these persecutions are destroyed by the Jews, as Mr. Whiston maintains: (Essay for restoring, &c. p. 13.) It is natural to understand this in a limited sense, only as intimating, that most of them suffered such unworthy usage; and we know that attempts were sometimes made to cut off all the prophets of Jehovah at once. 1 Kings, xix. 10, 11. Compare 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

² That Righteous One.] Christ was by way of eminence called so, as being alone perfectly righteous. Compare Isa. lii. 11; Zech. ix. 9; Acts iii. 14.

³ The betrayers and murderers.] It is a fine remark of Grotius, that the Suederim 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 such a divine messenger as Christ was from any injurious assault? instead of which, they had not only basely deserted him, but had

contrived, by you he was condemned, by you the sentence was extorted against him, and execution urged and obtained. Which is the less to be wondered at, as you have already despised so many advantages, and given such amazing proofs of the obstinacy and hardness of your hearts, *who have received the law*, which was delivered from mount Sinai with such awful pomp, *through ranks of angels*,⁵³ that were marshalled in solemn array on that grand occasion, (Compare Deut. xxxiii. 2.) and yet have been so hardened that you *have not kept it*: and now you go on to add sin to sin, in rejecting the milder and more gracious dispensation of the gospel.

54 *And hearing these things, their hearts were, as it were, sawn asunder; and not permitting him to proceed any farther, in a transport of rage they gnashed their teeth upon him, as if they would have devoured him alive.*

55 *But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, was by no means terrified with the evil which seemed to be determined against him, but looking up stedfastly towards heaven, he saw, in a most delightful visionary representation, even while he stood in their court, a bright symbol of the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand*

56 *of God. And being unable to contain his joy, he cried out in a sacred transport, and said, Behold, even now I see the heavens opened,*⁵⁴ and

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

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

55 But he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and

themselves become principals in his murder.

⁵³ *Through ranks of angels.*] It seems evident from Heb. ii. 2, and Gal. iii. 19, that God made use of angels, as the instruments of forming the voice heard from mount Sinai. And, so far as I can judge of the learned Elsner's arguments, in his dissertation against Cocceius on this head, from Wolff's abstract of them, he seems to have the advantage; but this text is so properly rendered through ranks of angels, (*σε δυνάμεως αγγελων*) that I apprehend nothing can be argued from hence, but that they graced the solemnity with their presence. Grotius explains it thus, justly observing, that it is a military word. Heinsius has taken great pains to prove what Vatablus hints, that the word *αγγελων* here, as well as in the places quoted above, signifies messengers, that is, prophets, and

that *δυνάμεις* is to be traced to a Chaldee etymology from *מַלְאָכִים* a copy or explication, as if it had been said, "The law has been copied out, and expounded to you by a series of prophets." But had this learned critic seen, how easily these expressions, as here translated, may be reconciled with the supposition, that Christ, as the great angel of God's presence, presided, while troops of angels assisted, (as independent on these texts in the New Testament, it is certain they did, see Psalm lxxviii. 17.) he would not have had recourse to so forced an interpretation.

⁵⁴ *I see the heavens opened.*] Witsius declares it as his opinion, (Miscell. lib. i. cap. xxi. § 6,) that the heavens were really divided, or rendered transparent, so that the throne of Christ's glory there became visible. But, not to insist on many other improbable circumstances attending

They rush upon Stephen, and stone him.

131

the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

*the Son of man that glorious sovereign whom you condemned and murdered, standing at the right hand of God,** where he shall ever reign, to save his people, and at length to execute full vengeance upon his enemies; as he himself solemnly warned you, when like me he was your prisoner. (Mat. xxvi. 64.)

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

And 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. And casting him out of the city, by a gate which was near the place where the Sanhedrim sat, as soon as they had got without the boundaries of that sacred place, which they judged it a profanation to stain with human blood, they stoned him;† and the

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the

this hypothesis, it would then have been a miracle, if all that were present had not seen it; for on such a declaration they would naturally look up. It is much more reasonable to suppose, he saw a visionary representation. God miraculously operating on his imagination, as in Ezekiel's, when he sat in his house at Babylon among the elders of Judah, and saw Jerusalem, and seemed to himself transported thither; (Ezek. viii. 1—4.) I say, miraculously operating, for the imagination is not itself capable of performing any such wonders, whatever some very ignorant of human nature, or disingenuous enough knowingly to misrepresent it, may fancy.—I am very ready to conclude with Mr. Addison, 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 spectators, and in some instances of their guards and tormentors too. See Addison of Christianity, chap. vii. § 5.

° *Standing at the right hand of God.*] Mr. N. Taylor, (in his excellent Discourse of Deism, p. 69.) observes, 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.

† *They stoned him.*] This seems (like the stoning Paul at Lystra, chap. xiv.

18.) to have been an act of popular fury, and exceeding the power which the Jews regularly had; which, though it might have extended to passing a capital sentence, (which yet we read nothing of here,) was not sufficient (so far as I can find on the most careful renewed examination of all Mr. Biscoe has urged) for carrying it into execution without the consent of the Romans. 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, (John xviii. 31,) but when nothing had passed which had the shadow of a legal trial. (Compare John viii. 59; x. 31; &c.) How far they now might have formed those express notions of what the rabbies call the judgment of zeal, I know not; but it is certain they acted on that principle, and as if they had thought, every private Israelite had, like Phinehas, 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 by the way, directly contrary to Deut. xvii. 6, which requires at least two witnesses in capital cases, where there is a legal process. See Mr. Lardner's Credib. Part. I. Book I. chap. 2. Vol. I. edit. 3, p. 112—120. Dr. Benson suggests some probable reasons, which might induce Pilate (who probably still continued procurator of Judaea) to connive at this great irregularity and outrage. Hist. of Christianity, p. 107.

66835

pleas'd with his slaughter; being so full of rage
 and malice against the Christian name, that he
 thought no severities could be too great for
 those who thus zealously endeavour'd to pro-
 pagate it.

IMPROVEMENT.

THANKFULLY must we own the divine goodness in having fill'd this important promise, of raising up a prophet like Moses; a prophet indeed far superior to him whom God's Israel is oblig'd by him, and ever own that divine authority which attends all his doctrines and all his commands! By him God has given us heavenly oracles indeed, that may well penetrate deep into our souls, as being well contriv'd to animate them, and to secure their eternal life.

But O, how many of those who have heard of him, and been baptiz'd into his name, in a more express manner than Israel was refus'd to hearken unto him, and in their hearts turn back into Egypt; being guilty of practices as notoriously opposite to his precepts, as the idolatry of the golden calf to those of Moses: Long did the patience of God bear with Israel in succeeding ages, while the tabernacle of Moloch and the sin of Jeophan diverted their regards from the worship of their living Jehovah: but at length he gave them up to captivity. Well have we derived, by our apostacy from God, to be made proportionable monuments of his wrath; yet still he continues graciously to dwell among us; and while the Jewish tabernacle, form'd so exactly after the divine model in the mount is no more, and while the more splendid temple which Solomon rais'd is long since laid in desolation, the Most High God, superior to all temples, made with hands, infinitely superior even to heaven itself, continues still to favour us with his presence, and condescends to own us for his people, and to call himself our God. Let us take the most diligent heed that we be not unrecumbent in heart, and in ears, and that we do not, after so fatal an example, resist the Holy Spirit, and by rejecting Christ, incur a guilt greater than 53

and guilt of our rebellion far more aggravated than theirs. The reproofs of the holy martyr Stephen were indeed plain and faithful, and therefore they were so much the more kind; but instead of attending to so just and so wise a remonstrance, those sinners against their own souls stopp'd their ears, lift up their outcries as cry; and like so many savage beasts rush upon him to destroy him; overwhelming that head with stones which

shone like an angel of God: Fatal instance of prejudice and of rage! But how were all the terrors of this murderous crew, when armed with the instruments of immediate death, dispelled by the glorious vision of Christ at the right hand of God! Well might he then remain intrepid, well might he commend his departing spirit into the hands of his divine Saviour, as *able to keep what he committed to him until that day.* (2 Tim. i. 12.)

Let us with holy pleasure behold this bright image of our Redeemer, this first martyr, who following so closely his recent steps, (as he suffered so near the place that had been the scene of his agonies,) appears to have imbibed so much of the same Spirit: Having thus solemnly consigned his soul to Christ, all that remained was, like Christ, to pray for his murderers; full of compassion for their souls, while dying by their hands, he only said, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, and then gently fell asleep; expired in holy composure and serenity of soul, and slept sweetly in the soft bosom of his Saviour.

O Saul, couldst thou have believed, if one had told thee, while thou wast urging on the cruel multitude, while thou wast glorying over his venerable corpse, that the time should come when thou thyself should be twice stoned in the cause in which he died, and triumph in having committed thy soul likewise to that Jesus whom thou wast now blaspheming! In this instance his dying prayer was illustriously answered: In this instance *the lion lies down with the lamb, and the leopard with the kid.* (Isa. xi. 6.) and it is most delightful to think, that the martyr Stephen, and Saul that 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!

SECT. XVI.

The Christian converts, being dispersed by persecution, go into other parts and preach the word. Philip the deacon goes to Samaria, where many embrace the gospel, as Simon the sorcerer also professes to do, and on that profession is baptized.
Acts VIII. 1—13.

ACTS VIII. 1.

SECT. XVI. **AND** in that very day in which this inhuman murder was committed on Stephen, who led the van in the glorious army of martyrs, *there was a great persecution excited against the church in Jerusalem, which continued to rage for*

ACTS VIII. 1.
AND at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem.

lem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

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

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

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

^a They were all dispersed, &c.] Perhaps it was then, that Ananias went to Damascus, chap. ix. 10. while others, after they had preached the gospel in the neighbouring parts, travelled on to Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, chap. xi. 19.

^b Devout men.] Dr. Benson thinks, (as Dr. Hammond in loc. and Mr. Baxter, Vol. IV. p. 864, also did,) that these were proselytes, as he also imagines Stephen to have been; but I can find no proof of either. 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 them to this honourable character. Thus Luke

some time; and such was the severity with which they were pursued by their malicious enemies, that all the principal members of the church were dispersed through the regions of Judea and Samaria,^a except the apostles, who with undaunted resolution were determined to continue at Jerusalem, how extreme soever their danger might prove, that they might there be ready to serve the interest of the church, as there should be occasion.

And Stephen was no sooner left for dead, but ² certain devout men^b had the courage to show themselves openly as the friends of that holy and excellent man, whose blood had been so unrighteously shed; and accordingly gathering round the corpse while it lay exposed to public infamy and abuse, they carried Stephen forth [to his burial] with solemn funeral procession, and made great lamentation for him, mourning that the church had lost so excellent an instrument of usefulness, though he himself was so much a gainer by it, as to be the object of congratulation rather than condolence.

But Saul, whom we mentioned before, like ³ some furious beast of prey, made havock of the church without mercy,^c not only breaking in upon public assemblies, but entering into houses, and dragging from them, without any respect either to age or sex, men and women [whom] he committed to prison, for no pretended crime but that of having embraced the gospel.

Nevertheless God over-ruled all this cruelty ⁴ and rage, to subserve his own wise and gracious purposes: for they who were dispersed went about into several parts, preaching the word^d where-

calls Joseph of Arimathæa a benevolent and upright man, when he speaks of the generous and courageous regard he showed to the body of Jesus; (Luke xxiii. 50.) It is possible, the manner in which these devout men celebrated the funeral of Stephen, might be urged by the enemies of Christianity, as an excuse for farther severities.

^c Like some furious beast of prey, made havock of the church.] Wolfius observes, (Cur. Philol. in loc.) that this is the most proper signification of *havock*, which is often applied to the savages of the desert.

^d Preaching the word.] There is no room

SECT.
XVI.

Acts
VIII. 1

SECT. ever they came; and in many places they were
XVI. remarkably successful, to which the consider-
ation of their being persecuted for conscience
sake might in some measure help to contribute.

Acts
VIII. 4

5 And we have particularly one instance of it in Philip the deacon;^e who, after the death of his beloved brother and associate Stephen, *came to the city of Samaria;*^f and knowing that all distinction between the people of that country and the Jews was now removed, freely *preached Christ unto them*, and proclaimed him as the promised Messiah. And the people who inhabited that city, notwithstanding their natural prejudices against the Jews, *unanimously attended to the things that were spoken by Philip;* as they not only *heard* the rational, convincing, and pathetic words which he spake, but were eye-witnesses of what he wrought in confirmation of his doctrine, *and saw the astonishing miracles which he performed.* For *unclean spirits which had possessed many, crying with a loud voice, came out of them* at Philip's command; and many others *who were paralytic and lame, and laboured under the most obstinate disorders,*

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

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

7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them; and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

to inquire, where these poor refugees had their orders. They were endowed with miraculous gifts; and if they had not been so, the extraordinary call they had to spread the knowledge of Christ wherever they came, among those who were ignorant of him, would abundantly justify them in what they did.

^e [Philip the deacon.] We are sure, it was not Philip the apostle, both as he continued at Jerusalem, and as this Philip had not the power of communicating the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands. (Compare ver. 13, 15, 17.) It must therefore be the deacon, no other of that name beside the apostle having been mentioned in this history. Some think that, for his fidelity and diligence in his inferior office, he was raised to the work of an evangelist. (Compare chap. xxi. 8, and 1 Tim. iii. 10.) But to infer from hence, that they who are ordained to the office of deacons, have by virtue of that, a right to preach publicly, is not only ungrounded, but seems contrary to the reason assigned by Peter for choosing deacons, chap. vi. 2—4. Besides, Apollon preached before he was baptized; therefore much less can we imagine he was ordained. (See Acts xvii. 21, 25.) And Grotius justly observes, that in circumstances like those, any pri-

vate person might do it. (Compare chap. xi. 20, and see Owen of Ordination, p. 65.) As for Dr. Hammond's criticism on the words *κηρυξ* and *εὐαγγελιστής*, as if the former signified *public preaching*, and the latter *teaching in a way of private converse*, it is sufficiently confuted by comparing ver. 5 and 40; chap. xi. 20; xiii. 32; xiv. 15; and many other passages.

^f [Came to the city of Samaria.] For the origin of the Samaritans, and the differences between them and the Jews, see note f on John iv. 9, Vol. I. It is certain, they 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; and as we do not find that they had any 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 scheme. (See Dr. Benson's History, Vol. I. p. 153.) It is not improbable, that the city here spoken of was Sichem, where Christ himself had preached in the beginning of his ministry (John iv. 5, 40, & seq.) which was for many years the capital of that country. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. xi. cap. 5. § 6.

8 And there was great joy in that city. *were immediately healed. And there was great joy in that city,* on account of those benevolent miracles which were performed by Philip in it, and of that excellent doctrine which he preached among them, containing such welcome tidings of pardon and eternal salvation.

SECT. XVI.
Actu VIII. 2.

9 But there was a certain man called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: *But at the time in which the gospel was thus brought by Philip to them, a certain man, named Simon, was before in that city, who had made himself very remarkable by using the unlawful arts of magic,* by means of which he had performed such things as were exceeding marvellous and astonishing to the whole nation of Samaria, pretending himself to be some extraordinary person,^h possessed of supernatural powers; To

10 To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. *To whom they all paid great regard, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is surely 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. *And they paid this regard to him,* not

11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. *on seeing one or two extraordinary facts, but because he had for a long time astonished them with the lying wonders that he wrought by [his] enchantments.*

^k *Ung* the unlawful arts of magic.] Dr. Benson thinks *μαγιστεία* to be entirely of the same signification with *Magis*, and intended to tell us, that this Simon was one of the sect of the Magi, for whose principles and history see Dr. Prideaux, Connect. Vol. I p. 174, & seq. It is indeed possible, he might profess himself of that sect; but I think the word *μαγιστεία* imports much more, and amounts to the same with one who used enchantments, pretending, in consequence of them, to exert some supernatural powers; whereas the word *Magus* (at least about Christ's time,) seems to have signified much the same with our English word *Sage*, and to denote 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. (Compare note^s on Matt. ii. 1, Vol. I.) Yet, as many natural philosophers pretended also to be magicians in the common sense of the word among us, and might make their natural knowledge subservient to that pre-

tence, when it was more imposture, it is not improbable, that they generally called themselves Magi; and so the verb *μαγιστεία* might come to signify the making use of unlawful arts, (as it plainly does here,) while the noun, from whence it was derived, might still retain a more extensive and innocent signification.

^h *Some extraordinary person.*] Irenæus tells us, (lib. I. cap. 20.) 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, that he asserted, all the names of God were to be ascribed to him, and that he was God above all principality, power, and virtue. (See Just. Mart. Apol. ii. p. 69, & Dial. 2. 349.) But, if he ever 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 blasphemous ascriptions were made. The version of 1527 renders *ἡ δυνάμις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ μαγιστεία*, the plenipotentiary of God; but that is far from expressing the emphasis of the phrase.

SECT.
XVI.Acts
VIII.

But when they gave credit to Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the important truths connected with the name of Jesus Christ, they embraced the gospel in great numbers, and were baptized both men and women.

13 And Simon himself also believed the truth of that doctrine which this divine messenger taught, though his heart was not savingly transformed by its power; and being baptized on a profession of that faith, he always kept near to Philip, beholding with amazement the great and powerful miracles which were wrought by him, with which he was himself as much transported as the Samaritans had formerly been at the sight of his magical performances.

12 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 believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

IMPROVEMENT.

IT was honourably and well done of these devout men, to pay this last token of respect to the remains of this first martyr in the Christian cause, by carrying him to his funeral with solemn pomp and public lamentation, though he died like an infamous criminal. Our ever-living and victorious Lord, no doubt, took it well at their hands, and they will be recompensed at the resurrection of the just, when that mangled body which they deposited in the grave shall be transformed into the glorious image of him for whom he gave it up to destruction, and to whose immediate and faithful care he committed the far nobler and more important part.

The wrath of man O Lord, shall praise thee, (Psal. lxxvi. 10.) It was particularly made to praise thee in this instance, by sending out the gospel missionaries, who, during the short repose of the church, had been qualifying for their work, and dispersing them through all the neighbouring countries: Had the calm continued longer, while they were so happy in the love and fellowship 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 (Mat. xvii. 4); such delightful mutual converse might have engaged them to prolong their abode there to future months.

¹ Simon himself also believed. Perhaps, as Mr. L'Eclat and Limborch conjecture, he might think Philip an abler magician than himself, and hope, by pretending to be his disciple, he might have an opportunity of learning his superior arts.

² Beholding with amazement, &c.] It seems with particular elegance and propriety, that the same 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 being there expressed by εὐσεβῶς and ἐκστασιαί, and here by ἐθαυμάζω. It seems therefore quite wrong to translate the former infatuated and the latter transported, as the author of the above-mentioned version has done.

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.

But the remainder of the wrath of this cruel Saul, and the rest of the persecutors, was so restrained in the midst of its career, that the apostles, who of all others seemed the most obnoxious persons, were for the present secure in Jerusalem; the power of Christ wrought secretly for their defence, and, by some unknown operation, either softened or awed the minds of those who (humanly speaking) had it in their power to add their blood to that of Stephen. Thus was our Lord's prediction fulfilled with regard to them, in some of the most pressing dangers that could be imagined, that *not a hair of their head should perish*, (Luke xxi. 18.) and thus was their fidelity and courage approved, by their continued residence even in this hazardous situation, till Providence gave a farther signal for their removal: In this, and in that, they were no doubt directed by supernatural influence, and we may admire their dutiful obedience to those commands, the particular reasons of which we cannot now fully trace.

The continued outrages and cruelties of Saul serve more and more to illustrate the sovereignty and freedom of divine grace, in that conversion which we are hereafter to survey; and give us a 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 also pleasant to observe, how the gospel mutually conquered the prejudices between the Jews and the Samaritans, & teaching the Jews to communicate, and the Samaritans to receive it with pleasure. It was a wonderful providence which had permitted the enchantments of Simon to be so successful before; but at length Simon also believed and was baptized: We see in this, as in a thousand nearer instances, 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, that we may obtain the happy medium between prostituting divine ordinances by a foolish credulity, and defrauding the children of the household of their bread, because they have not reached such a stature, or do not seek it in those forms or gestures which our mistaken caution may sometimes be ready to demand.

S E C T. XVII.

Peter going down to Samaria, to impart spiritual gifts to the converts there, discovers and censures the hypocrisy of Simon.
Acts VIII. 14—25.

ACTS VIII. 14.

SECT.
XVII.
Acts
VIII. 14

NOW when the apostles, who, as we observed before, were still at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, by the preaching of Philip the Evangelist, as was related above, they were desirous that these new converts might be further settled in their Christian profession, by those spiritual gifts which no inferior teacher or officer in the church could bestow; and accordingly sent to them two of the most considerable of their own number, namely, Peter and John, who had been so remarkable for the miracle they had performed, and the courageous manner in which they had borne their testimony to the gospel: Who, though once strongly prejudiced against the Samaritans,^a now cheerfully undertook the province; and going down thither prayed for them that they might receive the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit,^b and so be openly put on a level with the believing Jews, and be shewn to be equally owned by God as his people. For though the supernatural influences of the Spirit were displayed among them in the surprising miracles which Philip had performed, these extraordinary powers were not communicated to them, and he was not yet fallen on any of them, only they were baptized, as was said before, in the name of the Lord Jesus. But after the

ACTS VIII. 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.)

^a Though once strongly prejudiced against the Samaritans.] John was one of those who, provoked at their inhospitable treatment of Christ, (perhaps in proportion to the degree in which he honoured and loved his divine Master) had asked a permission to bring down fire from heaven to consume them: (Luke ix. 53.) But he now understood the genius of the gospel much better.—It is observed by Dr. Whitby and others, that, as Peter was sent with John on this errand by the other apostles, they had no notion of his being their head or superior.

^b That they might receive the Holy Spirit.] We shall not enter into any controversy as to the foundation this has been supposed to lay for the rite of confirmation, as now practised in some Christian and Protestant churches. It may be sufficient to observe that here were extraordinary gifts evidently conferred by extraordinary officers; and how suitably this was done in the present case is hinted in the paraphrase, and more largely shown by Dr. Beauson. (Hist. Vol. 4. p. 137. 138.)

17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

apostles had been praying for them, God was then pleased, in a visible and extraordinary manner, to answer their request; for they had no sooner laid [their] hands on these Samaritan converts, and recommended them to the divine favour, but it was followed with a wonderful effect, and they immediately received the Holy Spirit, and spake with tongues, and performed other extraordinary works.

SECT.
XVII.
Acts
VIII. 17.

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money;

Now when Simon the magician, of whom we spake before, 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 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; Saying, Let me prevail with you by this reward to give me also this power, which I have seen you exercise with so much ease, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands, he may receive this extraordinary communication of the Holy Spirit.

19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

But when Peter heard so infamous an offer, he was not able to conceal his indignation, and therefore said to him, in his own name and that of John, Let thy money go with thee to the destruction to which thou art thyself hastening, since thou hast thought so vilely of the free and invaluable gift of the blessed God, as to imagine it might be purchased with money. It is very evident, from such a detestable proposal, that notwithstanding the profession thou hast made, thou art indeed an utter stranger to the efficacy of the gospel, and hast no part nor lot in this matter, nor any interest in the important spiritual blessings to which all these extraordinary gifts are subservient; for thine heart is not upright in the sight of God,^a otherwise thou wouldst

^a Let thy money go with thee to destruction. This is not an imprecation, but a strong way of admonishing Simon of his danger, and of expressing how much rather the apostle would see the greatest sum of money lost and cast away, than receive any part of it on such shameful terms.

^a Thine heart is not upright in the sight of God. This is an instance of Peter's miraculously discerning spirits, for every common minister or Christian might have made the inference in such circumstances. But on the other side, this story will by no means prove Peter to have

SECT. think far more honourably of this Spirit of his,
 XVII. than to form a mercenary scheme to traffick in
 it in this scandalous manner. *Repent therefore*

Acts
 VIII. 22

*immediately of this thy enormous wickedness,^e
 and beg of God with the deepest humiliation
 and the most fervent prayer, if perhaps his in-
 finite mercy may yet be extended to such a
 wretch, and the blasphemous thought of thy cor-
 rupt heart may be forgiven thee: For though
 thou wast so lately washed with the water of
 baptism, I plainly perceive that thou art still in
 the very gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity;^f
 plunged in that hateful pollution which must
 be bitterness and poison in the latter end, and
 held in the chains of thine own covetousness and
 carnality, and consequently in a servitude utterly
 inconsistent with that state of glorious liberty
 into which the children of God are brought; so
 that thou art on the borders of dreadful and
 aggravated destruction, if immediate repentance
 does not prevent.*

24 *And Simon, as he could not but be very much
 alarmed by such a solemn admonition, answered
 and said to the apostles, If you indeed conceive
 my case to be so bad, at least extend your cha-
 rity so far, as to make your supplications to the*

22 Repent there-
 fore of this thy wick-
 edness, and pray
 God, if perhaps the
 thought of thine heart
 may be forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive
 that thou art in the
 gall of bitterness,
 and in the bond of
 iniquity.

24 Then answered
 Simon, and said,
 Pray ye to the Lord

been destitute of this gift. He might (like Christ in the case of Judas,) have discerned Simon's hypocrisy long before he thought fit to discover it openly, or he might have the gift really in some instances, though not in this; for there is no more reason to suppose, that Christ ever gave any of his servants an universal power of discerning the hearts and characters of all they conversed with, than there is to believe, he gave any of them a power of healing all the sick they came near, which we are sure that Paul (though he was not inferior to the chief of the apostles, 2 Cor. xii. 5; xii. 11;) had not, otherwise he would not have suffered the illness of Epaphroditus to have brought him so near to death, Phil. ii. 25-27, nor have left so useful a fellow-labourer as Trophimus sick at Miletum; 2 Tim. iv. 20.

^e *Repent therefore, &c.* Here is so incontestible an evidence of an unconverted sinner being exhorted to repentance and prayer, while he was known to be in that state, that it is astonishing it should ever have been disputed; and one would think, none could be so wild as to imagine that faith in Christ was not included in

that repentance and prayer, which an apostle preaches to a baptized person as the way of obtaining forgiveness. The dabious manner in which he speaks of his being forgiven, intimates, not that his sincere repentance might possibly fail of acceptance, for that is contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel, but that after the commission of a sin, so nearly approaching blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, there was little reason to hope he would ever be brought truly to repent.

^f *In the gall of bitterness, &c.* The gall of bitterness is the bitterest gall; and the whole sentence expresses, in Peter's strong manner of speaking, how odious and wretched a creature Simon now appeared to him. How much more odious in the eyes of an holy God must such a sinner be! Compare Dent xxix. 18; xxxii. 32; and Isa. lviii. 6. Albertus Obersev. p. 236, and De Thou, would render it, "I see thee as the very gall of bitterness, and a bundle of iniquity." Compare Mat. xix. 5; 2 Cor. vi. 15; Heb. viii. 10; in which places the former thinks it is used in the same sense as here. See Beza's beautiful illustration of this text.

for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

Lord on my account, & that none of these terrible things, which ye have often spoken of^h as the fatal consequence of sin, may come upon me: For I am far from disbelieving the truth of the gospel, how improper soever my proposal might be, or however derogatory from the honour of it.

SECT. XVII.

Acts VIII. 24.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

Thus did the two apostles, Peter and John, 25 perform the errand they were sent upon, and executed their commission; when therefore they had borne their testimony to the truth of the gospel, and had spoken the word of the Lord Jesus Christ to many, who had not received it from the mouth of Philip, they returned to the other ten at Jerusalem; and as they went along, they preached the gospel in many other towns and villages of the Samaritans, which lay in their way.

IMPROVEMENT.

LET us observe this peculiar honour by which the apostles were distinguished, that the Holy Spirit was given by the imposition of their hands. Thus did Christ bear his testimony to them, as the authorized teachers of his church; and it evidently appears, that we may with great safety and pleasure submit ourselves to their instruction; 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 made 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. (1 Cor. xiii. 1.)

Who can read without horror the infamous proposal which Simon made, when he thought of purchasing the gift of God with money? With somewhat of the same horror must we look on all those by whom sacred things are either bought or sold; it is an infamous traffick, about which an upright man cannot too deliberate a moment, but will reject it at once with an honest

^g Make your supplications to the Lord on my account. It is much to be feared, 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 Peter was gone, to their former subjection to him, notwithstanding their conversion to Christianity.

^h These things, which ye have spoken. As the plural number is here used, (if it be not, as I think it sometimes is, per for the dual) since one cannot imagine, as I hinted above, that the proposal was publicly made, it seems most natural to refer this to the awful things, he had heard in the course of Christian preaching, concerning the terrible effects of the divine displeasure against impenitent sinners in the future world.

ⁱ Borne their testimony. See notes on Luke xxiv. 48, Vol. II. § 202.

SECT. scorn and indignation, like that of Peter in the present instance.

XVII. 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 themselves Christians,

Verse 21 in vain to submit like Simon to baptism, or like him to adhere constantly to the ministers of the gospel, if their heart be not right with God; an hypocritical conduct like this will proclaim it aloud, *that they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of*

23 *iniquity.* Wash us, O God, from this odious and polluting gall, which naturally overspreads us; and loosen these bonds of sin with which Satan may sometimes bind those who have a name and a place in thy church, and in which he conveys them to final and everlasting destruction.

22 Yet let us not utterly despair even of the worst of men, but direct them to that great universal remedy, a deep and serious repentance of their sins, and an earnest address to God by prayer; to him who can wash us from crimson stains, and break in pieces

24 fetters of iron. It is some token for good, when sinners seem to fall under reproof, and desire the prayers of those who are more upright than themselves: But if men are animated in such requests and submissions, by no more noble and generous a principle than a 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 confession, and perhaps like him (if we may credit the most authentic uninspired histories of the church,^k) become open enemies to that gospel which they pretended for a while to believe and reverence.

SECT. XVIII.

Philip, by divine direction, instructs an Ethiopian Eunuch in the faith of Christ; and, having baptized him, goes and preaches the gospel in the neighbouring coasts of the Mediterranean sea. Acts VIII. 26, to the end.

ACTS VIII. 26.

SECT. XVIII. WHEN these important affairs at Samaria were dispatched, and the church there was in so flourishing and happy a state, *an angel of the Lord spake to Philip the evangelist,*^a who had been so successful in his labours amongst them, *saying, Arise, and go towards the south, by the way that goeth down from Jerusalem*

ACTS VIII. 26.

AND the angel of the Lord, spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

^k Histories of the church. See Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 14; Theodoret, Harer. Fab. lib. i. cap. 1; and compare note b. § 16, p. 107.

^a An angel of the Lord spake to Philip.

It gives us a very high idea of the gospel, to see the ministers of it receiving such immediate direction from celestial spirits in the particular discharge of their office.

to Gaza, which is through the desert or wilderness of Judea;^b for there in that retired solitude thou shalt meet with a person whom I will mark out to thee, with whom thou art to have a conversation of great moment.

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.

And without presuming more particularly to inquire into the design of the errand on which he was sent, *he arose and took his journey*, as the angel had directed him: *And behold, a certain Ethiopian eunuch, a grandee in the court of Candace the Queen of the Ethiopians, who was the person that presided over all her treasure,* was travelling that way; *who, as he was entirely proselyted to the Jewish religion, had lately come to worship at Jerusalem* at one of the great feasts; This man *was then returning home*; and his mind being deeply impressed with devout and religious sentiments, in consequence of those solemnities which had passed in that sacred place, as he pursued his journey, while he sat in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah;^c

^b Which is desert.] The construction of the Greek leaves it dubious, whether this clause refers to Gaza, or to the way that led to it. Dr. Benson, with Grotius, Dreuus, and other considerable writers, concludes that Gaza, (a city of the Philistines often mentioned in the Old Testament, Judg. xvi. 1, 21; Zeph. ii. 4; Zech. ix. 5,) after having been conquered by Pharaoh king of Egypt, (Jer. lxxvii. 1,) was ruined by Alexander the Great, and afterwards rebuilt with great magnificence, (Arrian. de Exped. Alex. lib. iv. cap. 2; Strab. Geograph. lib. xvi. p. 522; Joseph. Antiq. lib. xi. cap. 8, § 4, & lib. xiii. cap. 13, [at. 21,] § 3,) the new city was built at some distance from the old, which was left in ruins, and therefore called Gaza the desert. But, as this last fact is not sufficiently attested, I rather think, with Beza and Casaubon, that Philip is here directed to take that road to Gaza, which lay through the wilderness, which (though perhaps it might not be the shortest,) was chosen by the eunuch as the most retired; and I think the Greek idiom favours this interpretation, as it is not

but *ἀπὸ τῆς ἐρήμου*.
^c A certain Ethiopian eunuch.] It is certain, but the Hebrew word עֲבָדָה, which answers to *eunuch*, is sometimes very properly rendered an officer: (Gen. xxxviii. 26; xxxix. 1, 2 Kings

viii. 6; 1 Chron. xxviii. 1.) And the learned Heinsius takes pains to establish an etymology of *εὐνοχ*, which should make it an intimation of the good disposition of the person to whom it was given. But in what sense it is used here, is an inquiry of no manner of importance; and I think any curious discussion of such kind of questions would by no means suit a Family Expositor. I only add with Beza, that it seems quite ridiculous to imagine, that *εὐνοχ* was intended to signify any thing more than *er*; I have therefore rendered it accordingly.

^d A grandee in the court of Candace the Queen of the Ethiopians.] It appears, that Candace was a name common to several of the queens who reigned in Nubia, a part of Ethiopia, to the south of Egypt: (Compare Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. vi. cap. 29; and Alexand. Geniel. Diet. lib. i. cap. 2.) So that it is very uncertain, whether this princess be the person mentioned by Dio Cassius and Strabo, as at war with the Romans in the time of Augustus.—I know not how far we are to regard the authority, on which the Dieu tells us, that the name of this eunuch was Judith, and that of the Queen by which she was distinguished from others, Laccas.

^e Sat in his chariot reading, &c.] Probably this chariot was something in the form of our chaises with four wheels; for

sect.
xviii.
ACTS
VIII. 28

SECT. that he might thus fill up that vacant space of
 XVIII. time which his journey allowed him to some
 valuable purpose, and so might be better pre-
 pared to pass with safety through those busy
 scenes which would lie before him when he ar-
 rived at home.

Acts
 VIII. 28

29 *And the Spirit* by that secret suggestion, which inspired men could certainly distinguish as a divine revelation, *said to Philip, Approach, and join thyself to this chariot,* and enter into conversation with the person who sitteth in it, without fear of offending him, or exposing thyself to any inconvenience.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 *And Philip running up to the chariot, heard him reading the Scriptures;* for he read aloud that his own mind might be more deeply impressed with it, and that his servants who were near him might receive some benefit by it. And Philip, being well acquainted with the holy Scriptures, easily perceived that it was the book of the prophet *Isaiah* which was then before him, and that the passage would give him a very proper opportunity for entering into discourse with him concerning Christ, and delivering to him that evangelical message with which he was charged: He therefore took occasion to begin the conversation from this circumstance, *and said to the eunuch, Dost thou understand the true sense of those sublime and important things which thou art reading?*

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 *And the eunuch was so far from being offended at the freedom he took, that he mildly and respectfully said in reply, How can it be that I should fully understand such obscure oracles as these, unless some one, who is better acquainted with the contents of them, should guide me,* and throw that light upon them, which I, who am so much a stranger to the Jewish affairs, must necessarily want? *And concluding from the question he put, besides what he might conjecture from his habit, that he was better acquainted with these things than himself, he requested Philip that he would come up and sit with him in the chariot, where there was room conveniently to receive him, that so he might be farther informed in matters of so great importance.*

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.

though the eunuch did not guide it himself, there was room for another person to come and sit with him, (ver. 31); the

charioters therefore strove to have a seat by himself.

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 he opened not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and

Now the period or passage of Scripture which he was reading at that time, was this; (Isa. liii. 7, 8:) "He was brought to the slaughter as a sheep, and as a lamb before its shearer [is] dumb, so he opened not his mouth: In his deep humiliation his judgment was taken away; and who shall declare or describe his generation? for innocent as he was, his life is cut off from the earth." A passage expressly referring to the mockness with which the blessed Jesus should

801.

XVIII.

Act 8.

XII. 22

33

[In his humiliation his judgment was taken away.] The present reading of the Hebrew clause, answering to this, is much more agreeable to our translation of Isa. liii. 8. He was taken from prison and from judgment. But the seventy interpreters, whose version is here literally transcribed in the Greek, and exactly rendered in our translation, instead of לקח שפטו ונשפטו , appear to have read לקח שפטו ונשפטו , which seems either to have been the true reading, or in sense equivalent to it: for I cannot think, as Beza and many other commentators do, that it refers to Christ's being taken by his resurrection from his confinement in the grave, and from the judgment or sentence which had been executed upon him; agreeable to which Mr. L'Enfant renders it, His condemnation was taken away by his very acquittal; that is, his stooping to death gave occasion to this triumph; a sense, neither natural in itself, nor favoured by the connection as it stands in Isaiah. It seems rather to mean, if the Greek version be here admitted, "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." Le Clerc (in his Supplement to Dr. Hammond,) imitates this interpretation, with a small, and (so far as I can judge,) unnecessary and unwarrantable change in the version, In his humiliation he was judged, he was taken away. But our translation is far more literal; and to take away a person's judgment is a known proverb for oppressing him. See Job xxvii. 2.

[Who shall declare or describe his generation?] This is one of the many passages of the Old Testament prophecies, in which it is not so difficult to find a sense fairly applicable to Christ, as to know which to prefer of several that are so. Many ancient as well as modern writers, have referred it to the mystery of his deity, or of his incarnation; but Calvin

and Beza say, this was owing to their ignorance of the Hebrew; the word לקח not admitting such a sense; and it is certain, it very ill suits the connection with the following clause. Dr. Samuel Harris has a long discourse which seems only a fine-spun cobweb, to prove, that it refers to his not having any witnesses to appear for him, and give an account of his life and character, as he takes לקח in the former clause to signify his having no advocate to plead his cause. See his Second Discourse, p. 65. & seq. and his Essay, p. 145-149. Others, with Calvin and Beza, think it is as if the prophet had said, "Who can declare how long he shall live and reign, or count the numerous offspring that shall descend from him?" But not to say that this idea is much more clearly expressed by the prophet in verse 10. which on this interpretation is a tautology, I cannot find that לקח and שפטו are used as synonymous terms. The former of those words in the Hebrew signifies the same with a generation of men in English who are contemporaries; Gen. vii. 15; Jud. vi. 10; Psal. xcv. 10; eix. 12; and as שפטו in the Septuagint has most frequently this sense, so it evidently has in the writings of Luke. See Luke xi. 30, 30; xvii. 25; Acts ii. 40; xiii. 26. And therefore I suppose, with Dr. Hammond, the sense to be, "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 as it did not seem proper to determine this by rendering it, as in the version of 1727, Who can describe the men of his time? (because a translator of Scripture should leave ambiguous expressions, as he finds them,) so I thought it would be best to insert the paraphrase on both these clauses in the notes, that I might leave room for the eunuch's question in the next verse, which otherwise must have been superseded.

SECT.

XVIII.

Acts

VIII. 34

endure all his sufferings, while ungrateful sinners, in contempt of all laws both human and divine, persecuted him even to the death.

And the eunuch answering to Philip, said, I beseech thee to inform me, of whom doth the prophet say this? of himself, or some other person? Was Isaiah thus inhumanly put to death by the Jews? or did he foretell the sufferings of some future or greater person?

35 Then Philip, secretly adoring the divine Providence in giving him so fair an opportunity, opened his mouth^b with an air of solemnity proportionable to the importance of what he had to say, and beginning from this very scripture, in which he was so plainly delineated, preached to him the glad tidings of that Jesus^c of whom not Isaiah alone, but so many of the other prophets spoke: And after he had laid before him the predictions recorded in Scripture concerning him, he bore witness to the glorious accomplishment of them, and gave him the history of those extraordinary facts which had lately happened in confirmation of that gospel he taught.

36 His noble hearer, in the mean time, listened attentively, and though he saw no miracle performed in evidence of the truth of Philip's doctrine, he found such a light breaking in upon his mind from the view of the prophecies, and such an inward conviction wrought in his spirit by the divine influence, that he became a sincere convert to the gospel. And having for some time discoursed together of the person and the sufferings of Christ, and of the method of salvation by him, as they went by the way they came to a certain water, there being in that place some pool or stream adjoining to the road; and the eunuch, having learnt what was the rite of initiation which the great Prophet and Sovereign of the church had appointed, was willing to embrace the first opportunity that Providence

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?

^b Philip opened his mouth.] See notes on Mat. x. 2. Vol. I.

^c Preached to him Jesus.] Limborch very largely shews, in his commentary on this passage, how shamefully the Jews pervert the whole 53^d of Isaiah, in expounding it of the afflictions of Israel; and I am surprised to find, that Dr. Hammond still

mates, it might be accomplished in some one who lived quickly after Isaiah's time.—See all that Mr. Collins has urged on that head (Literal Scheme, chap. v. § 12, p. 208—220.) abundantly confuted by Dr. Bullock, Vindic. p. 147—156. Compare Bishop Chandler of Canterbury, p. 174—178.

offered of making a surrender of himself to Christ, and being received into the number of his people; upon which he said unto Philip, Behold, [here is] water: what should hinder my being baptized, and becoming from this hour one of your body?

SECT. XVIII. Acts VIII. 30

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.

And Philip said unto him, If thou believest with all thine heart this gospel which I have taught thee, so as cordially to subject thy soul to it, then it may lawfully and regularly be done without any further delay. And he answering, said, I firmly and undoubtedly believe, that Jesus Christ, whom thou hast now been preaching to me, is really the Son of God,^k and own him for the promised Messiah, who was sent into the world for the salvation of lost sinners; and I desire with all my heart and soul to give myself up to him, that he may save me in his own way.

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.

And, upon Philip's declaring his satisfaction in this profession of his faith in Christ, and subjection to him, and readily consenting to receive him as a fellow Christian, he ordered the chariot to stop: and they both went down to the water,^l both Philip and the eunuch, and there he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the

And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord,^m which fell upon the

^k I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of GOD.] It is surprising to see, in how many ancient copies and versions this verse is omitted. (See Dr. Mill in loc. and the version of 1727.) "Nevertheless" says Beza, "God forbid, I should think it ought to be expunged, since it contains such a confession of faith, as was in the apostolic times required of the adult, in order to their being admitted to baptism." Allowing it to be genuine, it 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.

^l They both went down to the water.] Considering how frequently bathing was used in those hot countries, it is not to be wondered, that baptism was generally administered by immersion, though I see no proof, that it was essential to the institution. It would be very unnatural to suppose, that they went down to the water, merely that Philip might take up a

little water in his hand to pour on the eunuch. A person of his dignity had, no doubt, many vessels in his baggage, on such a journey through so desert a country, a precaution absolutely necessary for travellers in those parts, and never omitted by them. See Dr. Shaw's Travels, Pref. p. 4.

^m The Spirit of the Lord, which fell upon the eunuch.] The Alexandrian manuscript, and several other old copies, read it, *Πνεῦμα ἁγίου ἐπέβητο ἐπὶ τὸν εὐνοῦχον*. That is, The Holy Spirit fell upon the eunuch, but an angel of the Lord snatched away Philip. And therefore, considering also how exceeding probable it is, that a person of his rank, going into a country where the gospel was entirely unknown, should be furnished for the great work of preaching it there, by the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, I thought fit to insert it in the paraphrase. (See Dr. Benson's History, Vol. I. p. 165.) I may here add, that Eusebius assures us, (I. c.

secr. eunuch, immediately *snatched away Philip*,^a in
 xviii. a miraculous manner, *and the eunuch saw him*
 no more: for as it thus appeared that Providence
 Acts
 VIII. 39 designed they should be separated, he did not
 attempt to search for him in the neighbouring
 parts, or to go any where to follow him, how
 much soever he esteemed his conversation; but
 getting up again into his chariot, *he went on his*
way rejoicing; with an heart full of thankful-
 ness, that he had been favoured with the privi-
 lege of so important an interview with him, and
 that after having received the gospel from his
 lips, he had seen such a miraculous confirma-
 tion of its truth in the sudden manner in which
 this divinely commissioned teacher was remov-
 ed from his sight, to which all his attendants
 were witnesses.

40 *But Philip*, quickly after he was separated
 from the eunuch, *was found at Azotus*, or Ash-
 dod, 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;) *and*
going on from thence, he preached the gospel
 with great success in Joppa, Lydda, Saron, and
 all the other cities along the coast of the Medi-
 terranean sea, *till he came to Casarea*,^b where
 Providence directed him to settle for a consider-
 able time. (See Acts xxi. 9, 10.)

Spirit of the Lord
 caught away Philip,
 that the eunuch saw
 him no more: and
 he went on his way
 rejoicing.

40 But Philip was
 found at Azotus: and
 passing through, he
 preached in all the
 cities, till he came to
 Casarea.

IMPROVEMENT.

THERE is great reason to adore the gracious councils and
 purposes of God, with respect to this Ethiopian eunuch; he was
 a chosen vessel, and desiring to improve that weak light which
 he had, God took effectual methods to impart to him more.
 Thus shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord, (Hosea

alg. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 1.) this new con-
 vey planted a flourishing church in
 Ethiopia; and it is a fact, in which all
 the most ancient histories of Ethiopia
 agree.

^a *Snatched away Philip.* Probably he
 transported him part of the way through
 the air, a thing which seems to have hap-
 pened with respect to some of the pro-
 phets. Compare 1 Kings xviii. 12; 2
 Kings ii. 16; Ezek. iii. 14. The spacious
 plain, which was probably the scene of
 this miracle, would make it so much the
 more conspicuous, and it would no doubt,

prove a great confirmation of the eunuch's
 faith.

^b *To Casarea.* This was a city on the
 coast of the Mediterranean sea, which
 was anciently called Stratonice, or Stra-
 ton's Tower; See Joseph. Antiq. lib. xii.
 cap. 11. [al. 19.] § 2; & Bell. Jud. lib.
 i. cap. 5. § 4, 5. It was far distant from
 Casarea Philippi, (of which we read Mat.
 xxi. 13.) which was situate to the north,
 in the tribe of Naphthali, and near the
 sources of Jordan. See note ^c on Mark
 xiii. 27. Vol. I. p. 482.

vi. 3.) An angel of the Lord is sent to give directions to an evangelist to meet him in a desert, and to instruct him there in what he had not learnt in his attendance at Jerusalem: And Philip, in obedience to the divine command, immediately retires from the more public service he had been engaged in at Samaria, to execute whatever God should please to call him to though he should order him to go into a wilderness, as he could open even there a door of opportunity to make him useful: and while, like Philip, we govern ourselves by the intimations of his will, we 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 space of time which a journey allowed him, in reading what might edify and instruct him even as he sat in his chariot: He chose the sacred oracles, and, while perusing them, was in an extraordinary manner taught of God. The question which Philip put to him, we should often put to ourselves; *Understandest thou what thou redest?* Let us choose those writings which may be worth our study, and then let us labour to digest them, and not rest in the empty amusement which a few wandering, unconnected, and undigested ideas may give us, while they pass through our minds like so many images over a mirror, leaving no impression at all behind them. The Scripture especially will be worthy of our study, that we may understand it; and we should earnestly pray, that this study may be successful. For this purpose let us be willing to make use of proper guides, though it must be confessed, that none we are like 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 God grant that we who do 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. 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 to the slaughter as a lamb, and dumb as a sheep before its shearers*: And let us learn patiently to suffer with him, if called to it, in humble hope of reigning with him, (2 Tim. ii. 12,) even though, like his, our judgment also should be taken away, and we be cut off from the land of the living.

Let those who firmly believe in him as the Son of God, enter themselves into his church, by those distinguishing solemnities which he has appointed for that purpose, to which the greatest should not think themselves above submitting: Let the ministers

sect. of Christ readily admit those that make a credible profession of
 xviii. their faith in Jesus, and of their resolution to be subject to him,
 to such ordinances, not clogging them with any arbitrary imposi-
 tions or demands. And when 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 go on their way rejoicing, even
 though Providence should separate from them those spiritual
 Verse guides who have been owned as the happy instruments of their
 39 conversion and their edification.

40 The servants of Christ are called to glorify him in different
 scenes and stations of life; happy if in one state and country or
 another they may spread the savour of his name, and gather in
 converts to him, whether from among the sons of Israel or of
 Ethiopia.

SECT. XIX.

Saul, setting out for Damascus, with an intent to persecute the church there, is miraculously converted by our Lord's appearance to him on the way. Acts IX. 1—9.

ACTS IX. 1.

SECT. WE have observed in the preceding history, that the persecution against the disciples
 XIX. of Jesus was very violent and severe after the
 death of Stephen; and particularly, that the
 Acts youth who was called Saul, distinguished himself
 IX. 1. by his forwardness in it; inasmuch that all
 the principal members of the church were driven
 away from Jerusalem, except the apostles.
 (Sect. 16. Acts viii. 1, 3.) *But Saul* was so
 exceedingly outrageous in his zeal against the
 gospel, that he could not be satisfied with this;
 his very heart was set upon extirpating the fol-
 lowers of Jesus, and like some ravenous and
 savage beast he was *still breathing out threaten-
 ings and slaughter against the disciples of the
 Lord:*^b In every word he spoke he menaced

ACTS IX. 1.

And Saul yet breath-
 ing out threaten-
 ings and slaughter
 against the disciples
 of the Lord, went un-
 to the high priest,

^a After the death of Stephen.] There are many disputes, as to the time of Paul's conversion. The learned Spanheim advances several arguments to prove, that it happened six or seven years after Christ's death, about the fourth year of Caligula, A. D. 40. I rather think with Dr. Benson, (agreeably to Bp. Pearson's Chronology,) that it was a pretty deal sooner, but that the exact time cannot be fixed from any circumstances transmitted to us.

^b Breathing out threatenings and slaughter.] This is an exceeding emphatical expression, as Elsner has well shewn in his illustration of it: but it will not prove, that he was able to accomplish the death of many of the Christians, though he might threaten it with almost every breath. It must increase his rage to hear, that those, whom he had been instrumental in driving from Jerusalem, were so successful in spreading the religion he was so eager to root out.

their destruction, and as if all the hardships of exile and imprisonment were too little, with a most cruel eagerness he thirsted for their blood. With this intent he came to the high priest,^c whom he knew to be much exasperated against

SECT
XIX.
Acts
IX. 1

² And desired of him, letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

them. And petitioned for letters from him in the name of the whole Sanhedrim, (chap. xxii. 5; xxvi. 12,) directed to the rulers of the Jewish synagogues at Damascus, whither (as he had been informed) some of those distressed refugees had fled, that if he found any of that way there, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem, to be proceeded against in the severest manner by the Sanhedrim.

³ And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.

And as he was proceeding on his journey, and was now come near to Damascus,^d it being just about the middle of the day, a wonderful event happened, which threw the whole course of his life into a different channel, and was attended with the most important consequences both to him and the church; for on a sudden a great light from heaven shone around him,^e exceeding the lustre of the meridian sun; (chap. xxii. 6;

⁴ And he fell to the earth, and heard

xxvi. 13.) And such was the effect this wonderful appearance had upon him, that he fell to the ground, being strack from the beast on which he rode, as all that travelled with him likewise were, (chap. xxvi. 14;) and to his great

^c [Came to the high priest.] The person now in that office seems to have been Caiaphas the inveterate enemy of Christ, who had so great a hand in his death. 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 be abridged by the Romans, was the supreme Jewish court, and had great influence and authority among their synagogues abroad.

^d [Came near to Damascus.] Witsius has given us a large and entertaining account of this city, in his Life of Paul, cap. ii. sect. 2. It was the capital city of Syria. (Isa. vii. 8;) and abounded so much with Jews, that Josephus assures us ten thousand of them were massacred there in one hour, and at another time eighteen thousand with their wives and children. Joseph. Bell. Jude lib. ii. cap. 20. [al. 25.] sect. 2; & lib. vi. cap. 8. [al. 28.] sect. 7. ^e [A light from heaven shone around him.]

This was occasioned by the rays of glory which darted from the body of our Lord. Some have thought, that Saul, being a learned Jew, would easily know this to be the shekinah, or visible token and symbol of the divine presence, and that he therefore cries, Who art thou, Lord? though he saw no human form. See Lord Barrington's Miscell. Saur. Essay iii. p. 5. But I think, the question implies, he did not know who or what he was, and that it is plain from chap. xxii. 14, and other texts, that he did see, amidst this glory, a human form, which yet he might not at first imagine to be that of Jesus, though Stephen had, probably in his hearing, declared that he saw a vision of this kind, chap. vii. 55, 56. Elner supposes with De Dieu, that this was lightning, and the voice thunder; and is large in shewing, how generally the Heathens thought such phenomena to attend the appearance of their deities.

said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

ACTS XXVI.—16. For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

ACTS IX. 7. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

entirely to thy disposal, and humbly wait the intimations of thy sacred pleasure, determined to submit to whatsoever thou shalt order me. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and stand upon thy feet, and go into the city, and I will take care that it shall there be told thee what thou must do, and thou shalt be instructed in all things which I have appointed concerning thee;

(chap. xxii. 10; xxvi. 16.) "For I have thus appeared unto thee for this purpose, to constitute and ordain thee a minister and servant to me, in the great work of propagating my gospel, and to appoint thee a witness both of these things which thou hast now seen, and of those things in which I will hereafter manifest myself unto thee: And in the testi-

mony thou shalt give, I will be with thee to protect thee by my power and providence, delivering thee in the midst of a thousand dangers from the malice of the Jewish people, and of the Gentiles; to whom, as the one or the other may come in thy way, I now send thee. That I may make thee instrumental to open their blind eyes, and to turn [them] from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may thus receive the free and full forgiveness of all their most aggravated sins, and may have an inheritance among them that are sanctified by means of that faith which is in me."

And the men who travelled with him, upon their rising from the ground, to which they had been struck upon the first appearance of the light from heaven, stood in a fixed posture perfectly astonished,^b and seemed for a while to be turned (as it were) into statues: And they were so confounded, that they uttered not a word, hearing indeed the sound of that voice which had spoken to Saul,^c without distinctly

^b Stood perfectly astonished.) To stand astonished does indeed sometimes signify merely to be astonished, without any reference to the particular posture, as Beza, I. Infant, and others have observed. So in our English phrase, to stand in jeopardy is to be in jeopardy, 1 Cor. xv. 30; and to stand in doubt is to be in doubt, Gal. iv. 20. (Compare Mat. xii. 46; Mark ix. 1; John i. 26; Acts iv. 10; and many

other places.) But the expression here may be literally true, and in that interpretation seems to convey the more lively idea.

^c Hearing the voice.] Beza, Vatablus, and Clarus think, they heard Saul's voice, but not that of Christ. Dr. Hammond, that they heard the thunder, not the articulate sound which attended it. Dr. Benson, as *above* often signifies to understand, supposes those attendants

SECT. XIX.

ACTS IX. 6.

ACTS XXVI.—16

18

ACTS IX. 7.

SECT. XIX. understanding the sense of what was said, (chap. xxii. 9.) *but seeing no one,*^k nor perceiving who it was that had been speaking to him.

Acts IX. 8.

But Saul, when he had seen this heavenly vision, *arose from the earth; 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; (chap. xxii. 11.) *But they* that were with him *led him by the hand,* as it would not be safe for him to ride in such a condition, and ⁹*brought him to Damascus.* And he was at his lodgings there *three days without sight,*^l and during all that time he *neither eat nor drank,*^m but lay for a considerable part of it as in a trance, in which he saw some extraordinary visions, particularly of Ananias who was to visit him, (compare ver. 12;) and the remainder of it he employed in such deep humiliation and humble earnest prayer, as suited his past guilt, and his present astonishing circumstances.

8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

IMPROVEMENT.

LET us pause a little on this most amazing instance of the power and sovereignty of divine grace in our blessed Redeemer;

were Hellenist Jews, who did not understand the Hebrew, which was the language in which Christ spake. But I think with Dr. Whitby, that the most probable way of reconciling this with chap. xxii. 9, is that which is expressed in the paraphrase, and that it is confirmed by John xii. 29, when some, present at the voice from heaven which came to Christ, took it for thunder. See Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. p. 655, 666.

^k *But seeing no one.* [So it was with the men who were with Daniel, when he saw the vision, (Dan. x. 7.) And the Heathens, however they came by the notion, thought their duties often rendered themselves visible to one only, in a company consisting of many. See Elmer, Observ. Vol. I. p. 303—305.]

^l *Without sight.* [Scales grew over his eyes, not only to intamate to him the blindness of the state he had been in, but to impress him also with a deeper sense of the almighty power of Christ, and to turn his thoughts inward, 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 bigotted Jews, to whom, as the most probable associates in the cruel work he intended, the Sanhedrim had directed those letters, which Saul would no doubt destroy as soon as possible.]

^m *Neither eat nor drank.* [Grotius and some later writers think, this was a voluntary fast, in token of his deep humiliation for the guilt he had contracted by opposing the gospel; but it might very possibly be 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.—Were they these discoveries, mentioned 2 Cor. xii. 1, & seq. and Gal. i. 11, & seq. were made at this time, is matter of some debate, and may be examined in a more proper place.]

and adore and rejoice in its illustrious triumph. Who of all the enemies of Christ, and of his church seemed ripest for tenfold vengeance? Whose name will be transmitted to posterity as the name of the person who most barbarously ravaged the innocent sheep and lambs of Christ's flock, and, like the ravenous wolf, most insatiably thirsted for their blood? Whose very breath was threatenings and slaughter against them, and the business of his life their calamity and destruction? Who but Saul: the very man for whom, under another name and character, we have contracted (if I may be allowed the expression) that tenderness of holy friendship, that next to that of his divine Master his name is written on our very hearts; and whom, though once the chiefest of sinners, we reverence as the greatest of the apostles, and love as the dearest of saints!

Thy thoughts, O Lord, are not as our thoughts, nor thy ways as our ways. (Isa. lv. 8.) He had Damascus in view, which was to be the scene of new oppressions and cruelties; he was, it may be, that very moment, anticipating in thought the havoc he should there make, when, behold, the light of the Lord breaks in upon them, and Jesus the Son of God condescends in person to appear to him, to expostulate with him! And how tender the expostulation! Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? Tender to Saul, tender to all his people; for it expresses his union with them, his participation in their interests; so that he looks upon himself as injured by those that injure them, as wounded by those that wound them.

Who, in this view, does not see at once the guilt and madness, and misery of persecutors? They have undertaken a dreadful task indeed, and will find it hard to kick against the pricks; they will surely find it so when Jesus appears to them in that vengeance which he here laid aside; when he sits on his awful tribunal to make inquisition for blood, and to visit upon them all their inhumanities and all their impieties.

But here our merciful Redeemer chose to display the triumphs of his grace, rather than the terrors of his wrath; and, behold how sudden a transformation it wrought? Behold, Saul, who had so insolently assaulted his throne, now prostrate at his feet! surrendering, as it were, at discretion; presenting a blank, that Jesus might write his own terms, and saying, as every one who is indeed the trophy of divine grace will say, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? As ready to employ all his powers for the service of Christ as he had ever before been to arm them for the destruction of his church.

What must the attendants of his journey think on such an occasion? If they were also converted, here were farther witnesses added to Christianity, and more monuments of divine grace erected; but if they were not converted, what an instance was this of their hardness and obstinacy? and even though their

SECT.

XIX.

Verse

SECT. XIX.
 Verse 8. bodily sight was continued, how much was their blindness worse than his! Let us pray that we may all be taught of God; and if we are brought to resign ourselves to God in sincerity and truth, let us acknowledge the eternal operations of his grace, as that to which the victory is owing, even where eternal circumstances have been most remarkable.

9 The situation in which Saul lay, seems indeed to have been very melancholy, his sight lost, his appetite for food gone, and all his soul wrapt up in deep astonishment, or melted in deep contrition and remorse; but though he might *sow in tears, he reaped in joy*, (1st Sal. cxxvi. 5.) It appears that light and gladness were sown for him. He came refined out of the furnace, and these three dark and dismal days are, no doubt, recollected by him in the heavenly world, as the era from whence he dates the first beamings of that divine light in which he now dwells. Let us never be afraid of the pangs of that godly sorrow, which working repentance to salvation not to be repented of, will soon be ten thousand times overbalanced by that exceeding weight of glory, and those full transports of eternal joy, for which it will prepare the soul.

SECT. XX.

Christ sends Ananias to Saul, to restore his sight; Saul is baptiz- ed and having preached the gospel at Damascus and Jerusalem, to avoid the rage of the Jews, is sent by the disciples to Tarsus. Acts IX. 10—31.

ACTS IX. 10.

SECT. XX.
 Acts IX. 10. *NO*W while Saul lay blind at Damascus, in those melancholy circumstances which have been just described, it pleased the Lord on the third day, to provide for his comfort and instruction: for *there was a certain disciple at Damascus, whose name was Ananias,*^a and he was a pious man according to the strictest precepts of the law, and had an honourable character among all the Jews who dwelt in

ACTS IX. 10.
 AND there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias, and to him

^a *Whose name was Ananias*]. As we read of Ananias only in this story, it is difficult to determine who he was. Dr. Benson thinks him to have been a native of Jerusalem, and one who had carried the gospel from thence to Damascus. (Hist. Vol. I. p. 169.) Some of the ancients say, he was one of the seventy disciples. Others from his being called a devout man according to the law, (Philip. xxi. 17.) have thought he was a

proselyte of righteousness, as it is usual now to speak. Perhaps he was a native of Damascus converted at the first Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended, and honoured 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 baptise him may farther intimate.

said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold I am here, Lord.

11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas, for one called Saul of Tarsus: for behold, he prayeth,

12 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 saints 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

the city as well as among the disciples of Jesus, to whom he was allied in the strictest bonds: (chap. xxii. 12.) And the Lord appeared and said to him in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I [am here,] Lord, ready to receive and execute thy commands. And upon this, the

Lord [said,] to him, Arise, and go to that which is called the Straight Street, and inquire in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus, whose name is Saul; for behold, he is now praying with great earnestness and affection; and I have compassion upon him, and am determined to send him immediate relief: And accordingly he hath just now seen thee in a vision, as a man whose name it has been intimated to him is Ananias; and this person has been miraculously represented to him, as coming in, and laying his hand upon him, that he might recover his sight, which by a very extraordinary occurrence he has for the present lost.

And Ananias, astonished to hear such a name, mentioned in such a connection, answered, Lord, is it possible thou shouldst send me on any message of favour to Saul of Tarsus! I have heard of many concerning this man even at this distance, how violent a persecutor he has been, and how much evil he has done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And I am credibly informed, that he is now come hither to Damascus with an intent to persecute thy people here, and that he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that invoke thy name, and to carry them prisoners to Jerusalem to be tried there.

But the Lord said unto him, Ananias, thou canst not imagine that I am ignorant of any of these things, or that it is for thee to debate my sovereign determinations; Go thy way, and execute immediately that message of mercy with which I have charged thee; for, how great and aggravated soever his former transgressions may have been, I assure thee that this very man is to me a chosen vessel, whom I have by my free

^b And he hath seen, &c.] Mf. A. Infant and several others think, these are the words of the historian, and therefore should be included in a parenthesis, and rendered And he, i. e. Saul saw a man, &c. But then I should think his name would

have been expressed, *ὡς ἵδοντος αὐτοῦ* 7. 2.

^c A chosen vessel.] Boga justly observes, that an instrument of building, or furniture, &c. is often in Greek called *σκεῦος*; and the word may very probably have

MEET.
XX.
Acts
IX. 15.

and sovereign grace ordained to bear my name as an apostle, and to preach my gospel; the truth of which he shall maintain with the greatest fidelity and courage before the Gentile nations and their kings,^d and before the children of Israel, and shall be made an instrument of eminent service: For I will immediately introduce him into a scene of action quite different from what he hath hitherto known, and will shew him how many things he who has done so much to oppose and injure my cause must at length suffer for my name;^e and he shall undergo them all with such cheerfulness, as shall render him an example to my saints in all the remotest ages of my church.

- 17 And upon this Ananias presumed not to object any farther, but with all readiness and joy undertook the message: He went therefore, and entered into the house to which he had been so particularly directed; and being introduced to the person whom he was sent to visit, and laying his hands upon him, he said, My dear brother Saul, for I most readily own thee under that relation, the Lord [even] Jesus who appeared to thee on the way as thou camest hither to Damascus, hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit, which shall be poured out upon thee in a miraculous way, before I leave this place. "For the God of our

Acts
xxii 14

fathers hath, in his secret and mysterious counsels, fore-ordained thee to know his will,

me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

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.

Acts XXII. 14.
—The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou

that signification here. One would think, none who knew Saul's character before his conversion, could imagine, there was so much merit and excellence in it, as that he should on this account be spoken of by Christ, as a choice or singular valuable person: (Compare 1 Tim. i. 15—15.) Yet this has been hinted of late, though the apostle speaks of himself as separated from his mother's womb, Gal. i. 15. which, in concurrence with many other Scriptures shews, how much more natural and reasonable it is, to acquiesce in the obvious and common interpretation we have given.

^d Before the Gentile nations, &c.] Ananias could not infer from hence, that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, while they continued uncircumcised, and so aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, &c. (a mystery which Peter did not yet know) for Christ might have used

these expressions, had Paul been brought before Heathen kings for preaching him as the Messiah to the Jews and proselytes.

^e I will shew him how many things he must suffer, &c.] If (as Grotius seems to think,) this intimates that Saul should presently have a revelation, and perhaps a visionary representation of all his sufferings among Jews and Gentiles by land and sea, in tumults and imprisonments, of which this book and his epistles give so large a description: it must appear a most heroic instance of courage and zeal, that with such a view he should offer himself to baptism, and go on so steadily in his ministerial work. Never sure was there, on that supposition, an exacter image of Jesus, who so resolutely persevered in his work, though he knew all things that were to come upon him.

shouldst know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldst hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness, unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Acts IX. 18.

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.—

[*Something like scales.*] Perhaps the outward coat of his eyes might be scorched with the lightning; and what fell from them might have some resemblance to the small scales of fishes.—Grotius thinks, this was an emblem of the darkness and prejudice, which before veiled his eyes; and their falling off intimated the clearer views of divine things, which he should for the future enjoy.

[He received the Holy Spirit.] We are sure from ver. 12, that the laying on of Ananias's hands was introductory to Saul's receiving his sight; and as this is connected with his receiving the Holy Spirit in ver. 17, it is reasonable to conclude, that they were both conferred at this time. Yet it seems evident, that the recovery of his sight preceded, and the effusion of the Spirit followed, his baptism; so that Ananias must have laid hands on him twice, if that action of his attended the descent of the Spirit on Saul; and it is the more probable it did not, as

“and to see that righteous person whom our ungrateful nation hath crucified, and to hear as thou hast done the voice from his own mouth, though he be now returned to the celestial glory: For thou shalt be his faithful and successful witness, and shall be employed to testify unto all men the truth of those things which thou hast already seen and heard, and of those which he shall hereafter reveal unto thee. And now, why dost thou delay a moment longer? Arise, and be baptized, and thereby express thy desire to wash away thy sins, invoking the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that illustrious and divine name, which thou hast formerly opposed and blasphemed.

And immediately, as soon as Ananias had entered the place and laid his hands upon him, there fell from his eyes [something] like scales; and he presently recovered his sight, and upon this arose and was baptized: And presently after this, he received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit,* by which he was much more particularly instructed in the contents of the gospel, and fitted to communicate it with the greatest advantage to others. And having received food, after a long abstinence, he was quickly strengthened, and recovered his former

we do not elsewhere find, that any but the apostles had the power of conferring it. See chap. viii. 16, 17. Dr. Benson has illustrated this by a variety of ingenious arguments, and is particularly in his conjectures (perhaps too minutely pursued,) as to the several gifts which were now communicated. (Hist. Vol. 3. p. 171—180.) We are sure, he had an ample revelation of the Christian scheme; otherwise he could not have been qualified to preach it as he did: (Compare Gal. i. 12; 1 Cor. xi. 23; xv. 5.) And we particularly find, he was enlightened in the sense of the Old Testament prophecies. He had also, no doubt, many other miraculous gifts and powers, besides that of speaking with tongues. But whether these were given (so far as they were steadily resident in him,) instantaneously or gradually, I think we cannot certainly determine. Some miraculous effects did, beyond all doubt, immediately appear.

SECT.

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spef. health and vigour; which it was his immediate
 xx. care to employ in the service of his new Master.

And as things now appeared to Saul in quite
 another light than they had done before, his
 disposition was entirely changed; and he asso-
 ciated with those whom he had come to perse-
 cute, and was for several days with the disciples

20 at Damascus. And immediately after his con-
 version, he preached Christ in the Synagogues,^h
 with great freedom and zeal, and proved by in-
 contestible arguments that he is the Son of God,

21 And all that heard him were astonished, and said,
 Is not this he who in Jerusalem was so exceed-
 ing zealous in his opposition to this way, as to
 spread desolation among them who called on this
 very name? and who came hither also to this
 end, that he might seize on all the followers of
 Jesus, whom he could find, and carry them
 bound to the chief priests? Whence then pro-

22 ceeds such an unaccountable change? But Saul
 perceiving there was such particular notice
 taken of the matter, and hoping that his testi-
 mony might have so much the more weight, in
 consequence of the knowledge which they had
 of his former character, was strengthened and
 animated so much the more in his zeal and ac-
 tivity; and confounded the unbelieving Jews that
 dwelt at Damascus, confirming and evincing with
 the fullest evidence, that this Jesus of Nazareth
 is indeed the Messiah.

23 And when many days were fulfilled, in which
 several events happened which are elsewhere
 hinted at; and particularly, after he had made
 an excursion into Arabia to spread the gospel
 there, and returned to Damascus again, (Gal.
 i. 16—18,) the Jews, finding it was impossible
 to answer his arguments, or to damp his zeal,
 resolved to attempt another way to silence him,

—Then was Saul
 certain days with
 the disciples which
 were at Damascus.

20 And straight-
 way he preached
 Christ in the Syna-
 gogues, that he is the
 Son of God.

21 But all that
 heard him were ama-
 zed, and said, Is not
 this he that destroy-
 ed 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 in-
 creased the more in
 strength, and con-
 founded the Jews
 which dwelt at Da-
 mascus, proving that
 this is very Christ.

23 And after that
 many days were ful-
 filled, the Jews took
 counsel to kill him:

^h Immediately he preached Christ, &c.]
 Dr. Wells, Script. Geog. Vol. III. p. 375.
 & in loc. says, that as soon as Saul had
 strength to go any where abroad, he re-
 tired into the desert of Arabia, where he
 supposes him to have been favoured with
 the full revelation of Christianity, and to
 have spent some considerable time in de-
 votion; after which he returned to Da-
 mascus, and preached; which he argues
 from Gal. i. 16, 17. But that seems in-

consistent with what is here said of his
 preaching immediately. I therefore im-
 agine, his going into Arabia (to which
 Damascus now belonged,) was his making
 excursions from that city into the neigh-
 bouring parts of the country, and per-
 haps taking a large circuit about it,
 which might be his employment between
 the time in which he began to preach in
 Damascus, and his quitting it after re-
 peated labours there to go to Jerusalem.

24 But their laying await 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.

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.

and, that they might effectually accomplish it, *conspired to kill him.*¹ But Providence so ordered it, that *their design* was happily discovered and *made known to Saul*, who therefore kept himself concealed, and would not give them any opportunity to execute their purpose; and though *they watched all the gates of the city continually,*² and some assassin or other was waiting at each of them *day and night, to attack and murder him* if he should offer to retire from thence, yet they could not compass their cruel design. But as his present situation was still judged unsafe, and it was no way proper he should be thus confined, *the other disciples of Jesus, anxious to preserve a life of so much value, took him by night, and let him down by the side of the wall in a basket,* and so dismissed him; heartily committing him to the divine protection, by the assistance of which he escaped the hands of those blood-thirsty Jews that were lurking about the gates. (2 Cor xi. 32, 33.)

And when Saul was come from Damascus to Jerusalem,³ he immediately attempted to associate with the disciples; but they all feared him, not believing that he, who had signalized himself so much by his rage against the church, was indeed a disciple, but suspecting that the change he professed was an artifice to work himself into their confidence,⁴ and by that means to have

¹ *The Jews conspire to kill him.*] What an amazing instance is this of the malignity of these wretched creatures, that, when so great a persecutor was by a voice and appearance from heaven converted to Christianity, they should be so far from following his example, that they should attempt to take away his life. In this design they were assisted by the governor of the city under Aretas king of Arabia, (2 Cor. xi. 52, 53.) by whatever revolution it had come into his hands, after having been conquered by the Romans under Pompey. Jos. Antiq. lib. xiv. cap. 2 [al. 3.] § 2. See Dr. Benson's Hist. Vol. I. p. 196.

² *They watched all the gates of the city.*] This shows, there were great numbers engaged in this bloody design; for Damascus was a large city, and had many gates. It seems, that the Jews had not now so much power there, as they had when Saul

was dispatched from the Sanhedrim; otherwise he might have been seized, and carried to Jerusalem, by some such commission as he himself had borne. But they had some interest in Aretas's deputy, and therefore endeavoured to compass his death by this indirect method. See Miscell. Sacra. Vol. I. Abstract, p. 15.

³ *When Saul was come to Jerusalem.*] This is the journey of which he speaks, Gal. i. 18; in which he formed his first acquaintance with Peter, the great apostle of the circumcision: But it is plain, as Mr. Cradock well observes, in his excellent Apost. Hist. p. 55. he went not to acknowledge his supremacy, but [to converse] to see and converse with him as a brother and fellow-labourer; and it seems by the expression, *conversatus est cum eis,* that he lodged with him.

⁴ Suspecting that the change he professed was an artifice, &c.] It may seem

SECT.
XX.
Acts
IX. 27

it in his power to detect and ruin a greater number of persons. *But Barnabas*, whose information had been more express and particular, *taking him* by the hand with an endearing friendship,^o *brought him to the apostles* Peter and James, the rest being then absent from Jerusalem; *and he related to them how he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ in the way to Damascus, and that he had spoken to him* in a manner which had sweetly conquered all his former prejudices against the gospel; *and how*, in consequence of that change which was then made in his views and in his heart, *he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus*, even at the apparent hazard of his life.

28 On this they gladly received him into their number, and into their most intimate friendship, *and he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem*, for a little more than a fortnight, (Gal. i. 18); *and with the greatest freedom* he there bore his testimony to the gospel, *preaching as boldly* and as publicly *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, as he had done before at Damascus.

29 *And he spake and disputed*, not only with the natives of Judea, but also *with the Hellenists*, or with those foreign Jews who used the Greek language,^p and came out of other parts to

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the 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 boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in, and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but

strange, that so remarkable an event as Saul's conversion should be concealed so long from the Christians at Jerusalem: But it is to be considered, that there were then not such conveniences of correspondence between one place and another, as we now have; and the war then subsisting between Herod Antipas and Aretas, (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. cap. 3. [af. 7.] § 1.) might have interrupted that between Damascus and Jerusalem: not to urge, that the unbelieving Jews, in order to prevent the argument which the Christians might draw from Saul's conversion, might very probably 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 Saul into suspicion.

^o *Barnabas taking him*, &c.] Some have said, I know not on what evidence, that Barnabas was an old acquaintance of Saul, and had been formerly his fellow-student under Gamaliel. See Reading's

Life of Christ, p. 565. Perhaps he might have seen Ananias, or some other witness of peculiar credit, no whose testimony he introduced him. It is evident, a most faithful and tender friendship was established between them from this time.

^o *To the apostles Peter and James*, &c.] Paul himself tells us, that on his going up to Jerusalem he saw no other of the apostles, Gal. i. 19. Beza well observes, we are quite uncertain on what occasion the rest were then absent from Jerusalem. Had they been there, though Saul staid but about a fortnight, he would no doubt have seen them.

^p *Jews who used the Greek language*.] So the Syriac version with great propriety explains the word *Hellenists*; of whom see note^s on Acts vi. 1, § 12, p. 71. I know not on what authority Epiphanius as quoted by Beza on this text asserts, that these Hellenists endeavoured to revenge themselves on Saul, by reporting every where, that his conversion to Christianity was the result of a disappointment

they went about to
slay him.

30 Which when the
brethren knew, they
brought him down to
Caesarea, and sent
him forth to Tarsus.

31 Then had
the churches rest
throughout all Judea,
and Galilee, and Sa-
maria, and were edified,
and walking in

worship at Jerusalem, as being earnestly desirous that they might carry along with them the knowledge of Christ into their own lands: But some of them were so enraged at this unexpected opposition from one on whom they had so great a dependence, that they attempted to kill him. And the brethren being informed [of it] judged it necessary to consult his safety without any delay; and therefore several of them conducted him to *Cæsarea*^a with such dispatch, that he had not an opportunity of enjoying any interview with the churches in Judea which lay in his way, (Gal. i. 22.) and from thence they sent him away with proper recommendations to *Tarsus*, the noble capital of Cilicia, and his native place, where they apprehended he might meet with some support from his relations, and pursue the work of God with some considerable advantage; which he accordingly did.

Then the several churches that were formed through all Judea, and those more lately planted in Galilee and Samaria, being greatly edified by the seals that were set to the truth of the gospel, and by the confirmation of the news of Saul's conversion, (though they could not enjoy the benefit of his personal labours,) not only advanced in Christian knowledge and holiness, but had also an happy interval of external rest,

in his addresses to the daughter of Caïaphas the high priest, as her father would not accept him for a son-in-law. If they told such an idle story, it must however imply, that they thought Saul a person of some rank, to have been capable of forming any such pretension.

^a Conducted him to *Cæsarea*.] I should have concluded, this had been the celebrated city of that name on the Mediterranean Sea, so often mentioned afterwards, and from whence he might so easily have passed by ship to Tarsus, had not Paul himself told us, he went through the regions of Syria and Cilicia, (Gal. i. 21.) which intimates, that he went by land, and makes it probable that it was *Cæsarea Philippi* near the borders of Syria, which is here spoken of. Compare note ^o on Acts viii. 40. p. 120.

[Being edified.] I follow Beza's construction of this intricate verse, as most agreeable to the Greek idiom, and refer the reader to Dr. Hammond's learned

note on the word *εὐδοκίαν*, edited, for an account of that figurative expression, which is properly a term of architecture.

[Had rest.] This is by no means to be ascribed merely, or chiefly to Saul's conversion, who, though a great zealot, was but one young man, and whose personal danger proves the persecution, in some measure, to have continued at least three years after it. I conclude therefore, the period spoken of is that, which commenced at, or quickly after, his setting out for Cilicia, and entirely acquiesce in Mr. Lardner's most judicious observation, (Cred. Book 1. chap. 2. § 12, Vol. I. p. 200—210.) that this repose of the Christians might be occasioned by the general alarm which was given to the Jews, [about A. D. 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

SECT. as several circumstances in the civil state of the Jews at that time concurred, either to appease their enemies, or to engage them to attend to what immediately concerned themselves. *And* as the followers of Jesus were not corrupted by this respite, but continued with exemplary devotion and zeal *walking in the fear of the Lord, and evidently appeared to be in an extraordinary manner supported by the aids, and animated by the consolation of the Holy Spirit;*¹ they were considerably multiplied by a new accession of members, whereby the damage sustained in the late persecution was abundantly repaired.

the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Acts IX. 31.

IMPROVEMENT.

Verse HOW admirable was the condescension and care of our blessed Redeemer, in sending good Ananias thus early as a messenger of comfort and peace to Saul in his darkness and distress. We cannot wonder at the objections which were at first ready to rise in his mind, but must surely yield to the great authority by which they were overborne; Go thy way, he is a chosen vessel. Thus does it become us to acquiesce in all our Lord appoints, in pursuance of the schemes of his electing love; and thus should we with brotherly affection, like that of this holy man, be ready to embrace even the greatest of sinners, when they are brought in humility to a Saviour's feet.

But when he is thus glorifying his power and his grace, what gratitude and love may he justly expect from those that are the happy objects of it? When the scales are fallen from their eyes, when they have given themselves up to him in the solemn seals of his covenant, when they have received the communications of his Holy Spirit, how solicitous should they be to love much, in proportion to the degree in which they have been forgiven? (Luke vii. 47.) And with what zeal and readiness should they immediately apply themselves, from a principle of gratitude to Christ, and of compassion to sinners, to declare that way of salva-

in the holy of holies; a horrid profanation, which the whole people deprecated with the greatest concern in the most solicitous and affectionate manner. (See Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 10 [al. 9.] Antiq. lib. xviii. cap. 8, [al. 11.] Philo de Legat. ad Cai. p. 1024, and the large account given of the state of the Jews at this time by Dr. Benson. (Hist. Vol. i. p. 201—210.) How long this rest continued, we do not certainly know, probably till Herod interrupted it, as we shall see hereafter, chap. xii.

¹ *The consolation of the Holy Spirit.* Some think *παρηγορησι* signifies in the general patronage and assistance, as it well may: and therefore in the paraphrase I have expressed both.—*De* Dieu takes great pains to prove, that *παρηγορησαι* το φθδν *παρηγορησι* signifies, that they advanced more and more in religion, &c. But it seems much more natural to explain it of the accession made to their numbers, in consequence of that advancement in piety, &c.

tion into which they have been directed; and, so far as they have opportunity, whether under a more public or private character, to lead others unto that Jesus on whom they have themselves believed. SECT. XX.

And now, let us with sacred pleasure behold the progress of grace in the heart of Saul: Let us view him rising from his bed of languishing with a soul inflamed with love and zeal, testifying the gospel of Christ, and confounding the Jews that dwelt at Damascus: Let us behold him running the bazard of his life there, while their obstinate hearts refused to receive or endure such a testimony; and then returning to Jerusalem, desiring to join himself to the company of those whom he had once despised and persecuted; and on that most public theatre, under the very eyes of that Sanhedrim from which he had received his bloody commission, openly bearing his testimony to that gospel which he had so eagerly attempted to tear up by the roots. Thence let us view him travelling to Tarsus, and visiting his native country, with a most earnest desire to fill Cilicia, as well as Judea and Damascus, with that doctrine which his divine Master had condescended to teach him, and to be the means of regeneration to the inhabitants of the place from whence he derived his natural birth. Verse 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30

And while we behold with reverence and delight the hand of God with and upon him, let us, as we are told the churches in Judea did, while he was by face unknown to them, glorify God in him, (Gal. i. 22, 24.) In all the labours and writings of Paul, the glorious apostle, let us keep Saul the persecutor in our eye, still remembering, that (according to his own account of the matter) it was for this cause that he, though once *the chief of sinners, obtained mercy, that in him, as the chief, Christ might shew forth a pattern of all long-suffering to them that should hereafter believe,* (1 Tim. i. 15, 16.)—Well might the churches be edified by such an additional evidence of the truth and power of the gospel. May the edification be continued to churches in succeeding ages; and while a gracious Providence is giving them rest, may they walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and be daily multiplied, established, and improved. 31

SECT. XXI.

Peter cures Aeneas at Lydda, and then raises Dorcas from the dead at Joppa. Acts IX. 32, to the end.

ACTS IX. 32.
AND it came to pass, as Peter

ACTS IX. 32.

HAVING dispatched this important history of the conversion of Saul, and of the vigour and success with which he set out in the Christian ministry; let us now turn to another scene,

- SECT. which happened during that peaceful interval mentioned above. Now it came to pass, at this favourable juncture, that the apostle Peter, as he was making a progress through all the [parts] of the neighbouring country, that he might rectify any disorders that occurred, and instruct and confirm the new converts in the knowledge and faith of the gospel, among the other places that he visited *came also to the saints that dwelt at Lydda*, a considerable town not far from the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. And he found there a certain man whose name was Æneas, who had been long disabled by a palsy, and had kept his bed eight years, in so deplorable a state as to be quite incapable of rising from it, or to be any way helpful to himself. And Peter seeing him, and perceiving in himself a strong intimation that the divine power would be exerted for his recovery, said to him, Æneas, Jesus the true Messiah, in whose name I preach and act, now at this instant *healeth thee*,^a and operates while I speak, to strengthen and restore thy weakened frame: With a dependence therefore upon his almighty agency, *arise and make thy bed*.^b And upon this the palsy left him, and the disabled man was all at once so strengthened, that *he arose immediately*, and did it.
- 33 And there he found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.
- 34 And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: Arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.
- 35 And the miracle appeared so extraordinary to all the inhabitants of the learned and celebrated town of Lydda,^c and to those of the fruitful
- 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda, and

^a *Jesus the Messiah* (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) *healeth thee.*] 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.—Clarins justly observes here, that no faith on the part of the person to be healed was required; and the like is observable in many other cures, 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.

^b *Make thy bed.*] Beza thinks, it is in effect bidding him *take up his bed*; but De Dieu well observes, that *επινοου* rather signifies to *smooth it*. As he was now for the present to quit his bed Dr. Hammond seems to think it refers to a couch on which he was to lie at the table: But perhaps it might mean, as if it were said to him, "Whereas you have hitherto for a long time been unable to help yourself at all, now you shall be so entirely restored, as not only to be able to rise, but to shake up and smooth your own bed against the next time you have occasion to lie down upon it;" which he might immediately do, as a proof of the degree in which he was strengthened.

^c *The learned and celebrated town of Lydda.*] I call it so, because there were several celebrated Jewish schools there, and the great Synhedrim sometimes met

Saron, saw him, and turned to the Lord.

vale of *Saron*, part of which lay in the neighbourhood of it, that they no sooner saw him, and had an opportunity of being informed in the particulars of so unparalleled a fact, but they believed that he in whose name it was done, was undoubtedly the Messiah, and so turned to the Lord, and embraced his gospel.

SECT.
XXI.
Acts
IX. 35

36 Now there was at Joppa, a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works, and alms-deeds which she did.

And the number of converts in these parts was greatly increased by another, and yet more astonishing event, which happened about the same time. For there was then at Joppa, a noted sea-port in that neighbourhood, a certain female disciple, named Tabitha, who by the interpretation of her name into the Greek language is called Dorcas; [and] she was universally respected as a person of a very lovely character, for she was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did upon all proper occasions.

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 upper chamber.

And it came to pass in those days, while Peter was at Lydda, that she was sick and died. And when they had washed her corpse, according to the custom of the place, they laid her in an upper chamber.

near it. (See Lightfoot, Cent. Chor. Mat. cap. 16.) It was but one day's journey distant from Jerusalem, and is said by Josephus to have been so large a town, as not to have been inferior to a city. (Antiq. lib. ii. cap. 6. [al. 5.] § 2.) Some have supposed, it was the same with Lod, which belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. (1 Chron. viii. 12, and Neh. xi. 33.) However, as it stood near Joppa, it must have been situate near the borders of the tribe of Ephraim.—Saron, or Sharon, which is here connected with it, was not a town, but a large fertile plain or valley, that lay near to Lydda, and extended from Casarea to Joppa, in which were many villages, as it was noted for its delightful situation, and the fine pasture it afforded for their flocks. Compare 1 Chron. xxvii. 29; Isai. xxxiii. 9; xxxv. 2; Ixv. 10.

[Joppa, a noted sea-port.] This was the nearest maritime town to Jerusalem, and was the only port belonging to it on the Mediterranean Sea, but was more than a day's journey distant from it. Though some have said Jerusalem might be seen from thence. (Strabo, Geogr. lib. xvi. p. 324. We find it mentioned in the Old Testament by the name of Japho, as belonging to the tribe of Dan. (Josh. xix. 46.) It was the place, to which the ma-

terials for building Solomon's temple were brought in floats by sea, and carried from thence by land to Jerusalem. (2 Chron. ii. 16.) Jonah took ship from hence for Tarshish, (Jonah i. 3.) And, as it lay between Azotus and Casarea, it was probably one of the cities where Philip preached the gospel in his progress. (Acts viii. 40.) There are still some remains of it, under the name of Jaffa.

[Tabitha, who by interpretation is called Dorcas.] She might, as Dr. Lightfoot supposes, be one of the Hellenist Jews, and be known among the Hebrews by the Syriac name Tabitha, while the Greeks called her in their own language Dorcas. They are both words of the same import, and signify a doe or fawn; in which sense the word *Δορκος* is often used by the Septuagint, Deut. xli. 15, 22; 2 Sam. ii. 15; Cant. ii. 9; Ix. 5; &c. And thus the name might probably be given her in her infancy on account of her amiable form, which rendered her peculiarly pleasant in the eyes of her parents.—Others suppose it rather to have signified a wild goat; and so the name might be intended to allude to the sprightliness of her temper, or to the quickness of her sight.—For the etymology of the words, see Drusius and Grotius in loc.

SECT.
XXI.
Acta
IX. 38

And as Lydda was very near Joppa, being but about six miles off, the disciples at Joppa hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, *intreating [him] that he would not by any means delay to come to them;†* that he might give them his advice and assistance under that great distress, which the loss of so dear and useful a friend could not but occasion.

- 39 And Peter presently arose, and went to Joppa with them. And when he was come to Tabitha's house, they brought him into the upper chamber where she was laid out; and all the widows stood by him, weeping for the loss of such a benefactress, and shewing the coats and mantles which Dorcas made for charitable purposes, while she was yet continued with them. And Peter putting them all out, as he found in himself a powerful encouragement to hope, that the petition he was about to offer was dictated from above, and therefore should certainly be heard, *kneeling down and prayed with great earnestness; and then turning to the body, he said,* as with a voice of authority in the name and presence of his great Lord, the sovereign of life and death, *Tabitha, arise.* And he had no sooner spoke these words, but she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she immediately sat up. And giving her his hand, he raised her up on her feet; and having called the saints and widows, who were near the chamber, and had impatiently been waiting for the event, he presented her to them alive.
- 42 And [this] wonderful act was presently known throughout all the city of Joppa; and many more believed in the Lord upon the credit of so signal a miracle. And as Peter was willing to improve so favourable an opportunity of addressing to them while their minds were impressed with so astonishing a miracle, he continued many days at Joppa, in the house of one Simon a tanner;‡

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to 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. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and knelt down and prayed, and turning himself 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 lift her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

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.

[That he would not delay to come to them.] We can hardly imagine, they urged his coming, merely to comfort them under this breach. But, if they had any view to what followed, it was an astonishing instance of faith, as it does not appear the apostles had before this raised any one from the dead. Were we to have been judges, perhaps we should have thought it much better, that Stephen should have been raised than Dorcas; but we must

submit our reasonings, on what we think fittest and best, to the infinitely wise determination of Providence, or we shall be most foolish and miserable creatures.

‡ In the house of one Simon a tanner.] Some render it a *carrier*. His business perhaps is mentioned, that it might appear the apostle was not elevated, by the dignity of the late miracle, above mean persons and things.

from whence he was afterwards sent for to Casarea, upon an extraordinary occasion, which will be related at large in the next section.

SECT.

XXI.

Acts

ix. 43.

IMPROVEMENT.

BLESSED apostle! who was thus enabled to imitate his divine master, in what he himself has celebrated as the brightest glory of his human character, in *going about doing good*, (Acts x. 38.) and who had always a concern, like him, when he performed the most important offices of kindness to men's bodies, that all might be subservient to the edification and salvation of their souls!

Behold, in what has now been read, not only a disease which a continuance for eight years had rendered inveterate and hopeless, but death itself yielding to his command, or rather to the infinitely superior power of his Lord, the great conqueror of death for himself, and (adored be his compassionate name) for all his people too. It is most delightful to observe, with what solicitous care of pious humility Peter immediately transferred the eye and heart of Æneas, and of every spectator, from himself to Christ, while he says, *Æneas, Jesus Christ healeth thee*. He would not leave them any room for a surmise; as if it was by any power of his own that so astonishing a cure was wrought; but leads them to consider it as the act of Christ, and to ascribe the glory of the work to him whose minister he was, and in whose name he spake. Thus if God favour us as the instruments of healing and animating those souls that were once lying in a hopeless state, not only disabled, but *dead in trespasses and sins*, let us acknowledge that it is *not we, but the grace of God that is with us*. (1 Cor. xv. 10.)

Great, no doubt, was the affliction which the disciples sustained, when so amiable and useful a person as Dorcas was taken away from them by death; a person whose heart had been so ready to pity the afflicted, and her hand to help them; a person whose prudence and diligence had also been as conspicuous as her charity; for she well knew there were circumstances in which to have given the poor the value of these things in money, would have been a much less certain and suitable benefit, than to furnish them with the necessaries and conveniencies of life thus manufactured for their immediate use: And surely the garments which she made and distributed, must be more precious to them in some degree for having passed through so kind a hand. Let us be cautious of such a character, in all the expressions of it which suit our circumstances in life, that when we are dead, the memory of our good actions may survive, to the credit of our profession, and to the glory of God.

It was a circumstance which greatly enhanced the value of

SECT. XXI. the intended miracle, that it was to call back from the dead so excellent a person: And with what humility, with what faith was it performed! Again does the servant follow 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 he was to pour out before God. First he bends his knees in prayer to the Lord of life, and then he directs his voice with a divine efficacy to the dead. So may we, O Lord, learn to address ourselves to those under the power of spiritual death, with that spirit and vigour which we receive by solemn and affectionate intercourse with thee, who hast the life of nature and of grace at thy command.

Verso
41 Who can imagine the surprise of Dorcas, when thus called back to life again, or of her pious friends, when they saw her alive? For their own sakes, 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 was matter of resignation and of submission, rather than of exultation, that she was called back to these scenes of vanity, which surely would hardly have been tolerable, had not a veil of oblivion been drawn over those glories which her separate spirit enjoyed. But we please ourselves with a 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 that from which so astonishing a Providence had, for a short interval, recalled her.

SECT. XXII.

Cornelius, an uncircumcised though pious Gentile, being divinely instructed to do it, sends for Peter, who, taught by a vision not to scruple it, returns with his messengers to Caesarea.
Acts X. 1--23.

ACTS X. 1.

SECT. XXII. **H**ITHERTO the gospel had been preached to the Jews alone; but God was now determined to open a way for the discovery of it to the Gentiles; and, that a proper decorum might be observed in the manner of doing it, he first sent it to one, who, though uncircumcised, was nevertheless a worshipper of the true God, whose story we shall here proceed to relate. Let it therefore be observed, that while Peter

ACTS X. 1.

THERE was a cer-
tain man in Co-Acts
X. 1.

sarea, called Cornelius, a centurion of the band, called the Italian band.

2 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 He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him,

continued at Joppa, (where the conclusion of the former section left him,) *there was a certain man, in the neighbouring and celebrated city of Cesarea, named Cornelius, who was a centurion, or commander of an hundred men, of that which is called the Italian cohort or band of soldiers,*^a which attended the Roman governor, who commonly kept his residence at this city. This Cornelius was a man of distinguished piety, and one that feared and worshipped the only living and true God,^b with all his house, giving also much alms to the people of the Jews, though he himself was a Gentile; and praying to God continually, in secret, domestic, and public devotions as he esteemed it an important part of his daily business and pleasure, to employ himself in such sacred exercises.

Now at a time when he was thus engaged,³ *he evidently saw in a vision, about the ninth hour of the day,* (that is, about three in the afternoon, which being the hour of evening sacrifice, was chosen by him as a proper season for his devotion,) *an angel of God coming in to him,*

^a *The Italian cohort or band of soldiers.* A Roman cohort was a company of soldiers, commanded by a tribune, consisting generally of about a thousand. (See Pitisc. Lexic. in voce Cohors.) Many, with Grotius, have explained this, as if the meaning were, that Cornelius was a centurion of one of the cohorts belonging to the Italian legion; and the editors of the Prussian Testament, with our English follower, have ventured (quite contrary to the original) to translate it so. But I refer the reader to the many learned and judicious things which Mr. Biscoe has said, (at Hoyle's Lect. chap. ix. § 1. p. 390—393.) to shew, that the Italian legion did not exist at this time, and that the version here given is to be retained. I think it exceedingly probable, for the reasons he urges, that this was a cohort different from any of the legionary ones, and consequently, that Luke has here expressed himself with his usual accuracy; and that the mistake lies, as it generally does, in those who think they have learning enough to correct him. It is probable, this was called the Italian cohort, because most of the soldiers belonging to it were Italians; whereas Josephus mentions Cesarian cohorts, from whom it might be proper to distinguish this. (Anti. lib. xix. cap. 9. [al. 7.] § 2.

& lib. xx. cap. 8. [al. 6.] § 7.) It might perhaps be the life-guard of the Roman governor, who generally resided in this splendid and celebrated city.

^b *A man of distinguished piety, and one that feared God.* It is a very unwarrantable liberty, that is taken in the version of 1727, to translate the latter of these clauses, *a proselyte*. I hope in a proper place to shew, that the name of proselyte was never applied by so ancient and correct a writer as Luke, to an uncircumcised person, and that there is no sufficient authority for the distinction, so generally admitted by learned men, between proselytes of righteousness, who by circumcision became debtors to the whole law, and proselytes of the gate, who, worshipping the true God, renouncing idolatry, and submitting themselves to the observation of the seven (supposed) precepts of Noah, were allowed, though uncircumcised, to live among the Jews, and converse familiarly with them. But the question is too complex, and too important to be handled in these notes. I therefore only desire, that I may not be condemned for waving all those interpretations of Scripture, which depend on this distinction of proselytes, till my reasons for doing it have been examined and answered.

- sur. in a form and habit of surprising brightness, and saying to him, *Cornelius!* And having fixed his eyes upon him with astonishment, he was afraid, and said, *What is it, Lord?* Protect me from all danger! and let me know the meaning of this vision!⁵ And presently the angel executed the commission with which he was charged, and said to him, *Thy repeated fervent prayers, and thine alms* with which they have been attended, *are come up* into the divine presence as a grateful memorial before God, far more pleasing to him than the most fragrant incense: And he is now about to give thee a very singular demonstration of his favour, by discovering things to thee which it is of the highest importance that thou shouldst know: *Send therefore some of thy men to Joppa, and fetch hither* [one] *Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon, by trade a tanner, whose house is by the sea side; and when he is come, as he will be instructed from above in the message he is to bring, he shall tell thee what thou must do for the security of thy final happiness.*
- 7 *As soon then as the angel who spake to Cornelius was gone, he was so earnestly desirous to hear what Peter was to say to him, that he immediately obeyed the orders that were given him; and calling two of his domestics, and a pious soldier who was one of them that always attended his person and waited upon him. And having related to them all [these] things, just in the manner they had happened, he ordered them to go for Peter, and sent them away to Joppa that very evening.*
- 9 And as they set out too late to reach the place that night, on the next day, while they were on their journey, and drew near the city, Peter went up to the top of the house to pray;⁶ the flat open

and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

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 soldier of them that waited on him continually:

8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house top to

⁵ *What is it, Lord?* Dr. Whitby thinks these words are addressed to the angel, as if Cornelius had said, "Sir, what would you say to me?" But it is both more literal and natural to render it as in the paraphrase, and to understand it as a sudden exclamation and prayer to God, to preserve him, and let him know what was the design of so astonishing an appearance.

⁶ *He went up to the top of the house to pray.* It seems a strange fancy of Mr. Rieuven,

(Apol. Vol. II. p. 63.) that this place to which Peter retired was some upper room, where the disciples used to assemble, and that he went up to it as a consecrated place, in which his devotions would be more acceptable to God than elsewhere.—It is not improbable, that he might, the rather choose it, for the advantage it gave him to look towards the temple at Jerusalem, to which Peter might hitherto have the same regard as the other Jew

pray, about the sixth hour.

10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready he fell into a trance,

11 And saw heaven opened, 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:

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.

had, who used to turn their faces towards it when they prayed. (Compare 1 Kings viii. 29, 30, 34; Psalm cxxxviii. 2; Dan. vi. 10; John ii. 4.)

^c *About the sixth hour.*] Besides the two stated hours of prayer, at the time of the morning and evening sacrifice, (of which we have taken notice before in note ^b on Acts iii. 1, p. 32.) the more devout among the Jews were used to set apart a third, and to retire for prayer at noon. Thus David says, *Evening and morning and at noon, will I pray;* (Psalm lv. 17;) and Daniel also *kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed;* (Dan. vi. 10.) Whether 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 hour. See Clem. Alex. Strom. lib. vii. p. 722.

^d *Have taken a little refreshment.*] After all that Limborch and several other writers have said, this seems to me the most proper import of the word *εσθίσαι*; and the authorities produced by Rappertus, (Annot. ex Herod. p. 515, 514; and

roof with which the houses in those parts were built, affording a more convenient place of retirement than could at that time be found within doors; and it was now about noon, or the sixth hour of the day.^e And he was very hungry, and would gladly have taken a little refreshment; but while they were preparing dinner for the family, he fell into an ecstasy or trance,^f in which a very remarkable and instructive vision presented itself to him. For he had a strong impression made upon his mind, and apprehended, while he lay in this state, that he saw heaven opened, and something of a large extent descending to him from above like a great sheet or wrapper,^h which was fastened at the four corners, and so let down to the earth by an invisible hand:

In which there were all [sorts of] things in great variety, even four-footed animals of the earth, and wild beasts, and reptiles or creeping things, and fowls of the air of several kinds. And while this plenty of provision was before him, there came a voice from heaven to him, saying, Rise, Peter, since thou art hungry, and take thy choice of what thou wilt out of this great variety; kill any of these animals which may be

In which there were all [sorts of] things in great variety, even four-footed animals of the earth, and wild beasts, and reptiles or creeping things, and fowls of the air of several kinds. And while this plenty of provision was before him, there came a voice from heaven to him, saying, Rise, Peter, since thou art hungry, and take thy choice of what thou wilt out of this great variety; kill any of these animals which may be

Elsner Vol. I. p. 407; to prove that it signifies just the same with making a set meal, confirm me in the contrary opinion.

^e *An ecstasy or trance.*] The word *εκστασις* properly signifies such a rapture of mind, as gives the person who falls into it a look of astonishment, and renders him insensible of the external objects round him, while in the mean time his imagination is agitated in an extraordinary manner with some striking scenes which pass before it, and take up all the attention. The reader may see some extraordinary instances of this kind mentioned by Gualterius, in his large note on this text.

^h *Something—like a great sheet or wrapper.*] As we do not in English call sheets vessels, I thought the general word here used more properly answered to *εσθίσαι*, which extends to all sorts of household-furniture, as well as instruments of husbandry, war, &c. and has no word that I recollect in our language, exactly answering to it. The other word *σεν* signifies any large piece of linen in which things are wrapped, and seems to have been an emblem of the gospel as extending to all nations of men.

SPER.
XXII.

Acts
X. 9

10

STCT. most agreeable to thee, *and eat freely of what*
 XXII. *is before thee.* But Peter, said, with a kind of
 ~~~~~  
 Acts pious horror, *By no means, Lord: I would much*  
 X. 14 rather continue fasting a great while longer,  
 than satisfy my hunger on such terms: for I see  
 only unclean animals here, and thou knowest  
 that from a religious regard to the precepts of  
 thy law, *I have never, from the day of my birth*  
*or unclean, nor took the liberty of tasting what*  
*is prohibit'd in itself, or polluted by any acci-*

15 *dental circumstance that has attended it. And*  
*the voice [said] to him again the second time,*  
*Those things which God hath cleansed by such*  
 a declaration of his will in bidding thee to eat  
 of them, *do not thou any more call common,* but  
 readily submit thyself to his directions, and leave  
 16 it in the power of the great law-giver to change  
 his precepts as he shall see fit. *And that it*  
 might impress his mind the more, and he might  
 give the more particular attention to it as to a  
 thing established by God, the vision was not  
 only doubled, but *this was done three times*  
 successively, (compare Gen. xli. 32,) *and at last*  
*the vessel, with all that was in it, was taken up*  
*into heaven again.*

17 *And Providence so ordered it, that at this very*  
 juncture, *while Peter was doubting in himself*  
*what the vision which he had seen might import,*  
 or what it was designed to point out to him,  
*behold, the men who were sent from Cornelius,*  
 the pious centurion mentioned above, *having*  
*inquired out the house of Simon the tanner, stood*  
 18 *at the door: And calling to those that were with-*  
*in, they asked if one Simon, whose surname was*  
*Peter, lodged there: And being told that he did,*  
 they desired immediately to speak with him  
 on an affair which was of the utmost impor-  
 19 tance. *Now, as Peter was reflecting on the*  
*vision, and was attentively revolving it in his*  
 own mind, *the Spirit, by an inward suggestion,*  
*said unto him, Behold, three men are inquiring*

14 But Peter said,  
 Not so, Lord; for I  
 have never eaten  
 any thing that is  
 common or unclean.

15 And the voice  
 spake unto him again  
 the second time,  
 What God hath  
 cleansed that call  
 not thou common.

16 This was done  
 thrice: and the ves-  
 sel was received up  
 again into heaven.

17 Now while Pe-  
 ter doubted in him-  
 self, what this vision  
 which he had seen  
 should mean; be-  
 hold, the men which  
 were sent from Cor-  
 nelius, had made in-  
 quiry for Simon's  
 house, and stood be-  
 fore 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.

[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.—Mr. L'Enfant and

some other critics, have observed, that  
 the Jews looked on unclean animals as  
 an image of the Gentiles; which, if it  
 were the case, renders this emblematical  
 representation peculiarly proper. See  
 Grotius on ver. 15.



20 Arise therefore, *for thee*: Delay not therefore, but arise and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

*for thee*: Delay not therefore, but arise and go down to these men,<sup>k</sup> and take the journey with them which they shall propose, without any scruple of conversing with them, or the person from whom they come; for I have sent them, and, when thou comest to compare their message with what thou hast now seen, thou wilt easily know the intent of this vision, and the use thou art to make of it for thine own direction.

SECT.  
XXII.  
Acts  
X 20.

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?

Then Peter instantly, before any message from the strangers could reach him, went down from the house-top to the men who were sent to him from Cornelius, and while they still continued at the door, said to them, Behold, I am [the man] whom ye inquire for: What is the cause for which you are come hither?

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.

And they told their story in a few plain words, and said, Cornelius the centurion, a righteous man, who feareth God, and hath a character attested by all the Jewish people, though he has not completely a proselyte to their religion, has been divinely instructed by the ministry of an holy angel, to send for thee to his house, and to hear words from thee upon some important subject, in the purport of which we do not doubt but thou art fully instructed, though it be not particularly known to us: We therefore desire, that, in compliance with his request, and this divine command, thou wouldest be pleased immediately to go with us to Cæsarea.

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.

Having therefore called them in, he entertained [them] there that night, And the next day Peter set out with them; and some of the brethren who were inhabitants of Joppa went with him upon so great an occasion, which could not but excite their diligent attention, and raise an high expectation.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

WE are now entering on a series of the story in which we ourselves are intimately concerned: We are going to see the first fruits of the Gentiles gathered into the church; and let us see it with gratitude and delight. Most amiable and exemplary

<sup>k</sup> Therefore arise and go down.] The learned Elzevir, (Observ. Vol. I. p. 408,) and Rapheleus, Annot. ex Hierod. p. 345, have observed, that αὐτῶν should

here be rendered therefore, and have produced several instances from approved authors, in which it has that signification.

SECT. is the character of Cornelius, who, though exposed to all the  
 XXII. temptations 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  
 Verse I  
 2 a beauty and acceptance to each other: And he was also an ex-  
 ample 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 as-  
 sembled nation, even on the supposition of their general apostacy,  
*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* (Josh xxiv. 15.)

3, 5, 6 To him God was pleased to send the gospel, and the manner  
 in which he sent it is well worthy of our remark. An angel ap-  
 peared, not himself to preach it, but to introduce the apostle,  
 to whom that work was assigned.—With what holy complacency  
 4 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.—Yet after all that they have  
 7, 8 done, let them learn by the conduct of this devout, upright,  
 and charitable man, not so to rest in their own virtues as to ne-  
 glect inquiring after that way of salvation which God has estab-  
 lished by his Son, but always ready to regard it as the one  
 thing needful; let them maintain an uniformity in their charac-  
 ter by a diligent and candid attention to the declaration of it in  
 the gospel.

9 Peter retires for secret prayer in the middle of the day, as if  
 he had learned of David to say, *Evening and morning, and at  
 noon, will I pray and cry aloud.* (Psal. lv. 17.) He seeks a  
 10 16 convenient retirement, and in that retirement the vision of the  
 17 20 Lord meets him; a vision mysterious indeed in its first appear-  
 ances, but gradually opened by divine providence, the process  
 of which renders many things plain, which at first seemed dark  
 and unaccountable.  
 13 15 This vision declared to him in effect the abolition of the Mo-  
 saic ceremonial law, of which the precepts relating to the dis-  
 14 tinction of meats made so important a part; and we see here  
 with pleasure, that strict as his observation of it had been from  
 21, 23 his very birth, he was not now disobedient to the heavenly vi-  
 sion, but freely received the uncircumcised, and freely goes 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 de-  
 gree in which we appear 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 advice

and 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 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. (Rom. xiv. 16.)

SECT. XXIII.

*Peter coming to Caesarea, preaches the gospel to Cornelius and his friends; and upon their believing it and receiving the Holy Spirit, by a miraculous effusion, he without farther scruple admits them into the church by baptism, though they were uncircumcised Gentiles. Acts X. 24, to the end.*

ACTS X. 24.

AND the morrow after they entered into Caesarea; and Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

ACTS X. 24.

IT was observed in the preceding section, that Peter and some of the brethren set out from Joppa upon the invitation of Cornelius: And we now add, that the next day they entered into Caesarea: and good Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his relations and most intimate friends upon this great and important occasion.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet and worshipped him.

26 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 many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know

And as Peter was entering into his house, 25 Cornelius met him, and to express his reverence to one so remarkably the messenger of heaven, falling down at his feet, paid homage to him.

But Peter would by no means permit this, and therefore raised him up, saying, Arise, for I also myself am nothing more than a man as thou art, and pretend to no right to such profound respects as these, but am ready in civil life to pay thee all the regard that is due to thee.

This happened just at the entrance of the house, and thus discoursing with him, he went in, and found many of the friends and acquaintance of Cornelius gathered together; so that Peter, at the first sight of them, expressed some surprise. And he said to them, You cannot but 28

<sup>a</sup> And falling down at his feet, paid homage to him. He could not, as some have fancied, imagine Peter to be an angel, considering how the angel had spoken of him. But his reverence for him as a divine messenger, together with the

custom which prevailed in the East of expressing the highest respect by prostration, might induce him to fall down at his feet, and offer an homage, which Peter wisely and religiously declined.

SECT.  
XXIII.  
Acts  
X. 28.

know, that it is looked upon among us as unlawful for a man that is a Jew to join in friendly conversation with a Gentile, or to come into the house of one of another nation, who is not at least naturalized by circumcision and a full conformity to our law, which I am well aware that you are not: Nevertheless God hath lately shewn me that I am

29 to call no man common or unclean. Wherefore when I was sent for hither by your messengers, I came away without any contradiction or debate: I would ask therefore, and desire to know from your own mouth, on what account you have sent for me.<sup>b</sup>

30 And Cornelius, with all frankness and seriousness said, It is now four days ago that I was fasting till this hour, and at the usual time of evening prayer, at the ninth hour I prayed in my house; and behold, to my unspeakable surprise, a man appeared and stood before me in bright raiment, whom I perceived to be an angel:

31 And as this put me in some fear, he said in a most gentle and engaging manner, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are graciously remembered before God, who is about to give thee a most important token of his favourable regard to thee: Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he lodgeth in the house of [one] Simon a tanner by the sea-side; who, when he is come, shall speak to thee of various things now unknown to thee, but on thine acquaintance with which, new scenes of duty and happiness shall

32 be opened upon thee. Immediately therefore, that very evening, I sent unto thee the messengers whom I now see returned with thee; and thou hast done very well, and acted like a pious and charitable person in coming. Now therefore, we are all here present before God, disposed to hear with a becoming reverence and attention, all those things which God hath given thee in charge.

33 Then Peter opening his mouth, and addressing

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, that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, 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 fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing.

31 And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is 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, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

34 Then Peter

<sup>b</sup> On what account you have sent for me.] Peter knew it by revelation, and by the messengers who were sent from Cornelius: but he puts him on telling the story, that the company might be informed, and Cornelius himself awakened and im-

pressed by the narration; the repetition of which, even as we here read it, gives a dignity and spirit to Peter's succeeding discourse, beyond what we could otherwise so sensibly perceive.

opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35 But in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all:)

\* He that feareth him, and worketh righteousness.] This, for any thing I can see, might be supposed the case of many, who were far from using in any degree Jewish proclaytes, and had never heard of the Jews and their religion, as it was certainly the case of many, before the peculiarities of Judaism existed, and even before the institution of the Abrahamic covenant. I think this text 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 far from intimating, that some such persons may be found among those that reject Christianity, when offered to them in its full evidence, it determines nothing concerning the existence of such in every nation, though it tells us, how God would regard them, supposing them to exist.

<sup>a</sup> That message which he sent, &c.] I was long of opinion with Erasmus, that the whole of this ver. c was to be referred to the first words of the next, as if Peter had said, You know the word which he sent, &c.—even the word which was published, &c. But upon farther consideration I have changed my view of it, and preferred that interpretation which Irenæus and Chrysostom anciently proposed, and

himself to them with a seriousness and solemnity answerable to so great an occasion, said, Of a truth I perceive, and am now fully satisfied, whatever my former prejudices were as to the difference between the Jews and Gentiles, that God, the great Father of the whole human race is no respecter of persons, and accepts no man merely because he is of such a nation, nor so determines his regards as to confine his favours to the seed of Abraham and the people of the Jews alone: But that in every nation, he that with a true filial reverence and obedience feareth him, and in consequence of this worketh righteousness, whatever be the family from which he is descended, though he be none of the posterity of Abraham, is acceptable to him.

And this I apprehend now to be the meaning of that message which he sent to the children of Israel, proclaiming the glad tidings of mutual peace by Jesus Christ, the great ambassador of peace; who, after all his abasement, being exalted to his kingdom, is become Lord of all, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also, and

in which Boza, Grotius, De Dieu, I. Eantant, and most of the moderes have followed them. And I have acquiesced in it, not only in regard to the great judgment of some of these writers, and their exquisite skill in the Greek idiom, but also because I see not how Peter could reasonably take it for granted, that Cornelius and his friends were acquainted with the message of peace and pardon sent to Israel by Jesus Christ, that is, with the gospel, which if they had known, there would have been no necessity of his own embassy to them. It must be allowed indeed, that Christ did not expressly preach this doctrine, and declare the admission of the uncircumcised Gentiles into his church; but he had dropped several hints concerning the extent of his kingdom, which Peter, on such a striking occasion as this, might recollect as referring to the present event. (Compare Mat. vii. 11, 12; John x. 16; xii. 32; Mark xvi. 15, 16; and Mat. xxvii. 19, 20.) In this view there was a peculiar propriety in mentioning Jesus as Lord of all. But nothing can be more unnatural than Hemstadius's gloss and version.—The locus who preached peace, &c. is Lord of all. The locus is never said to do any thing by Jesus Christ

SPEC.  
XXIII.  
Acts  
X. 35

SECT. under that character will manifest the riches of  
 XXIII. his mercy unto all that call upon him. (Com-  
 pare Rom. iii. 29; x. 12.) And since this is  
 the case, far be it from me to maintain any farther  
 reserve with regard to those whom God hath  
 been pleased through him to receive. I shall  
 therefore set myself with pleasure to commu-  
 nicate to you the method of salvation by him.

Acts  
 X. 36

37 *You cannot but in general know something, though it may be only in a confused and imperfect way, of the report there was but a few years ago through all Judea, which began first and took its rise from Galilee, just in your neighbourhood, after the baptism which John preached*

37 That word (*I say*) you know which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached:

38 *prepare his way; I mean the report [concerning] Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit, and with a power of performing the most extraordinary miracles in attestation of his divine mission; who went about, and passed through the whole country, doing good, wherever he came, and particularly healing all those who were oppressed by the tyranny of the devil, dispossessing those malignant spirits of darkness with a most apparent and irresistible superiority to them, for God himself was with him, and wrought by him to produce those astonishing effects. And we his apostles, of whom I have the honour to be one, are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the whole region of the Jews, and particularly in Jerusalem, their capital city; for we attended him in all the progress which he made, beholding his miracles, and hearing his discourses: Whom nevertheless this ungrateful people were so far from receiving with a becoming regard, that they slew him in a most infamous manner, even*

38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

39 *And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree.*

39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree.

\* *Concerning Jesus of Nazareth.* He was not ashamed to own, that the person he preached as the Messiah came out of a place so infamous among the Jews as Nazareth, since all the reproaches of that kind were so abundantly rolled away by the glorious circumstances which he afterwards relates. The difficulty here in the construction of the original seems to be the best removed by supplying the word *sic*, *concerning*, and so referring it (as Sir Norton Knatchbull and others have done,) to the report which they had

heard. The sense however will be the same, if *sic* be considered as redundant. (in the same manner as we find the like expression used, Mat. xii. 36.) and the clause rendered as it is in our translation. *How God anointed Jesus, &c.* — It is more natural to admit either of these explanations, than to repeat the words [*You know*] from the preceding verse, (as some would do,) and to suppose that Peter said to persons who were strangers to the gospel, You know Jesus of Nazareth.

40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly.

41 Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he arose from the dead.

42 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.

43 To him give all the prophets wit-

hanging him upon tree, and crucifying him, as if he had been the vilest of malefactors and slaves. Yet *this very person*, though so injuriously treated by men, *hath the ever-blessed God raised up from the dead on the third day*, according to repeated predictions; and, as a demonstration of the truth of it, *hath given him to become manifest* after his resurrection, and evidently to appear, *Not indeed to all the Jewish people,*<sup>c</sup> nor to return to those public assemblies of them which he had often visited, but to certain *witnesses*, who were before appointed by God for this purpose; even to us, who conversed very intimately with him before his death, and were so far favoured that we have eaten and drank together with him several times after he rose from the dead; so that we can, and do with the greatest certainty bear witness to the truth of this important fact. And he hath given in charge to us to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation by him to the people, and to testify wherever we come that it is he, this very Jesus of Nazareth, who is the person appointed by God [to be] the glorious and majestic Judge in the great day of future account, both of the living and the dead,<sup>e</sup> who shall all be convened before his throne, and receive their final sentence from his lips. And if this were a proper audience wherein to insist upon this subject, I might copiously show, (as in due time I may do,) that to him all the Jewish prophets bear witness,<sup>b</sup> and that from what they

SECT. XXXII.  
Act. X. 40

<sup>c</sup> Not to all the people.] This is not a place for vindicating the wisdom and righteousness of that dispensation of Providence, which ordered that Christ should not appear publicly after his resurrection. Many valuable writers have done it at large. See Mr. Ditton on the Resur. Part III. § 60—70. Bishop Burnet's four Disc. p. 52—56. Dr. Sykes of Christianity, chap. v. p. 164, & seq. Mr. Fleming's Christol. Vol. III. p. 484—498. Bishop Blackwall at Boyle's Lect. Sermon. iv. p. 25, 26. Sermons de Mr. Superville, tom. iv. p. 9—12. Bishop Atterbury's Posthum. Sermon. Vol. I. p. 182—190; and Miscell. Sacra, Essay ii. p. 77, 78.—I shall only observe in one word, that as God was by no means obliged to give that perverse people the Jews the highest and most striking degree of evidence that

could be imagined, (supposing this would have been such,) so it is certain, that the evidence which he gave of this fact, by the miraculous gifts conferred on the chosen witnesses of it, was of a nature capable of being conveyed to the world in general in a much more convincing manner, than Christ's appearance in the temple for several succeeding days could have been.

<sup>e</sup> Appointed by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead.] This was declaring, in the strongest terms, how entirely their happiness depended upon an humble subjection of soul to him, who was to be their final Judge.

<sup>b</sup> To him all the prophets bear witness.] Compare note <sup>c</sup> on Luke xxiv. 27 Vol. II. sect. 197.—It is observable that, in this discourse to an audience of Gentiles, the

SECT. foretold concerning him it appears, *that every* ness, that through his  
 XXIII. *one who believeth on him shall receive the for-* name, who ever be-  
 givenness of their sins by his name, though their lieveth in him, shall  
 crimes be attended with aggravations ever so receive remission of  
 Acts sins.  
 X. 43

44 *While Peter was yet speaking these words,* 44 While Peter yet  
*the Holy Spirit,* spake these words,  
*without the imposition of the* the Holy Ghost fell  
*apostle's hands, fell on Cornelius and upon all* on all them which  
*his friends that were hearing the word,* heard the word.  
 a visible appearance of cloven tongues, as that  
 in which he fell upon the apostles and other  
 disciples at the day of Pentecost. (Compare  
 chap. xi. 15.)

45 *And all they of the circumcision who believed,* 45 And they of the  
*as many as came with Peter upon this occasion,* circumcision which  
*were exceedingly astonished,* believed, were as-  
<sup>k</sup> tonished, as many  
*to see that the miracu-* as came with Peter,  
*lous and important gift of the Holy Spirit,* because that on the  
*which they supposed peculiar to the Jewish na-* Gentiles also was  
*tion was poured out upon the Gentiles also; who* poured out the gift  
*as they imagined, could not have been admit-* of the Holy Ghost.  
 ted into the church without receiving circum-  
 cision, and so subjecting themselves to the ob-  
 46 *servance of the whole Mosaic law. But now* 46 For they heard  
*they found it was incontestably evident, that*  
*even those who were not circumcised might be*  
*partakers with them of the highest privileges;*

apostle Peter first mentions Christ's person, miracles, and resurrection, and 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. And Limborch recommends this as the best way of beginning the controversy with the Jews themselves, as being liable to least cavil.—It would however have been easy to have proved the truth of what the apostle here asserts, from several testimonies of the prophets, (had it been proper for that audience,) as will appear by comparing Isa. liii. 11; Jer. xxxi. 34; Dan. ix. 24; Mic. vii. 19; Zech. xiii. 1; Mal. iy. 2.—We may farther observe, that we do not read of Peter's working any miracle on this great occasion, as 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 truth of the gospel,

and of Peter's being an authorized interpreter of it.

<sup>l</sup> *The Holy Spirit fell upon all, &c.]* This were they consecrated to God, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles; and thus did God direct that they should be baptized, giving this glorious evidence of his receiving them into the Christian church, as well as the Jews.—It is observed by Dr. Lightfoot, that one important effect of this descent of the Holy Spirit upon them probably 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 in the original.

<sup>k</sup> *They of the circumcision—were astonished.]* The Jews had long ago a proverb among them, "That the Holy Spirit never rests upon an Heathen." This astonishment shews, that notion prevailed even in these Christians, whether the proverb was so old or not.



them speak with  
tongues, and magni-  
fy God. Then an-  
swered Peter,

for they heard them all speaking in [diverse] lan-  
guages which they had never learned, and glo-  
rifying God for the rich display of his grace by  
the gospel, in such exalted sentiments and lan-  
guage, as abundantly proved their minds, as  
well as their tongues, to be immediately under  
a divine operation.

SECT.  
XXIII.  
Acts  
X. 46

47 Can any man  
forbid water, that  
these should not be  
baptized, which have  
received the Holy  
Ghost, as well as we?

Then Peter yielding to the force of evidence, 47  
however contrary to his former prejudices, with  
great propriety answered, Can any one reason-  
ably forbid that water should be brought, or offer  
to insist upon the common prejudices which  
has prevailed among us, that these persons should  
not be baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus,  
and solemnly received into his church, who  
have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? It  
is surely his seal set upon them, and it would  
be an arrogant affront to him, to refuse them  
admission to the fullest communion with us.

48 And he com-  
manded them to be  
baptized in the name  
of the Lord. Then  
prayed they him to  
carry certain days.

And as none of the brethren that came with 48  
him pretended to object any thing against it, he  
immediately ordered them to be baptized in the  
name of the Lord Jesus; choosing to make use  
of the ministry of his brethren in performing  
that rite, rather than to do it with his own hands,  
that by this means the expression of their con-  
sent might be the more explicit. And being  
thus received into the church, they had so high  
a value for the conversation of this divine mes-  
senger, and for the joyful tidings which he  
brought them, and were so earnestly desirous  
to be farther instructed in that faith, into the  
general profession of which they were baptized,  
that they intreated him to continue with them  
several days, and omitted nothing in their power  
to make his abode agreeable, as well as useful.

IMPROVEMENT.

THERE is no room to wonder, that a man of Cornelius's be-  
nevolent 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. VETUS  
24, 27

[Can any one forbid water, &c.] Eras-  
mus supposes a transposition or transposi-  
tion of the words here, as if it had been  
said, "Who can forbid, that these should  
be baptized with water?" But it  
seems most natural to understand it, (as

Dr. Whitby does,) "Who can forbid that  
water should be brought?" In which  
view of the clause one would naturally  
conclude, they were baptized by pouring  
water upon them, rather than by plung-  
ing them in it.

sect. XXXIII. What nobler or more rational office can friendship perform! and how deficient is every thing that would assume such a name, which doth not extend itself to a care for men's highest and everlasting interests.

Verse 25, 26 It must, no doubt, be some prejudice in favour of 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.

33 That humble subjection of soul to the divine authority which Cornelius, in 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 now to be tried.

34, 35 Well might Peter apprehend so natural a truth as that which he here professeth, 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.)

36 We also know that important word which God sent to Israel, 43 preaching peace by Jesus Christ, the Lord of all. May we know it to saving purposes, and *believing in him, 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 virtue 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.

41 Let us not esteem it any objection against his divine mission, that God did not humour the wantonness of men so far, as to cause him 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 of 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 family of God was so illustriously declared; and let us be ready, after the example of Peter, whatever preconceived prejudices it may oppose, to receive all whom the Lord hath received, from whatever state his grace hath called them, and cordially to own them as brethren whom our heavenly Father himself doth not disdain to number among his children.

SECT.  
XXIII.  
Verse  
44-46

47-48

SECT. XXIV.

*Peter being questioned about his interview with Cornelius, gives a particular and faithful narration of it, for the satisfaction of his brethren, who were under strong Jewish prejudices. Acts XI. 1-18.*

ACTS XI. 1.  
AND the apostles and brethren that were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

ACTS XI. 1.  
THUS Cornelius and his friends were initiated into the Christian religion, as was related above; and Peter abode with them a while at Caesarea, to confirm them in the faith they had embraced. But in the mean time the apostles, and other brethren who were in Judea, heard in the general that the uncircumcised Gentiles also had received the word of God, and had been baptized; which very much alarmed them, as they were not informed in all the particular circumstances attending that affair.

SECT.  
XXIV.  
Acts.  
XI. 1.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

And when Peter was come up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, they of the Jewish converts, who were still fond of the circumcision which they had received, and of the other ceremonial injunctions to which they had submitted, warmly expostulated and contended with him about what he had done: 2 Saying, there is a strange ac-

3 Saying. Thou

\* Contended with him.] How good an argument soever this may be, as Bishop Burnet and many others urge it against the supremacy of 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

went, took upon them, without reason, to arraign their conduct, and consequently did not in this respect pay a becoming deference to them. It plainly shows, how little regard was had to any uncircumcised persons, whatever profession they might make of worshipping the God

SECT  
XXIV.Acts  
XI. 3.

count come to us lately, and we cannot but hear it with great surprize and displeasure, that *thou didst go in* as a guest to the house of men *who were uncircumcised, and didst eat and drink as freely with them* as if they had been God's peculiar people as well as ourselves; a thing, as thou well knowest, quite unexampled among us.

4 And upon this *Peter beginning* from the vision he had seen, which was evidently designed to dispose him to such condescension, *opened to them [the matter] in order;*<sup>b</sup> and gave them a full detail of all the particulars with the exactest

truth and simplicity, *saying, I was, just before this extraordinary event happened, which I confess may well surprise you, praying, in a proper place of retirement, in the house of Simon the tanner in the city of Joppa; and in a trance I saw a remarkable vision, even something like a great sheet descending from heaven, which was let down by the four corners: and it was so directed, that it came close to me.* And as I was *looking attentively upon it, I observed and saw a great variety of four-footed creatures of the earth, and wild beasts and reptiles and fowls of the air: But I took notice of this circumstance, that they were all of sorts prohibited by our*

7 law.<sup>c</sup> *And I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Arise, Peter, kill any of these animals that are here before thee, and eat freely*

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,

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, and certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me.

6 Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw 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, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

of Israel, and is therefore very inconsistent with what has generally been supposed, and so much insisted upon, of the great difference which the Jews made between those who are commonly called proselytes of the gate and the idolatrous Gentiles. Had it been usual to distinguish them so much in their regards, Peter would not have needed to vindicate his conduct by urging the vision, since he knew from the first mention of Cornelius to him, (chap. x. 2.) that he was *godfearing, one who feared God, that is, as these critics would explain it, a proselyte of the gate.*

<sup>b</sup> *Peter opened to them [the matter] in order.* As it is probable, that they were only some of the Jewish converts, who questioned 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 he chose to treat them in a more gentle and con-

descending manner, giving therein a most amiable example of humility and condescension, which it will be the glory and happiness of gospel-ministers, to follow, in circumstances which bear any resemblance to this.

<sup>c</sup> Were all of sorts prohibited by our law.] There is no sufficient reason to suppose, as most have done, that all manner of living creatures, clean and unclean, were presented to Peter in his vision; for though it be expressed in very general terms, especially in the first account of it, (chap. x. 12.) yet it is manifest, there would have been no room for Peter's scrupling to eat had he seen any creatures there, but what he apprehended to be prohibited by the law. And the translation I have given of that verse, which perfectly agrees with the original, will not oblige us to suppose, that any animals were there, but such as were esteemed unclean.

8 But I said, Not  
so, Lord: for nothing  
common or unclean  
hath at any time en-  
tered into my mouth.

9 But the voice  
answered me again  
from heaven. What  
God hath cleansed  
that call not thou  
common.

10 And this was  
done three times:  
and all were drawn  
up again into heaven.

11 And behold, im-  
mediately there were  
three men already  
come into the house  
where I was, sent  
from Caesarea unto  
me.

12 And the Spirit  
bade me go with  
them, nothing doubt-  
ing. Moreover, these  
six brethren accom-  
panied me, and we  
entered into the man's  
house:

13 And he showed  
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 sir-  
name 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 begin-  
ning.

16 Then remem-  
bered I the word of  
the Lord, how that  
he said, John indeed  
baptized with water;  
but ye shall be bap-  
tized with the Holy  
Ghost.

of whatever thou pleasest. *But I said, By  
no means, Lord; for nothing common or un-  
clean, nothing prohibited in itself, or polluted  
by any accident, hath ever entered into my  
mouth, and by thy grace nothing of that kind  
ever shall.*

*And the voice answered me the se-  
cond time from heaven, Those things which God  
hath cleansed, by bidding thee to eat of them, do  
not thou any more call common. And this was  
done three times, exactly with the same circum-  
stances, that it might make the greater impres-  
sion upon my mind: And at length all the things  
which I had seen were drawn up again into heaven.*

*And behold, at that instant, as soon as the  
vision was over, while I was thinking what  
might be the meaning of it, three men were  
come to the door of the house in which I was,  
who were sent from Caesarea to me by Corne-  
lius the centurion. And immediately the Spi-  
rit commanded me to go with them, without any  
scruple or debate; accordingly I went, and these  
six brethren also, who are here present, and are  
witnesses of all that happened afterwards, went  
along with me; and we arrived at Caesarea, and  
entered into the man's house. And when I had  
inquired what was the reason of his sending for  
me, he presently told us how he had seen an  
angel standing by him in his house, and saying to  
him, Send men to Joppa, and fetch hither Si-  
mon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall in-  
struct thee in the way of life, and speak words  
to thee by which thou and all thy family shall  
be saved, if they are attended to with a proper  
regard.*

*And as I began to speak, before I had made  
any considerable progress in my discourse, the  
Holy Spirit fell upon them, in the visible form  
of cloven tongues of fire, even as it did upon us  
at the beginning of our public ministry, after the  
ascension of our blessed Lord. (Chap. ii. 3, 4.)  
And this was so extraordinary an occurrence, that  
I immediately remembered, and could not  
but seriously reflect upon the word of the Lord  
Jesus, as then remarkably verified, how he said  
but just before his ascension, (chap. i. 5.) John  
indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be bap-  
tized with the Holy Spirit; for this pouring forth  
of the Spirit upon them appeared to be a kind  
of baptism, whereby that prediction was won-*

SECT.  
XXIV.  
Acts  
XI. 8.

SECT. derfully accomplished. *Since therefore God*  
 XXIV. himself, the sovereign dispenser of his own fa-  
 vours, gave to them the very same gift, as [he  
 Acts did] to us who had before believed on the Lord  
 XI. 17. Jesus Christ, what was I that I should be able  
 to prohibit God, or should presume to oppose  
 myself against his wise and gracious pleasure?  
 It rather appeared to me, as I persuade myself  
 it must to you, my brethren, matter of congrat-  
 ulation and praise, than of cavil or complaint.

- 18 *And when they heard these things, they ac-  
 quiesced in them with pleasure, and glorified  
 God for so wonderful a manifestation of his  
 rich grace, saying, God hath then given to the  
 poor Gentiles also repentance unto life,*<sup>a</sup> and has  
 not only made them the overtures of it, but has  
 graciously wrought it in some of their hearts;  
 and we shall rejoice to see it prevailing more  
 and more.

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 Gen-  
 tiles granted repen-  
 tance unto life.

## IMPROVEMENT.

Verse WITH what joy ought every one who loved God or man to  
 1, 2 have heard, that the Gentiles had received the word of the gos-  
 pel; yet we find those of the circumcision disputing with Peter  
 upon the occasion: Their prejudices as Jews were so strong,  
 that they thought the passage to the church must still lie through  
 the synagogue, and so remembered that they were disciples of  
 Moses, as almost to forget that they were the disciples of Christ.  
 Let us always guard against that narrowness of mind which would  
 limit even the Holy One of Israel to the bounds which we shall  
 mark out, and exclude others from his favour, that our own ho-  
 nour may appear so much the more signal.

4 But let us with pleasure observe the mildness and prudence  
 8. 19. of Peter; warm as his temper naturally was, and high as he was  
 raised by the divine favour; though he had been so re-  
 markably turning the key of the kingdom of heaven itself, and  
 opening it by immediate divine direction to the uncircumcised,

<sup>a</sup> *God hath then given to the Gentiles  
 also repentance unto life.* In this they  
 acquiesced for the present, till the con-  
 troversy was renewed by some fiercer  
 zealots, chap. xv. 1, 5. But I beg leave  
 to observe here, that it would have been  
 very improper for them thus to have  
 spoken of the Gentiles in general, if they  
 had only meant such, as had already for-  
 saken idolatry, and were worshippers of  
 the true God. They plainly speak of  
 those to whom this repentance was grant-  
 ed, as persons who before, according to

their apprehension, were in a state of  
 death; in which condition, it is probable  
 they had thought all uncircumcised per-  
 sons to be: and without doubt, they must  
 mean to include the idolatrous Gentiles  
 among the rest, as those who were not  
 evidently and certainly so.—To re-  
 nder this clause, "God has granted sal-  
 vation to the Gentiles on the terms of  
 their repentance," is, I think, deter-  
 mining and limiting the sense in an un-  
 warrantable manner.

that they might enter; yet he stands not upon the general honours of his apostolic character, nor insists upon that implicit submission to him which some, with no such credentials, have been ready to arrogate to themselves: But he condescends to the younger brethren, and gives them a plain, distinct, and faithful narration of the whole matter just as it was. Thus let us learn in the spirit of gentleness, humility, and love, to vindicate our actions where they have been uncandidly mistaken. And when we have the pleasure to know that they are right, let us enjoy that happy reflection to such a degree, as not to suffer ourselves to be disquieted and put out of temper, by the rash charges and censures of those who will judge our conduct before they have examined into it; and are disposed, more to their own detriment than it can possibly be to ours, to err on the severe extreme.

SECT.  
XXIV.

Peter, we see, very circumstantially recollected what he had seen and heard. Let it also be our care to treasure up in our memory, and to inscribe on our hearts, whatever God shall be pleased, though in more ordinary methods of instruction, to discover to us; and never let us be disobedient to any intimation of the divine will, but, on the contrary, always most cheerfully acquiesce in it. Who are we, that in any respect we should resist God? and particularly, who are we, that we should in effect do it by laying down rules relating to Christian communion, which should exclude any whom he has admitted? O that all the churches, whether national or separate, might be led seriously to consider, how arrogant an usurpation that is on the authority of the supreme Lord of the church! O that the sin of this resistance to God may not be laid to the charge of those who perhaps in the main with a good intention, in an overfondness for their own forms, have done it, and are continually doing it!

Verse  
17

Like these brethren of the circumcision, let us be willing to yield to the force of evidence, even when it leads us into an unexpected path; and let us glorify God, when he is pleased to manifest himself to those who seemed to us to have the least room to hope for such a favour. Whether it be to us or to others that God hath granted repentance unto life, may we rejoice in it, and adore his goodness therein! For it is certain that none of the delights of life, which men so fondly pursue, are half so valuable as that *godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation.*

## S E C T. XXV.

*The gospel is preached at Antioch: Barnabas coming thither confirms the disciples, who are there called Christians. Agabus visits them, and foretells the famine, which occasions their sending alms to Jerusalem. Acts XI. 19, to the end.*

## ACTS XI. 19.

S E C T.  
XXV.Acts  
XI. 19.

IT is now proper to mention some other circumstances relating to the church elsewhere. We observe therefore, that during the transactions which have been before related, *they who were dispersed from Jerusalem by the distress and persecution which arose about Stephen, after they had gone through Judea and Samaria, (chap. viii. 1,) travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word of the gospel to none but the Jews only*; not being at all apprehensive, that the Gentiles were to share the blessings of it. *But some of them who bore a part in this work, were men that were natives of the island of Cyprus, and of the province of Cyrene, in Africa, who having heard the story of Peter's receiving Cornelius, though a Gentile, into the communion of the church, took occasion from thence to imitate his example, and having entered into Antioch, spake freely to the Greeks*<sup>b</sup>

ACTS XI. 19.

NOW they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus, and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

<sup>a</sup> *Having entered into Antioch.*] This is an account very different from that which ecclesiastical history gives us, which affirms that Peter was the first who preached the gospel at Antioch, which I mentioned to shew how little these traditions are to be depended upon, as to the first settlement of Christian churches in the world, of which I think we know little certain but from the New Testament. It seems more probable, that Simon, Lucius, and Manaen, who are mentioned, chap. xiii. 1, might be the first preachers here.—Antioch was then the capital of Syria, and, next to Rome and Alexandria, was the most considerable city of the empire.

<sup>b</sup> *Spake to the Greeks.*] Instead of Ἑλληνῶν, the Alexandrian manuscript, which is favoured by the Syriac and some other ancient version, reads Ἑβραίων, which common sense would re-

quire us to adopt, even if it were not supported by the authority of any manuscript, at all; for, as the Hellenists were Jews, there would, on the received reading, be no opposition between the conduct of these preachers, and those mentioned in the preceding verse. Here undoubtedly we have the first account of preaching the gospel to the idolatrous Gentiles; for it is certain, there is nothing in the word Ἑβραίων to limit it to such as were worshippers of the true God; nor can I find the least hint in the New Testament of the two different periods that some have supposed, in the first of which it was preached only to those called proselytes of the gate, and in the second to those who were before idolaters; yet the hypothesis seems in itself so improbable, that it stands in need of the strongest proof before it can be admitted, as I may elsewhere shew at



21 And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. as well as to the Jews; *preaching* the gospel of the Lord Jesus to them, and inviting them to accept of his invaluable privileges. *And the hand of the Lord was remarkably with them* in this pious labour, and a great number of the Gentiles were so effectually convinced and wrought upon by their discourses and miracles, that they *believed and turned unto the Lord Jesus*, consecrating themselves to the service of God through him, with the most humble dependence on his blood and grace.

SECT.  
XXV.  
Acts  
Xl. 21.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church, which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas that he should go as far as Antioch. *And the report concerning them came to the ears of the church that was at Jerusalem*, who, as they had lately seen a way was opened for the conversion of the Gentiles, received the tidings of this further progress of the gospel, with peculiar pleasure; and, desirous to confirm them in the faith into which they had been initiated,

23 Who when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord. *Who when he was come thither, and beheld the grace of God manifested towards them in bringing them to the knowledge of himself in a Redeemer, greatly rejoiced in the good work that was begun among them, and exhorted them all to adhere to the Lord, with full determination and resolution of heart*, whatever circumstances of difficulty and extremity might arise. And

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord. *the exhortation, as it came from his mouth, was peculiarly graceful and effectual, for he was a good man himself, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith*; and speaking from the deep experience of his own heart, and with that full authority which so exemplary a life gave him, as well as with such extraordinary divine assistance, he was the happy means, not only of confirming the faith of those who had already embraced the gospel, but of bringing others to an acquaintance with it: *And thus a considerable number believed and were added unto the Lord*, and were by baptism received into the church.

largely. It is well known, that, as the Greeks were the most celebrated of the Gentile nations near Judaea, the Jews called all the Gentiles by that general name. Compare Rom. x. 12, 1 Cor. xiii. 13, Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11. See also 2 Mac. ii. 19, 13, 20; vi. 9; xl. 21.

[A good man.] The author of Miscell. Sacra, thinks the expression signifies, that he was a man of a sweet and gentle disposition, not disposed to lay any unnecessary burthens on these new converts, and so the more fit to be employed at Antioch in these circumstances. Abstract p. 18.

SECT.  
XXV.  
Acts  
XI. 23

Then Barnabas perceiving, after some abode there, that he wanted an assistant in his labours, went to Tarsus to seek Saul,<sup>d</sup> whose departure thither we mentioned above in the last particulars which we related concerning him. (Compare Acts ix. 30.)

26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch.—

And such a view of the probability of extensive usefulness which seemed to present itself there, that he succeeded in his proposal, and brought him to Antioch;<sup>e</sup> at his return to that populous and celebrated city.

And it came to pass that they continued there, and assembled at proper times in the church for a whole year, and taught considerable numbers of people: And the disciples were by divine appointment first named Christians at Antioch;<sup>f</sup> a title that was really an honour to them, and was very well adapted, to signify their relation to Christ as their common Lord, and their expectations from him as their Saviour.

27 And in these days, while Barnabas and Saul were at Antioch, certain prophets, who were divinely inspired to foretell future events, came from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them whose name was Agabus, stood up in one of their assemblies, and signified by the immediate di-

25 Then departed Barnabas to 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 they assembled themselves with the church and taught much people; and the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and

<sup>d</sup> *Went to Tarsus to seek Saul.*] I have never been able to discover, on what foundation the ingenious writer mentioned in the last note, asserts, that this was the second time of Saul's being at Tarsus after his conversion, and that he had in the mean time (that is, since his first journey thither, Acts ix. 30.) made the tour of Syria, and preached the gospel there.

<sup>e</sup> *Finding him he brought him to Antioch.*] This he might do, as very rightly judging, that since he was by his country a Greek, though by descent a 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 conversation, and eminent piety and zeal.

<sup>f</sup> *By Divine appointment first named Christians at Antioch.*] They were before this called by the Jews, Nazarenes or Gallileans, and by each other, disciples, believers, brethren, or saints. But they now assumed the name of their great

leader, as the Platonists, Pythagoreans, Epicureans, &c. with much less reason had done the name of theirs. I think with Dr. Benson, that the use of the word *χριστιανισμ* implies, that it was done by a divine direction; and have translated it accordingly; (compare Mat. ii. 12, 22; Luke ii. 26; Acts x. 22; Heb. viii. 5; xi. 7; xii. 25.) and therefore am not solicitous to inquire, whether the name were given them, as ecclesiastical history tells us, by Euodius, (who is mentioned by it as their first bishop,) or by Barnabas, or Saul, as Bishop Pearson seems to think. (See Pears. on the Creed, p. 103.) The learned and candid Witsius 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 had some ages before raised so many cruel persecutors of the church of God. Wits. de Vit. Paul. cap. iii. sect. 5.

signified by the Spirit, that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

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

rejection of the Spirit, that there should shortly be a great famine over all the land; which accordingly came to pass quickly after the days of Claudius Caesar, the Roman emperor then reigning. And, in consideration of the distress which it might bring along with it, the disciples at Antioch determined, that according to the respective abilities of each<sup>b</sup> they should send a liberal contribution to the assistance of the believing brethren, who dwelt in such great numbers in Judea,<sup>c</sup> and had many poor among them, who would particularly need to be supported in a time of such calamity. And this accordingly they did, sending [it] to the elders<sup>d</sup> to be deli-

SECT.  
XXV.

Acts  
XI. 28

[A great famine over all the land.] As it is certain, *συστομία* may have such a limited signification, (see note \* on Luke ii. 1, Vol. 1.) I follow this translation, as what appears to me safest, and refer my reader to those reasons for doing it, which he may find at large in Mr. Lardner's Credibility. (Book I. chap. 11. § 2, Vol. I. p. 539, & seq.) The learned Archbishop Usher has endeavoured to prove the famine in the fourth year of Claudius [A. D. 44.] universal. But Mr. Hiscoe rather thinks, there may be a reference here to what happened in a course of some years, and observes, (as Mr. Bosnage had done before,) that there were famines in various places during the reign of Claudius, not only in Judea, which began the latter end of his fourth, and was continued in his fifth, sixth, and seventh years, (of which Josephus takes notice, Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 2. § 6; & cap. 5. [al. 3.] § 3,) but also at Rome in his second; (as mentioned by Dio. lib. lx. p. 671; and that Syria in his fourth, (Orus. lib. vii. cap. 6.) Greece in his ninth, (Euseb. Chron. p. 204.) and Italy in his tenth and eleventh, (Facit. Annal. lib. xii. cap. 53. and Sueton. Claud. cap. 18.) were visited with the like calamity. He therefore supposes all these to be included in this prophecy. (Serin. at Boyle's Lect. chap. iii. § 3, p. 60—66.) But the persons, with regard to whom it is here mentioned, were so much more concerned in the first of these, which seems also to have been the most extreme, that I am still of opinion, the prediction chiefly refers to that, which was the dearth in which Helena Queen of Adiabene so generously relieved the Jews with corn and other provisions from Egypt and Cyprus, which, by the way, proves, that the famine was not universal at that time.

See Wits. Meletem. de Vit. Paul. cap. iii. § 6.

<sup>b</sup> According to the respective abilities of each. I think this all that is intended by *καθὸς ἰκανότητά τῶν*, though the words might more literally be rendered, according to the abundance which each had; for it is hardly to be imagined, that every Christian at Antioch was in abundant or plentiful circumstances; nor do I think any thing can be inferred, concerning the extent of the famine, from this circumstance, as it plainly appears, not to have been begun, when the collection was resolved upon.

<sup>c</sup> They should send to the assistance, &c.] Vitrina has shewn at large, that it was common for the Jews, who lived in foreign parts, to send relief in times of distress to their poor brethren at Jerusalem. (Vitrin. de Synag. vel. lib. iii. Part I. cap. 13. p. 809—811.) This tender care in these Gentile converts at Antioch would tend powerfully to conciliate the affections of their circumcised brethren, and was some acknowledgement, though not an equivalent, for the voluntary poverty many of the saints in Judea had incurred by the sale of their estates, as well as for the peculiar persecutions which they underwent from their unbelieving countrymen.

<sup>d</sup> Sending it to the elders. I am much surpris'd that a person of Dr. Whitby's judgment should think the persons here spoken of were the elders of the Jewish synagogues, considering that these were the men, who would of all others have been most ready to injure and defraud the Christians. It seems much more rational, with the late Lord Barrington, to conclude from hence, that there was now no apostles at Jerusalem, and that the elders, having been competently instruct-

SECT. vered to the deacons, or to be otherwise distributed as they should think fit; being satisfied that they would make a prudent use of what they sent them upon this occasion *by the hands of Barnabas and Saul*, who took the money they had collected to Jerusalem; and as the famine lasted for some time, were afterwards employed in prosecuting this generous and necessary work by new collections elsewhere.

ACTS  
XI. 30

## IMPROVEMENT.

- VERS. LET us with pleasure observe, how in the instance here recorded, the blood of a martyr was the seed of the church; an event afterwards so common, that it became a proverb. Thus they who were scattered abroad on the death of Stephen every where dispersed the gospel; and let us be thankful that some of them brought it to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. Freely did it run, and illustriously was it glorified: But with whatever evidence and advantage they preached it, with whatever spirit and zeal (in some measure the natural consequence of having been called to suffer so dearly for it,) the success of all is to be traced up to the hand of the Lord that was with him. This engaged men to believe and turn unto the Lord; to stop in their career of sin, to pause upon their conduct, to accept of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour, and to consecrate themselves to God through him. O that his hand might be with all his ministers! O that such success might every where be produced by its powerful operations!
- 23 Well might Barnabas rejoice when he saw such a scene, and more distant brethren be pleased when they heard of it; for what is the triumph of the gospel but the triumph of human happiness? And who, that has cordially received the gospel, does not feel his whole heart most tenderly interested in that? He wisely and properly exhorted them, having once embraced this divine and glorious dispensation, with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord; and there was great need of such an exhortation, as well as a very solid foundation for it: Such difficulties will arise in our Christian course, though we should not meet with persecutions like theirs, that we shall need a most steady resolution of mind in order to our adherence to the Lord;

ed in Christianity, were left to take care of the church there, while the apostles took a tour into the neighbouring parts more fully to instruct and confirm the new converts. (MISSELI, Sacr. Essay. ii. p. 110, & seq.) This is the first mention that we have of elders, in the Christian church; and Dr. Hammond has a large and very remarkable note here, in

which he labours to prove, that these elders were the same officers with those called *ἐπίσκοποι* or *bishops*, and thinks there is no certain evidence from Scripture, that the name of elders or presbyters was given so early to another order between them and deacons; but this is not a place to enter accurately into inquiries of this nature.

but let us arm ourselves with it, and hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, since he is invariably faithful who hath promised. (Heb. x. 23.) Such exhortations as these will be most effectual when they come, as in this instance they evidently did, from a good man, whose example will add authority to his words, and so be a means not only to quicken religion in the hearts of those who have already embraced it, but to propagate it to those who are yet strangers to it.

With pleasure let us reflect upon this honourable name, which the disciples of Jesus first wore at Antioch; they were called Christians, as it seems, by divine appointment: And would to God that no other, no dividing name, had ever prevailed among them! As for such distinguishing titles, though they were taken from Apollos, or Cephas, or Paul, let us endeavour to exclude them out of the church as fast as we can; and while they continue in it, let us take care that they do not make us forget our most ancient and most glorious title. Let us take heed, that we do not so remember our difference from each other in smaller matters, as to forget our mutual agreement in embracing the gospel of Christ, and in professing to submit ourselves to him as our common Prince and Saviour.

The notice of the famine brought to them by Agabus the prophet, awakened the generosity of the Christians at Antioch, to supply the pressing necessities of the saints in Judea. The possibility, at least, that it might have affected themselves, would have led some to conclude it the part of prudence to keep what they had to themselves: But they argued much more wisely, choosing thus to lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come, and to secure a title to that peculiar care of divine providence, which is promised and engaged to those who mind not every one his own things, but each the welfare of others and of all. (Phil. ii. 4.)

SECT. XXVI.

*Herod having slain James, seizes Peter, and commits him to prison, who is delivered by an angel, in answer to the prayers of the church. Acts XII. 1—19.*

acts XII. 1.  
NOW about that time Herod the

ACTS XII. 1.  
NOW about that time, when Saul and Barnabas were preparing to set out for Jerusalem, to carry thither what had been collected by the Christians at Antioch for the relief of the saints in Judea, Herod Agrippa, the king,

\* Herod Agrippa.] So the Syriac expressly, renders it; and there is no reason to doubt, especially considering the similarity of circumstances mentioned be-

SECT  
XXVI.  
Acts  
XII. 2

abusing the authority with which he was invested by the Roman emperor, laid hands in a very injurious manner on some of the church to persecute and afflict them. And he carried this injustice so far, that he even slew James the son of Zebedee, the brother of John, one of those three apostles whom Jesus honoured with such peculiar intimacy; beheading him with the sword,<sup>b</sup> as an enemy to the state, as well as an opposer of the law of Moses.

- 3 And as he found that no immediate vengeance overtook him on this account, and likewise saw that [this] was acceptable to the Jews,<sup>c</sup> whose favour he laboured by all possible means to conciliate, he went on farther, and presumed to seize Peter also, renowned as he was for such a variety of miracles, which were wrought by him at Jerusalem in the name of Jesus: And it was in the days of unleavened bread, during the feast of the passover that Peter was apprehended. And having seized him at this pub-

King stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

4 And when he

low that this Herod was the prince whom Josephus calls Agrippa, which probably was his Roman, as Herod was his Syrian name. He was not (as Grotius by a slip of memory says,) the son, but the grandson, of Herod the Great by his son Aristobulus, (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. cap. 2. [al. 7.] § 4.) nephew to Herod Antipas who beheaded John the baptist, brother to Herodias whom that incestuous and adulterous tetrarch married, and father to that better Agrippa, before whom Paul made his defence, (Acts xxv. 13, & seq.) Cæsar Calpurnia 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. (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. cap. 6. [al. 6.] § 10, 11, & cap. 7. [al. 9.] § 2.) In this authority Claudius confirmed him, and made him king of Judea, adding to his former dominions those of Lysania. (Antiq. lib. xix. cap. 5. [al. 4.] § 1.) Mr. Fleming thinks, it was high treason against the Messiah for him to assume the title of king of Judea; and that this arrogance, joined with his cruelty, rendered him more worthy of that terrible death described

below. Flein. Christol. Vol. III. p. 358.

<sup>b</sup> Slew James—with the sword.] This was our Lord's prediction relating to him fulfilled. (Mat. xx. 23.) I know not how far we are to depend upon the tradition, which we find cited by Eusebius, (Eccles. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 9.) 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 I think it is very beautifully observed by Clerus, (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.

<sup>c</sup> Saw that this was acceptable to the Jews.] Josephus tells us, "that this prince was a great zealot for the Mosaic law, that he dwelt much at Jerusalem, and was fond of all opportunities of obliging the Jews, as his grandfather Herod had been of pleasing strangers;" a character well suiting what Luke here says of him. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. xix. cap. vii. § 5.

had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quarters of soldiers to keep him, intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

7 And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up,

4 Bound with two chains. It is well known that this way of securing prisoners of importance, by chaining each of their hands to a guard, was practised among the Romans; and the reader may

lie time, when so many Jews were come together from all parts, he put him in prison, delivering him to the custody of four quaternions of soldiers, that is, to sixteen, consisting of four in each party, who were to relieve each other by turns, watching him constantly by day and night: This Herod ordered for the greater security of so noted a person, intending immediately after the passover to bring him out to the people, to be made a spectacle to them in what he should suffer; as Jesus his Master had been on the first day of unleavened bread.

In the mean time therefore, till the day of execution came, Peter was thus kept in the prison. But as the importance of so useful a life was well known to his Christian friends, earnest and continued prayer was, with great intensity and assiduity of mind, made to God on his account, by the whole church at Jerusalem.

And the event quickly shewed that this their earnest supplication was not in vain; for when Herod was ready to have brought him out to execution, [even] that very night before he had designed to do it, Peter was quietly sleeping between two soldiers, in full calmness and serenity of mind, though bound with two chains,<sup>4</sup> which joined each of his hands to one of the soldiers that lay on either side of him, in such a manner that it was (humanly speaking) impossible he should have risen without immediately awaking them: And the other two guards then on duty stood centry before the door, and were keeping the prison, that there might be no attempt of any kind made to rescue him; because he was looked upon as a prisoner of great consequence.

And behold, an astonishing deliverance was wrought out for him in all this extremity of danger; for an angel of the Lord presented himself on a sudden, and a glorious light shone in the whole house, dark and gloomy as it was: And this heavenly messenger was no sooner come, but giving Peter a gentle blow on the side, he

SECT.  
XXVI.  
Acta  
XII. 4.

find authorities to this purpose produced by Grotius, in his note on Acts xxviii. 16; and by Mr. Lardner, (now Dr. Lardner) Credib. Book I. chap. 19. § 9, Vol. I. p. 321, 322.

SECT. *awoke him, saying, Arise quickly. And at the*  
 XXVI. *same moment of time both his chains fell off*  
 Acta *from his hands: Yet the soldiers were by a mi-*  
 XII. 7. *raculous power kept so fast asleep, that they*  
 were not at all alarmed by the noise of their

8 fall. *And the angel said to him, Gird thyself*  
 presently in the clothes thou hast on, tie thine in-  
 ward garment about thee, and bind on thy san-  
 dals, that thou mayest walk out; and according-  
 ly he did so. *And he says to him farther,*  
*Throw thy mantle round thee, and follow me*  
 9 out. *And Peter going out of the prison, as he*  
 was guided by the angel, met with no opposi-  
 tion in his way, and followed him as he was or-  
 dered: *And he was so astonished, that he did*  
*not know that what was done by the angel was*  
*true and real, but only supposed that he had seen*  
*a vision, as in some other instances he had done.*

10 *And passing through the first and second watch,*  
 where the guards were all asleep, *they came to*  
*the iron gate that leads into the city, which,*  
 though it was a heavy gate, and very strongly  
 fastened, yet was no hindrance in their way, but  
 opened to them as of its own accord. *And thus*  
*going out into the city, they went together*  
*through one street; and immediately the angel*  
*having done all that was requisite for his deli-*  
*verance, and set him at full liberty, departed*  
*from him on a sudden, and left him alone to go*  
 where he pleased.

11 *And Peter being come to himself, and reco-*  
 vered from the first astonishment of such an ex-  
 traordinary event, *said, Now I know truly*  
*that the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose cause I was*  
 going to suffer, *hath (as he formerly did, chap.*  
 v. 19.) *sent his angel, one of the many heav-*  
 enly spirits under his command, and hath deliver-  
 ed me from the hand of Herod, who intended  
 my death, and from all the expectation of the  
 Jewish people: who, after the many beneficial  
 miracles I have wrought among them, were  
 thirsting for my blood, and waited impatiently  
 to see my execution.

12 *Such was the grateful sense that Peter had of*  
 his deliverance; *and recollecting where he was,*

saying, *Arise up*  
 quickly. *And his*  
 chains fell off from  
 his hands.

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 un-  
 to the city, which  
 opened to them of  
 its own accord: And  
 they went out, and  
 passed on through  
 one street, and forth-  
 with the angel de-  
 parted 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 deli-  
 vered me out of the  
 hand of Herod, and  
 from all the expecta-  
 tion of the people  
 of the Jews.

12 And when he  
 had considered the

\* *Recollecting where he was.* | This is so natural an interpretation of *επιθυμῶν*, that there seems no need of Dr. Hammond's conjectural emendation, who would read it *επιθυμῶν, making haste*, as he also would, chap. xiv. 6.



thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where 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.

he presently concluded whither to go, and came to the house of Mary the mother of John, who was surnamed Mark, where many Christians were gathered together, and were spending the night in praying earnestly for his deliverance: And God answered them, while they were yet speaking; for he had now discharged the prisoner for whom they were so much concerned, and brought him to the very house in which they were assembled. And as Peter stood, and knocked at

the door of the outer gate,<sup>f</sup> which entered into the house; that they might guard against the danger of admitting any person whom they did not know, a maiden, whose name was Rose, went to the door, to listen and inquire who was there.<sup>g</sup>

And he had no sooner answered, but knowing Peter's voice, she was so transported with joy and surprise, that she did not open the gate; but running to the company that were assembled in the house, she told [them] that Peter was actually standing at the gate. And they said to

her, Surely thou art distracted, to imagine so incredible and so impossible a thing. But she persisted in it, that she was sure she heard his voice; and confidently affirmed that it was undoubtedly so. Then, as they knew not how to account for it, they said, in their confusion of thought, It is then probably his angel, who has assumed his form to bring us some tidings of him; or perhaps he is executed in prison, (as John the Baptist was in the night,) and his separate spirit has appeared, as a token of its being employed, as angels are, in ministering to the church on earth.<sup>h</sup>

[At the door of the outer gate.] Though De Dieu, chiefly on the authority of Kimchi, in his distinction between שַׁעַר and פֶּתַח, interprets this of a kind of wicket in a pair of great gates, I apprehend, (according to the accurate and useful description which Dr. Shaw has given of the houses in the east,) that the word *rhoda* here properly signifies what we generally call the gateway of a large house, by which, if there be an area surrounded with buildings, you pass into it. And it is probable, that this was no small house, as many were assembled there.

[To inquire who was there.] That this is the most exact signification of the original word *ῥωδᾶ*, is abundantly demonstrated by Raphellus, (Annot. ex

Xen. p. 159.) and Blener, (Observ. Vol. I. p. 411.)—I render this maiden's name Rhoda by the English name Rose, as, whenever I meet with Greek names in use among us, I think it most natural to give the English termination; and shall only add, that Grotius has well observed, the Jews frequently gave to their female children the name of agreeable flowers or plants: Thus Susannah signifies a lily, Hedessa a myrtle, Tamar a palm-tree, &c.

<sup>h</sup> It is his angel, &c.] Though I have followed the more common rendering here, I pretend not certainly to say, that Sir Thomas Brown is mistaken, (in his Religio Medici, p. 19.) when he says, (as Clavius, Cameron, and Hammond also do) that the word *ῥωδᾶ* here signifies *rose*.

SECT.  
XXVI.  
Acts  
XII. 12

SECT.

XXVI.

ACTS

XII. 10

But Peter in the mean time continued knocking, upon which they went out several of them together; and when they had opened [the door,] they saw him, and rejoiced to find that he was there, but were exceedingly astonished at the

17 sight of him. And as he found upon his coming in among them, that his presence threw them into a confused transport, which grew so loud that he could not easily be heard, he beckoned to them with [his] hand to be silent, and related to them how the Lord had conducted him out of prison, by the ministry of an angel: And having told them the particulars of what had passed, he said, Let care be taken to inform James,<sup>1</sup> and the other brethren, of these things, that they may magnify God for this great deliverance, and consider it as an engagement to serve him with greater resolution and zeal. And presently departing from thence, he went to another place,<sup>2</sup> and continued some time in retirement, that he might avoid the search which his persecutors would of course make for him, when they should find that he was gone.

18 And accordingly, as soon as it was day, there was no small tumult among the soldiers on his account, and no search was spared that they might know what was become of Peter.<sup>1</sup> For the

16 But Peter continued knocking, and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them, how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, He shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went in to another place.

18 Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

venge, as to be sure it often does. Compare Mat. xi. 10; Mark i. 2; Luke vii. 24, 27; bc. 52; and Jam. ii. 25. They might perhaps think, he had sent somebody, who telling her, he came from Peter, she by mistake apprehended it to be him. But I think it much more probable, that, as she overheard that she knew his voice, they then judged it to be something supernatural. It is by no means certain, 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. See Phil. de Sacrif. Cain & Abellis, p. 134; and de Gigantibus, p. 286; and Dr. Waterland's Sermon, Vol. II. p. 20, 21. But whatever their notion was, one way or other, no argument can be drawn from it, as to the truth of either of these suppositions.

[Inform James.] As James the brother of John was dead, (see 2.) the person here referred to must be James the Less, the brother or kinsman of our Lord, and author of the General Epistle which bears his name. He appears to have been a

person of considerable weight and importance; Peter therefore particularly directs the message to him for his encouragement, and to engage the concurrence of his thanksgivings to God, on account of this extraordinary deliverance.

[Went to another place.] It was convenient he should withdraw from Jerusalem; but it is utterly incredible, that he now went to Rome, and made that abode of twenty-five years thence, which the Papiſt writers pretend. The absurdity of which pretence has been abundantly demonstrated by many Protestant writers, and by none more pertinently, in a few words, than Beza in this place.

[What was become of Peter.] Elzevir (Observ. Vol. I. p. 412.) and Raphellius (ex Xen. p. 160.) have so abundantly proved, that τὸ ἀπεῖναι τὸ ἴδιον μὴ δύναται with great propriety be thus rendered, that I see no reason to imagine, as Erasmus here hints, that it may refer to some notion, that Peter had been transformed, perhaps by magic art, into some form of shape different from his own.

guards awaking out of their sound sleep, could none of them give any account of what had passed, and were ready to suspect and accuse each other of negligence or treachery, in giving the prisoner an opportunity to make his escape.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death.--

And indeed very fatally for them had he escaped; for *Herod searching for him, and not finding him, examined the keepers* as strictly as possible; and as he could make nothing out by his inquiry, but that he was gone while they slept, and thought it by no means prudent to give any intimation that he suspected a miraculous interposition of Providence in favour of a man whom he had devoted to destruction, he *ordered them to be immediately led away to execution* for their negligence; and so the affair ended, and shortly after his life too, as we shall find in the following section.

IMPROVEMENT.

WE have now before us the death of another martyr, and that martyr an apostle, and that apostle no less a person than James the brother of John, who was also one of the chosen favourites and companions of our blessed Lord; and not the less dear because so early dismissed from mortal life and labour, and dismissed by a violent and bloody death. He was slain with the sword; but that blow, which was hardly if at all to be felt, in one short moment transported him to his long-loved Lord, and introduced him to that endeared converse with Jesus in his heavenly presence, of which all the most intimate hours spent with him upon earth, not excepting that of the transfiguration itself, (to which he was an eye-witness,) were but an imperfect shadow.

But how strange was it, that this 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, his Lord only excepted, that ever had appeared in all the list of the prophetic and inspired race! Yet thus it was that they proceeded to fill up the measure of their fathers; (Mat. 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

*Ordered them to be led away to execution.* It is well known, that the word *executio* has this signification. See Beza and Heinsius in loc.---He probably punished them with such severity, lest an apprehension of a miraculous deliverance should have prevailed, and so Christiansly have gained, as it probably did, additional strength. What had so nota-

riously happened to all the twelve apostles in a circumstance much resembling this, (chap. v. 12 & seq.) could no doubt add great weight to such a representation, and it seems that this reasonable interposition of Providence, joined with the death of Herod soon after, put a speedy end to this persecution.

SECT.  
XXVI.  
Acts  
XII. 18.

verse  
1, 2

sect. thirst for their blood: The surest token of *wrath coming upon*  
 xxvi. *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 which  
 had been shed from Abel to James.

Verse Peter was also imprisoned, and was bound with chains; and no  
 5, 6 doubt the prayers and tears with which the church were contend-  
 ing for his delivery, would appear exceedingly despicable to his  
 enemies, if known by them; but they found to their confusion,  
 that his Redeemer was strong. (Jer. l. 31.) The Lord Jesus sent  
 an angel to him, who found him secure in his innocence, and  
 happy in his hope, sleeping between those two guards, who  
 perhaps in a few hours were to have been his executioners, and  
 sleeping so sweetly sound, that the brightness of the angel's pre-  
 7-10 sence did not immediately awake him. The angel smites him,  
 and his chains fall off; the iron gates are opened, and the pri-  
 soner is set at full liberty. So does the angel of death smite as  
 it were, but with a gentle blow, the servants of Christ, and the  
 letters of mortality fall off; the doors of the dungeon are opened,  
 and they are led into the new Jerusalem, where they find ano-  
 ther kind of society, another kind of rest, another kind of joy,

12-16 The prayers of the night were added to those of the day.  
 Pious men and women, the aged and the young, were assem-  
 bled on this important occasion: And while they were praying,  
 God answered; while they were yet speaking, he heard. (Isa.  
 lxx. 24.) Behold, Peter is himself sent among them, to bring  
 9 them the astonishing news of that real deliverance, which at first  
 appeared to him but as a vision of the night: What delight must  
 such a mercy give them! especially when considered as an an-  
 swer of prayer! What an encouragement must it be to them all,  
 to hold fast the profession of their faith without wavering, and in  
 17 every future exigence by prayer and supplication to make their  
 requests known unto God. (Phil. iv. 6.) Peter was solicitous it  
 might be known to the surviving James, and the other apostles,  
 that they might glorify God in him, and might take encourage-  
 ment from it, to go on boldly in the prosecution of their work.  
 With such views should we own the goodness of God in any de-  
 liverance he grants us, that others may learn to confide in him,  
 and may join their praises with ours.

18, 19 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 Peter, whilst 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 vengeance 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 sight he must have appeared the murderer of Peter, as well as of James. SECT. XXV.

## SECT. XXVII.

*Herod, on his reconciliation to the people of Tyre and Sidon, makes a public oration, for which he is extravagantly applauded, but for his pride on that applause is miraculously destroyed. Acts XII. 19—24.*

ACTS XII. 19.  
AND he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and there abode.

ACTS XII. 19. WE have just given an account of the miraculous manner in which Peter was delivered from the cruel attempt of Herod, and of the transport of rage in which that tyrannical prince ordered the guards to be put to death, though in reality they had been no way necessary to his escape. And now after this disappointment, Herod departed from Jerusalem, and passing from Judea to the city of Caesarea, he abode [there:] till in the midst of all his pride, and glory, the judgment of God overtook him, and Providence avenged the death of James, and the designed murder of Peter, in a most awful manner on this persecuting prince. SECT. XXVII.

And very observable were the circumstances of his miserable end; as introductory to which it must be observed, that *Herod was highly incensed against the Tyrians and Sidonians*, on account of some supposed affront which he had received from them, which provoked him so far, that, having vowed a severe revenge, he was preparing with all speed to make war upon them: *But* as they were a trading people, and were apprehensive of the consequences of the king's displeasure, *they unanimously came* to a resolution to send proper representatives to Caesarea, to appear before him, and having found

<sup>a</sup> *Passing from Judea to Caesarea.*] This is the same Caesarea, which was formerly called Straton's Tower, and had been rebuilt by Herod the Great. (See note on Acts viii. 40, p. 120.) Josephus (who gives us an account of the death of Herod Agrippa, which greatly illustrates this of St. Luke,) says, that he went to Caesarea

in the third year of his reign over the whole country, to celebrate games there in honour of Claudius Caesar, to whom he had been so much obliged. (Antiq. lib. xix. cap. 8. [al. 7.] sect. 2) It seems, that the oration afterwards mentioned was made in a full theatre there.

SECT.  
XXVII.  
Acts  
XII. 20

out means of *gaining Blastus, the king's chamberlain, to espouse their interest*, and being introduced by him, *they begged for an accommodation of the difference, and earnestly entreated he would grant them terms of peace, which they found it absolutely necessary to sue for, because their country was nourished and maintained by that of the king; they having little corn of their own growth, and not being able to subsist without a constant supply of provisions from Judea and Galilee.* (Compare 1 Kings v. 11; and Ezek. xxvii. 17.)

having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

- 21 *And to make the transaction as solemn as possible, upon a set day* which he thought proper for that purpose, when a grand assembly was held, *Herod came forth with great magnificence and splendour, arrayed in a royal habit, and being seated in a public theatre upon the throne, made an oration to them with a great deal of state and affectation of eloquence, expressing at large his clemency and condescension in admitting them to favour, when he could*
- 22 *so easily have subdued them by force. And the people, who flocked in multitudes to this grand spectacle, were so charmed with his appearance and address, that they all cried out, as in a rapture, as soon as he had done speaking, Surely [it is] the voice of a god that we hear, and not that of a mortal man: And the unhappy prince, instead of expressing a just indignation at such base and impious flattery, hearkened to it with a secret complacency.*
- 23 *But immediately all his haughty parade was disgraced and exposed; for an angel of the Lord, by an awful though invisible operation on his vitals, smote him with a sore and grievous dis-*

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 immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not

<sup>s</sup> *Arrayed in a royal habit.* Josephus expressly says, that his fine robe was richly wrought with silver, which, reflecting the rays of the rising sun with an unusual and almost insupportable splendor, gave his flatterers an occasion of complimenting him with the title of a deity:—Mr. Fleming imagines they therein referred to the glory with which the shekinah used to appear; and that Herod, being impious enough to assume the honour of it, provoked the divine Majesty beyond any farther sufferance, so that he

sent a disease upon him, which rendered him equally contemptible and miserable. (Flem. Christol. Vol. II. p. 300.) Fleming has given several instances of the madness of heathen princes, who arrogated divinity to themselves, and some of them came to infamous ends. (Observ. Vol. I. p. 419, 414.) But to be sure, Herod's knowledge of the true God, and of his jealousy with respect to divine honours rendered his guilt incomparably more aggravated than theirs.

God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

ease, <sup>c</sup> because he gave not God the glory, in rejecting these blasphemous applauses. On which he was presently forced to quit the place in extreme torture, and being miserably eaten and tormented (as his grandfather Herod the Great had been,) with a vast number of small worms,<sup>d</sup> which bred in his bowels, and rendered him a most nauseous and horrible spectacle to all about him, he expired in equal agony and infamy: sunk as much below the common state of human nature, as his flatterers had endeavoured to raise him above it.

scrip.  
xxvii.  
Acts  
XII. 23.

24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.

And upon this the word of God grew more <sup>24</sup> and more successful, and in every place where the seed of the gospel was sown, the number of believers was considerably multiplied,<sup>e</sup> and their faith greatly established: And after all the opposition of its enemies, who had endeavoured to extirpate it, the progress of Christianity was apparently promoted by the concurrence of these extraordinary events, in the deliverance of Peter, and the death of Herod, that cruel persecutor, under such evident tokens of divine vengeance.

\* An angel of the Lord smote him. Josephus tells us, (in the place cited above) that, as he did not rebuke this impious flattery, 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 then 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, A. D. 44.—Some have supposed, when it is said an angel smote him, that this is only a Jewish phrase, to signify he was suddenly seized with this disorder; But I think, it expresses the real, though invisible agency of a celestial spirit in this occasion. Compare 2 Sam. xxiv. 16; & Kings xix. 35.

<sup>d</sup> Being eaten with worms. Bera and Elmer think, *κατασχευόμενος* signifies in the general *assailed with vermin*, and may express the disease called *verbera pedicularis*, of which, as the latter of these critics has shown, (Vol. I. p. 417, 418.) several persecuting and cruel princes have died. (Compare 2 Mac. ix. 9; and Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. viii. cap. 16.) I think with Dr. Lardner, (Credib. Book I. chap. I. § 6, Vol. I. p. 39, 40.) that Josephus, out of a partial fondness for Herod Agrippa, whom he had so much extolled, has concealed this particular, which was the true cause of those excruciating pains in the bowels, of which this Herod, and his grandfather Herod the Great died. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. xvii. cap. 6, [ad. 3.] § 6.

<sup>e</sup> The word of God grew, and was multiplied. The expressions here used, (*αὐξάνει καὶ πολλαπλασιάζεται*) relate properly to *receptacles*, 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.

## IMPROVEMENT.

- SECT. *THE wrath of a king is as the messengers of death; but a*  
 xxvii. *wise man (says Solomon) 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.
- Verse  
 20 Tyre and Sidon were nourished by the king's 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.)
- 21, 22 How vain and impious was the applause of this servile multi-  
 tude, when they were so ready to compliment a mortal man in  
 shining apparel, and on a royal throne, with the title of divini-  
 ty! and how wretched the infatuation of his mind, when he  
 could receive that ascription without horror, yea even with  
 complacency! Thus do pomp and power, wealth and grandeur,  
 take away the heart of their possessors; but never is a mortal  
 nearer to destruction than when he forgets that he is a mortal.
- 23 With pleasure no doubt, did this angel of the Lord come down  
 to execute upon this proud and persecuting prince the ven-  
 geance due to the honours of God which he had invaded, and  
 the blood of the saints which he had spilt. Let us adore the  
 triumph of the injured Majesty of heaven: He 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.
- 24 Thus is the Almighty Sovereign of the universe *known by the*  
*judgment which he executeth* upon the haughty kings of the  
 earth. (Psal. ix. 16.) In vain might the gospel flourish on oc-  
 casion of such an event; as so this royal corpse was (as it were)  
 given for manure to the roots of that vine which he, in contempt  
 of the King of Kings by whom it was planted, had impiously  
 endeavoured to root up.



## SECT. XXVIII.

*Saul and Barnabas, being returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, are sent out from thence to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; and, coming to Cyprus, smite Elymas with blindness, and convert Sergius Paulus the Roman governor there. Acts XII. ult. XIII. 1—12.*

ACTS XII. 25.

AND Barnabas and Saul, returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

ACTS XII. 25.

WE have formerly taken notice of the message on which the disciples at Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem; to carry their alms to the brethren there, who were threatened with an approaching famine, which Agabus had foretold; (chap. xi. 29, 30. p. 165.) And we shall now observe, that *Barnabas and Saul having fulfilled [their] ministry*, and faithfully performed the charge committed to them, *returned back to Antioch from Jerusalem, bringing along with them John, whose surname was Mark.*<sup>b</sup>

SECT.  
XXVIII.  
Acts  
XII. 25

<sup>a</sup> *Having fulfilled their ministry, returned from Jerusalem.* Mr. Fleming thinks with several other good critics, that they returned after the death of James, and in the interval between the commitment and deliverance of Peter; and that it was to avoid breaking the thread of the story, that their return was not mentioned sooner. (See *Flem. Christol.* Vol. II. p. 290.) But Dr. Lardner argues, from its being inserted here, that the commission was not executed till after the death of Herod, and dates the beginning of the famine accordingly. (*Credib. Bo-k I.* chap. xi. sect. 2. Vol. I. p. 541.) Lord Barrington thinks, it was during Paul's abode at Jerusalem on this occasion, that he had the vision in the temple mentioned Acts xxii. 17—21; and that then the Lord Jesus gave him that commission to the Gentiles expressed Acts xxvi. 17, 18; which words he supposes to have been spoken at this time, and that this extraordinary fact is referred to Acts xiii. 2. when the Spirit speaks as having already called him and Barnabas to the work, to which they were then to be separated; which must suppose, that Barnabas had also some correspondent vision, or was mentioned in that of Paul. (See *Miscell. Sacr. Essay*

ii. p. 28, 29.) But I shall give my reasons, when I come to the text in question, why I understand them in a different sense and connection.

<sup>b</sup> *John, whose surname was Mark.* It appears from what Grotius has urged, *Prolog. ad Marc. Evang.* that this was a different person from Mark the Evangelist, who was for several years the intimate companion of the apostle Peter, and seems to have been converted by him, as he calls him his son, (1 Pet. v. 13.) a title, which the apostles used to give to those who were the fruit of their ministry. Compare 1 Cor. iv. 15; Gal. iv. 19; and *Philem.* ver. 10. We learn from Scripture, that this person was the son of Mary, at whose house the disciples met to pray for Peter, when he was imprisoned; Acts xii. 12; 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 his taking him with them to Antioch, and from thence to Pamphylia, Acts xiii. 5, & seq. where it should seem he was discouraged by the difficulties of the work from going any farther, and returned to Jerusalem, ver. 13, but by his insisting afterwards, when they were sitting out upon another progress, that Mark should

SECT. *Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers of great note; particularly Barnabas, the generous Levite whom we just now mentioned, who had given up the whole of his estate to charitable uses; and Simeon, who was also called Niger, or the Black, from his swarthy complexion; and Lucius, the Cyrenian, a native of Africa; and Manaen, a person of considerable rank, who was educated with Herod the tetrarch in his father's court,<sup>d</sup> yet thought it no disgrace to appear as a Christian minister; and, to mention no more, Saul, that remarkable convert, whose labours in the church were, as we shall farther learn, so eminently useful. And as they were ministering to the Lord in public, and joined fasting to prayer, the Holy Spirit by immediate revelation said, Separate to me Barnabas and Saul, for the extraordinary work of preaching the gospel among the Gentiles, to which I have now expressly called them.<sup>e</sup>*

SECT. XXVIII.  
Acts XIII. 1

ACTS XIII. 1. Now there were in the church that was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work I have called them.

go with them to visit the churches, which Paul was so averse to, that they parted; and Paul chose Silas to attend him, while Barnabas took Mark, and sailed for Cyprus. (Acts xv. 37-40.) We have no farther account of him in the Acts; but he appears so far to have retrieved his character, that he is recommended afterwards by the apostle Paul to the Colossians; (Col. iv. 10.) and, when he was at Rome, the apostle mentions him among his fellow-labourers, (Philem. ver. 24.) and at last speaks of his desire to see him, as one that was useful to him in the ministry. (2 Tim. iv. 11.)

<sup>c</sup> *Certain prophets and teachers.* Who of these might be the stated pastors of the place, and who only occasional residents there, we cannot I think with any certainty determine, only that Paul and Barnabas were of the latter.—Mr. Fleming, on the supposition mentioned in note <sup>b</sup>, concludes that this assembly might be held with some peculiar regard to Peter's danger, and that in it the Spirit directed, that both Paul and Barnabas should be received into the now diminished number of the apostles. See Flein. Christol. Vol. II. p. 236.

<sup>d</sup> *Manaen, who was educated with Herod the tetrarch.* He seems by this to have been a person of considerable rank, and having been a courtier, might probably have learnt some peculiar arts of ad-

dress; yet he had no share in this extraordinary commission granted to Paul and Barnabas. Compare 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. Josephus Antiq. lib. xv. cap. 10. [al. 13.] § 5. mentions one Manaen an Essene, who had foretold Herod the great, while he was yet a boy, that he should be a king, and was afterwards in high favour with him; and some have thought, this was his son. See Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. iii. sect. 11. p. 79-81. That Manaen, Simeon, and Lucius, were all apostles, is a strange opinion of Dr. Scott, (Christian Life, Vol. III. p. 1099.) which so judicious a man could never have entertained, had it not seemed necessary to solve a difficulty, which I hope we shall presently see is only imaginary.

<sup>e</sup> *For the work to which 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 countries of Asia Minor to preach the gospel there. But that they were now invested with the apostolic office by these inferior ministers, (though expressly asserted by Clarus and many others,) is a thing neither credible in itself, nor consistent with what Paul himself says, Gal. i. 1. And that they now received a power, before unknown in the church, of preaching to the idolatrous Gentiles, is inconsistent

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Barjesus:

7 Which was with the deputy of the country Sergius Paulus, a prudent man;

And having on this notice appointed a solemn day for this purpose, in which they fasted and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, in token of their designation to that extraordinary office, they dismissed them from Antioch with all the most affectionate tokens of Christian friendship.

They therefore being thus sent out by the immediate direction of the Holy Spirit, and animated to a noble elevation of soul in the thought of such an important mission, departed to Seleucia, a considerable port in the Mediterranean sea; and from thence they sailed to the island of Cyprus; so celebrated, or rather so infamous, for the worship of Venus, who was supposed to hold her peculiar residence here, and therefore was commonly called "the Cyprian Goddess."

And being arrived at Salamis, the eastern port of the island, and consequently that which lay nearest to the place from whence they came, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews there; for there were great numbers of that people in Cyprus: And they had also John for their attendant, who waited upon them with great respect, not pretending to a character by any means equal to theirs.

And having traversed the whole island, as far as Paphos, which lay on its western coast, they found there a certain Jew, who was a magician [and] false prophet, whose name was Bar-Jesus, or the son of one Jesus or Joshua: This was a person who was much regarded, and was at that time with the Roman praefect there, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man, of a steady conduct and thoughtful temper, ready to inquire

with Acts xi. 20, 21, and upon many other considerations, to be proposed elsewhere, appears to me absolutely incredible.

[By the Holy Spirit.] 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 Spirit himself.

[A magician and false prophet.] There were many instances of real or pretended sorcery among the Jews in these days, which seems to have been designed by the devil and wicked men, to slur the miracles of Christ and his apostles. But, by confounding them in several instances,

the Christian cause was magnified yet more, than it would otherwise have been. Nevertheless it is to be feared, they wrought on many who were not wise and candid enough to examine, so as to introduce a general contempt of all pretences to supernatural powers as false or inconclusive: a sad instance of which we have seen in Marcus Antoninus, who though he professes some revelations to have been made to himself in dreams, (De Rebus suis, lib. i. sect. 17.) yet reckons it among the great advantages he received by conversing with Diogenetus, that he learnt from him to despise all stories of miracles and dispossessions, *ibid.* sect. 6.

SECT.  
XXVIII.  
Acta  
XIII. 3

SECT. after truth, and capable to judge of its evidence;

XXVIII. *who having received some general intelligence*

of their character and messages, sent some of

Acts XIII. 7. those that were about him, and calling for Bar-

nabas and Saul, desired to hear the word of God,

that he might know what was the purport of

their preaching, and what regard was due to the

doctrine they taught. *But Elymas, or the ma-*

*gician, (for that was the meaning of his name*

*Elymas, when translated into the Greek lan-*

*guage,)* as he was sensible that he should be no

more regarded if their doctrine was received,

set himself all he could to hinder the effect of it,

and *withstood them* in their preaching, *endea-*

*vouring* in a crafty way, by a variety of false

insinuations which he used, *to turn away the*

*proconsul* from embracing the faith.<sup>8</sup>

9 *Then Saul (who is also [called] Paul,<sup>9</sup> and*

will generally be spoken of hereafter by that

name, by which the Romans and Greeks would

most naturally mention him,) *being filled with*

the powerful effusion and impulse of the Holy

Spirit, turning to Elymas the sorcerer, and *look-*

*ing stedfastly upon him, said, with just indigna-*

tion, *O thou wretch [who art] full of all*

ill arts, who dost vex the souls of the simple-

who called for Bar-  
nabas and Saul, and  
desired to hear the  
word of God.

8 But Elymas the  
sorcerer (for so is his  
name by interpreta-  
tion) withstood them,  
seeking to turn away  
the deputy from the  
faith.

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

<sup>8</sup> That was his name when translated, &c.]

The most probable etymology I have found of it is that, which derives it from the Arabic word *Alim*, which signifies one acquainted with hidden secrets, from the Hebrew *עלם*, *alam*, to hide, and is used in the Arabic Version of the Old Testament for the Hebrew *שׂוֹטֵר*, a magician. See Beza in loc.

<sup>9</sup> The proconsul.] So the word *proconsul* properly signifies; and, though Beza and Dr. Hammond, as well as Grotius and Mr. L'Anfant, (who has taken almost all his notes from him,) say that the title was improperly applied to the governor of Cyprus, as they suppose, by way of compliment, while he was only *pro-prætor*, a sort of lieutenant; Dr. Lardner, with great learning vindicated the accuracy with which St. Luke speaks, (Credib. Bæc. l. chap. 1. § 11. Vol. I. p. 51. 54.) and shewn from Dio, lib. lxxi. p. 503. A. & 506. B. that they who presided over the Roman provinces by the appointment of the senate, (and Cyprus was now of that number, though it had once been prætorian,) were called proconsuls, though they had never filled the consular chair, which (as ap-

pears by the Fasti Consulares,) was the case with the excellent and happy governor of whom we speak. See Mr. Bæcon at Boyle's Lect. chap. lxxi. § 4. p. 25, 26.

<sup>10</sup> Saul, who is also called Paul.] Some have thought the apostle had originally two names, and many others that he changed the former for the latter with design, either out of deference to Sergius Paulus, or to the Gentiles, among whom he now preached, so much as to be called by way of eminence, (though not in strict appropriation,) their apostle. See Dr. Hammond in loc. But I think Beza's account of the matter most easy and probable, that having conversed hitherto chiefly with Jews and Syrians, to whom the name of Saul was familiar, and now coming among Romans and Greeks, they would naturally pronounce his name Paul; as one, whose Hebrew name was Joehannan, would be called by the Greeks and Latinus Johannes, by the French Jean, by the Dutch Hans, and by the English John. See also Grot. in loc. Beza thinks, the family of this proconsul might be the first, who addressed or spoke of him by the name Paul.

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.

*deceit and of all wickedness! Thou notorious son of the devil, that great deceiver, the adversary both of God and man! The enemy of all righteousness! wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord, and by thy perverse misrepresentations to lay a stumbling-block before those that would embrace the gospel? Thou shalt be confounded in this cursed undertaking, and made a signal monument of the divine displeasure. And behold, even now the almighty hand of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose gospel thou opposest, is upon thee, and thou shalt be struck blind by it, and shalt not be able to see even the sun itself at noon-day for a certain time, that thou mayest be convinced of thy sin and folly, and mayest, if possible, be brought to repentance for it. And immediately, while Paul was yet speaking, a thick mist and darkness fell upon him; and going about in the utmost confusion, he sought some to lead him by the hand, not being able so much as to find the door without a guide, and afraid that he might run upon any one who stood in his way.*

*Then the proconsul, seeing what was done, yielded to so convincing an evidence, and believed the gospel; being also struck with admiration of the internal evidence which he soon discovered in the doctrine of the Lord; and which broke in with increasing lustre on his mind, in proportion to the degree of attention with which he inquired into it.*

IMPROVEMENT.

WE who were once sinners of the Gentiles, and now by the divine goodness are brought to the knowledge of the gospel, have abundant reason to be thankful that inspired messengers

<sup>1</sup> *The proconsul believed.*] I can see no reason at all to imagine, with Lord Barrington, Abstract, p. 21, and Dr. Benson, Vol. II. p. 27, that Sergius Paulus was the first convert to Christianity among the idolatrous Gentiles, which, if their own interpretation of Acts xi. 19, 20. (unnatisfactory as it seems,) were to be allowed, would appear incredible from this very context; for who can imagine that Paul and Barnabas should, as we are assured they did, traverse the whole island of Cyprus, from Salamis to Paphos, without converting one person from idolatry,

though it is here uncontroverted that they bore an unlimited commission, and fully understood its extent) — Limburch justly argues in favour of Christian magistracy from hence, as it is neither credible, that, if Sergius Paulus abdicated his office, so important a circumstance should be omitted, or that Paul should have acquiesced in his continuing in it, if he knew it contrary to the will of Christ, which he would not fail fully to declare to him. See Lamb. Theolog. lib. 8. cap. 72, sect. 5.

SECT.  
XXVIII.  
Acts  
XIII. 10

Vers.

- SECT. were sent to teach it, being separated to that purpose by the  
 XXVIII. direct appointment of the Holy Spirit. May they that go out  
 Verse to this sacred work in all nations, and in all times, maintain a  
 becoming regard to his influences; and may he make their way  
 4 prosperous! That he may be engaged to do so, it is certainly  
 convenient, upon the justest principles of reason and piety, to  
 3 send them forth with solemn prayer; in which ministers and private  
 Christians should from time to time concur, with an in-  
 tenseness and seriousness answerable to the occasion.
- 6, 8 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. Nevertheless, the King of Kings  
 knows how to make way to the hearts of the greatest among the  
 7 children of men; nor can any of them shew a more solid and  
 important prudence, than to inquire impartially into the evidences  
 of the gospel, and to give themselves up to be governed by  
 it; an happy resolution, which they will probably be disposed  
 to form in proportion to the degree in which they observe its  
 12 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.
- 9, 10 Justly might 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 inca-  
 11 pable of seeing the light of the meridian sun, seemed but a dole-  
 ful emblem of that more fatal darkness which, through the cor-  
 ruption of his heart, had spread itself over his mind, and pre-  
 vented the light of the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God,  
 from shining upon it. (1 Cor. iv. 4.) Have we not reason to  
 fear, that God may in his righteous judgment punish that in-  
 quity of Spirit, with which many now rise up against the right  
 ways of the Lord, (not ceasing to pervert and disguise them,  
 that they may more plausibly and effectually oppose them,)  
 with an internal blindness, in which they may wander on to their  
 destruction? And if others stupidly permit themselves to be  
 guided by them, what can be expected but that *the blind lead-  
 ing the blind, both leaders and followers should fall into the pit?*  
 (Mat. xv. 14.)

## SECT. XXIX.

*Paul and Barnabas come to Antioch in Pisidia, where the former delivers a remarkable discourse in the Jewish synagogue. Acts XIII. 13—42.*

ACTS XIII. 13.

NOW when Paul and his company landed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

ACTS XIII. 13.

THE reader was informed, in the last section, of the success with which Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel in Cyprus, where Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul, was converted to it; and we are now to add, that *loosing from Paphos, they and their companions, who were desirous to spend some longer time with Paul, that they might be more fully instructed in the Christian faith, came to Perga, a town in Pamphylia, a province of the Lesser Asia, which lay east of Cilicia to which it was contiguous, and on the northern coast of the Mediterranean sea. But John, surnamed Mark, perceiving they intended a long tour in those parts, and that they were like to meet with much opposition among the idolatrous Gentiles, to whom they were carrying the gospel, could not by all the warmest remonstrances of Paul and his own uncle Barnabas, be persuaded to share their labours and dangers in so excellent a cause; but taking the opportunity of a vessel which he found in that port bound for Palestine, he withdrew himself from them, and returned to Jerusalem.*

SECT.  
XXIX.  
ACTS  
XIII. 13

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.

Nevertheless they remained inflexible in their resolution of prosecuting the important work in which they were engaged; and therefore going on from Perga, they came to Antioch, a considerable city in the district of Pisidia,<sup>a</sup> which lay north of Pamphylia, and consequently farther from the sea: And entering into the Jewish synagogue on the sabbath-day, they sat down

<sup>a</sup> Antioch in Pisidia.] The situation of this place is thus described, to intimate how carefully it should be distinguished from Antioch in Syria, so much more frequently mentioned in this history.

<sup>b</sup> Entering into the synagogue, they sat down.] The professed followers of Jesus

were excommunicated, at least on conviction, by an act of the Sanhedrim made before the crucifixion of our Lord; (compare John ix. 22; and xii. 42;) and it is what he had foretold to his apostles, that they should be so treated. (John xvi. 2.) Yet Paul and Barnabas enter the syno-

- SECT. among those that were worshipping there. *And* 15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.
- XXIX. after the customary reading of the proper section for the day out of the law, and another out of the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue, knowing in general the public character which the two celebrated strangers sustained, and being curious to hear from their own mouth that new doctrine which had made so much noise in other places, sent one of the inferior officers to them, saying, Men [and] brethren, if you have any word of exhortation to the people, or any declaration to make which may conduce to the edification of the assembly, speak [it] freely, as this is the proper season of doing it.
- Acts XIII. 15. 16 Then Paul stood up, and waving his hand, to render the audience more attentive, said, Ye men of Israel, and all ye that fear God, and are met together with devout hearts to worship him this day, *hearken*,<sup>d</sup> I beseech you, with patient attention, for I shall mention several facts which 16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience:
- 17 This God of this peculiar people, for such I well know the seed of Israel to be, graciously chose our pious and venerable fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to be the objects of his special favour, and for their sakes was pleased to promise 17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers,

gogue without opposition, and meet with a regard which none can imagine the Jews would shew to excommunicated persons. Learned men have accounted for this by saying, that elders and doctors among the Jews, (such as Paul and Barnabas are supposed to have been,) though sometimes scourged in the synagogues, were not cast out of them.

<sup>c</sup> *The rulers of the synagogue sent to them.* It is, I think, a very fruitless attempt which some learned men have made, to ascertain the conditions on which persons were admitted to teach in the Jewish synagogues, and to settle the forms with which they were entered on that office. It has been supposed, that Paul and Barnabas had gone through these forms, and that their sitting down in the seats appropriated to the doctors or teachers led these rulers, though strangers to them, to send them this permission. But it seems evident from Maimonides and the Talmud, that after public worship was over, any one might make a speech to the people in the synagogue, on any subject which he apprehended might be for their advantage. Yet it would be a circum-

stance of decency, which the good sense and breeding of Paul and Barnabas would lead them to regard, that the rulers should be made acquainted with their desire of doing it; probably by some message or interview before the devotions began, to which this permission of theirs might refer. See Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. vii. sect. 2. p. 271, 272.

<sup>d</sup> *All ye that fear God, hearken.* This discourse seems chiefly intended to illustrate the divine economy 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 handsome and unallected opportunity of shewing his acquaintance with their Scriptures, which it is well known they esteemed as the highest part of literature, and object of adulation.—The expression, *ye that fear God*, is ambiguous, and would best suit those that 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.



and exalted the people, when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

18. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20. And after that,

most important blessings to their offspring: Accordingly he took them under his protection from their first beginning, and raised the people from that prostrate and dejected state in which they were while sojourning in the land of Egypt, under the tyranny of Pharaoh; and to deliver them from that inhospitable and oppressive country, he led them out of it with an uplifted and extended arm, having displayed his power in a variety of most astonishing miracles, by which he pleaded their injured cause.

And then for the space of about forty years, he endured their perverse and ungrateful behaviour in the wilderness, carrying them (as it were) through a course of education there, to form them in those retired circumstances to a habit of observing that admirable system of laws which he there thought fit to give them. At length he put a period to that pilgrimage, in which, nevertheless, they had been sustained by so many miraculous tokens of his care; and having cast out seven mighty nations, who were before settled in the land of Canaan, and had erected more than thirty kingdoms there, defended by fortifications of great strength as well as by numerous forces both of horse and foot, he distributed their whole country to them for an inheritance, and supported them in it for many generations.

\* *Raised the people, while sojourning in the land of Egypt.*] Beza and Mr. L'Enfant explain this, as referring to the honour the Israelites were in during the ministry of Joseph in Egypt; but Elmer (Obsev. Vol. I. p. 418, 419.) has shewn, that the word *raised* often signifies to deliver, or raise out of a calamitous state. (Compare Psal. ix. 13; xviii. 38; xxiii. 5. Septuag.) And, as Joseph proudly declined any attempt to make his brethren courtiers, and kept them in the country under the character of shepherds (a profession which the Egyptians held contemptible rather than honourable, Gen. xlv. 34.) I think it by far more natural to interpret the passage as in the paraphrase.

† *Endured their behaviour.*] This is the proper import of the word *endured*, and it was very fit to give this oblique intimation of that perverseness and in-

gratitude, which so early began to prevail among them. The Syriac renders it by a word, which signifies to nourish or educate, so that Beza conjectures they read *raised*, and it suggests so beautiful a view of the conduct of Providence towards them in this respect, that I could not forbear inserting the thought, though I prefer the common and almost universally received reading. Yet I find Dr. Hammond thinks the other was probably authentic, and observes that the expression of nursing them, (for so he understands it,) is beautifully connected with that of taking them up when they lay like an exposed infant. \* Compare Deut. i. 31; and Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, 8.

‡ *Cast out seven nations.*] Namely, the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. Deut. vii. 1; Josh. ii. 10; xxiv. 11.

SECT.

XXIX.

Acta

XIII. 17

SECT.  
XXIX.  
Acts  
XIII. 20

in this period of their history, after these transactions, [which lasted] about four hundred and fifty years,<sup>h</sup> that is, after the choice of our fathers, and the birth of Isaac, in which the promises to Abraham began to be accomplished, He gave [them] a series of judges; by whose heroic interposition he delivered them from those repeated oppressions and miseries which their frequent revolts to idolatry had brought upon them. And this continued, with some intervals, till the time of Samuel the prophet, who was the last of these extraordinary leaders and magistrates.

- 21 And from that time, too fond of being like their neighbours in that respect, they desired a king, (1 Sam. viii. 5.) insensible of the favour which God had done them in assuming the character and relation of a king to them: And God gave them, first, Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin; and his government with that of Samuel the prophet lasted for the 22 term of forty years.<sup>i</sup> And having in his righ-

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 Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he

<sup>h</sup> After these transactions [which lasted] about four hundred and fifty years. The course of the sacred history will by no means permit us to imagine, that the judges in their ascension continued 450 years after the settlement of Israel in Canaan; since we learn from 1 Kings vi. 1, that Solomon began to build the temple in the 450th year after they came out of Egypt. It is certain therefore, that, if we make no alteration in the reading here, or in the Old Testament, the words must be so pointed, as to justify my inserting in the version, those words [which lasted,] in which I follow Mr. L'Enfant and the translation of 1727. In that case I think, the time must be computed from the birth of Isaac, on the principles which Mr. Campo has laid down, in his excellent Compendium of Eccles. Hist. lib. 3. cap. 3. § 1-7. Yet I own, that Dr. Whitby 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. (Antiq. lib. viii. cap. 3. [al. 2.] § 1.) 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, as illustrated by Dr. Lightfoot, (Hor. Heb. in loc.) and Mr. Biscoe, (Boyle's Lect. chap. xx. p. 666, 667,) is very remarkable. But I was cautious of paraphrasing this text in a manner which must allow an important error in our Hebrew copies, and affect the whole system of the sacred chronology.

<sup>i</sup> For the term of forty years. It is the opinion of Beza, Grotius, Calvin, Brenzinius, Woltzogenius, Lamborch, (Anie. Collat. cap. 26.) and several other considerable critics, that the forty years here spoken of do not all belong to the reign of Saul, but include at least a considerable part of Samuel's government. Dr. Benson has also more lately declared himself on the same side of the question (Hist. of Christianity, Vol. II. p. 31.) and Messieurs L'Enfant and Beauobre give us the same interpretation. But the learned Mr. Biscoe has advanced so much in favour of the supposition that the reign of Saul continued all these forty years, (Sermon at Boyle's Lect. chap. xvii. p. 612-616.) which Mr. Bedford also maintains in his chronology, that I think it incumbent upon

had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have

tous displeasure rejected Saul, and removed him from reigning over Israel, for his rebellion against the divine command in the business of Amalek, and for other crimes of aggravated guilt, (1 Sam. xv. 23; and 1 Chron. x. 13.) He afterwards raised up to them David for a king, the person so justly celebrated in all succeeding ages; to whom also he gave a more glorious testimony in his word, (1 Sam. xiii. 14;

SECT.  
XXIX.  
Acta  
XIII. 22

me to give some better reason, than merely the authority of the greatest names, for paraphrasing the clause as I have done, especially as most of the authors mentioned above have only given their opinion, and none of them has entered fully into the question. The chief consideration which determined me is this: Samuel is expressly said to have judged Israel all the days of his life; (1 Sam. viii. 15;) but we are sure, that he lived the greater part, (probably by far the greater part,) of the forty years preceding Saul's death; for David was but thirty years old, when he began to reign over Judah, (2 Sam. v. 4,) which was not till after Saul was slain; and Samuel did not only anoint him, (at which time we cannot suppose David to have been less than fifteen years old,) but lived a considerable time after; that is, till about the time of David's going to Paran, (1 Sam. xxv. 1;) which seems to have been but a little before his sojourning in the country of the Philistines, where he dwelt only a year and four months before the battle at Gilboa, in which Saul fell; (1 Sam. xxvii. 7;) a circumstance that greatly favours the opinion, (which as Drusus observes,) so commonly prevailed among the Jews, that Saul survived Samuel but little more than two years. I am indeed far from thinking that Saul's reign is to be reckoned only from Samuel's death; the contrary is most apparent; and Mr. Hucue 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 *Ux* ground action at Mizpeh,) to Samuel, who might in 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 story, lived privately, and whose authority was never so great as to swallow up that of so illustrious a prophet and judge.—I know, the authority of Jerephus is urged in

defence of the scheme I oppose; for he says, according to our present copies, that Saul reigned "eighteen years during the Samuel's life," which I think very probable, "and two and twenty after his death." (Joseph. Antiq. lib. vi. cap. 14. [al. 15.] § 9.) But this is utterly incredible; for David then could not be eight years old, when Samuel anointed him, which as was said before was some considerable time before the prophet died; and it may therefore be assuredly concluded, (as Dr. Hudson intimates) that the true reading is that of Epiphanius, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Eutychius, which leaves out *xxx annis, and twenty*, so as to assign him but *two years* after the prophet's death, which agrees very well with our interpretation.—The argument for Mr. Hucue's scheme, taken from Ishbosheth's being forty years old at the time of his father's death, (1 Sam. ii. 10,) would indeed be of great weight, if the sagacious historian had any where told us, that Saul was very young when anointed by Samuel; but the word *בָּרַךְ*, which is used on the first mention of him, (1 Sam. ix. 2, though rendered by our translators a *choice young man*, has not necessarily that import. The Seventy have often rendered it *senilis, senilis, senilisque, strong, choice, warlike*, and here *epiphaneus, of a shining presence*; and I think it would be easy to shew, that in many places where they render it *senilis*, (as indeed they frequently do,) it only signifies a *person in the full vision of his constitution*. It seems by no means probable, that God should choose a stripling for the first king of Israel; and I think what is said of the age of Ishbosheth, compared with the passages mentioned above, plainly shews, that Saul was then in his prime, perhaps about thirty-five, and justifies the residence of Pagnin, Montanus, Munster, and the Vulgate, who render it *electus*, a *choice person*, without determining any thing concerning his youth, in which they also agree with the Syriac and Arabic Versions.

sect. and Psal. lxxxix. 20.) and said, "I have found  
 xxix. "my servant David the son of Jesse, a man ac-  
 cording to mine own heart, who will not dis-  
 regard my voice as Saul has done, but shall  
 Acts do all my will, and rule my people with in-  
 XIII. 22 "tegrity."

23 From him, it was declared, that the Messiah  
 should descend, and by a special covenant he  
 was assured, that his throne should be establish-  
 ed to all generations. (Psal. lxxxix. 3, 4.)  
 Now therefore, of this holy man's seed, accord-  
 ing to the tenor of that frequently repeated pro-  
 mise, (Isa. ix. 6, 7; xi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 5, 6;) God hath raised up unto Israel Jesus, the great  
 and illustrious Saviour, so long foretold in the  
 sacred oracles, whom I am this day come to  
 preach among you. This is the person God  
 hath so often promised he would send into the  
 world, and he appeared just in the time, and  
 with the circumstances, which those divine pro-  
 phecies had pointed out; John the Baptist hav-  
 ing been sent before as his herald, and having  
 preached in a very convincing manner, to intro-  
 duce his appearance, the baptism of repentance  
 unto all the people of Israel;<sup>b</sup> even that bap-  
 tism which, in token of their repentance, they  
 were commanded by God to receive; thereby  
 to signify, on the one hand, their desire to  
 purify themselves from all their pollutions, and  
 on the other, to testify God's readiness to for-  
 give them, and admit them into his favour.

25 And when John was just fulfilling his course, he  
 said, Whom do you imagine me to be? I am not  
 [he,] nor do I at all pretend to be the promised  
 Messiah:<sup>c</sup> But behold, there cometh one after  
 me, the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to  
 unloose, nor to perform the lowest office of  
 menial service to him. (Compare John i. 20,  
 27.)

26 And let me assure you, men [and] brethren,  
 even all you who are children of the family of  
 Abraham, and all those among you that truly fear

<sup>a</sup> John having before preached, &c.] He 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.

<sup>b</sup> Whom do you imagine me to be? I am not he.] Raphellus has taken pains to prove from some similar passages in the Greek classics, that both these clauses may be considered as united in an affirmation, and rendered, "I am not the person whom you suppose me to be;" that is, the Messiah, Amot. ex Herod. p. 251, 252.

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 unto all the people of Israel.

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, 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 Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abra-

ham, 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 they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath-day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

28 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, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare

God and serve him, of whatever family or nation you may be descended, let me (I say) solemnly assure you, that these things are your great and immediate concern: For unto you, though providentially cast at some distance from the time and place in which this message of John was first delivered, and in which Jesus at first appeared, yet unto you is the word of this great and important salvation sent. For the

inhabitants of Jerusalem, and their rulers, not knowing this illustrious person, though God bore such a convincing testimony to him, and being also ignorant of what was signified by the sayings of the prophets, which are read every sabbath-day among them, (as they have this day been among you,) have unwittingly fulfilled [them] in condemning him. And though they could

find no sufficient cause of death [in him,] nor indeed any thing in his whole conduct capable of any degree of blame, yet nevertheless they requested Pilate with the utmost importunity, that he might be condemned and executed. And

when they had inadvertently accomplished all things that were written concerning him, in such a circumstantial detail of particulars as is truly astonishing, taking him down from the cross, on which he had expired in the midst of ignominy and torture, they permitted his friends to bury him, and laid him in a tomb. And there

they took the utmost care to guard him; but God raised him up, from the dead on the third day, according to his own repeated prediction, which they had heard from him before, but were unable to obstruct and hinder its accomplishment. And after he was risen from the dead, he appeared

for several days to those that came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem a little before his death; who most of them continue to this day, and are his witnesses to the people of the Jews, among whom they still reside, and where any of you who go up to Jerusalem may hear it from their own mouth,

And we, who are sent out by him on the same

SECT. XXIX. Arts. XIII. 2

<sup>m</sup> Taking him down from the cross.] The apostle was far from being ashamed to mention th; most ignominious parts of his Master's sufferings to those who were

strangers to the gospel; knowing how sufficiently he answered all that could be objected from thence by what he added and testified concerning his resurrection.

SECT. XXIX. errand, and furnished with all proper credentials for that purpose, do now bring you these good tidings, that the very promise which was made to the fathers, and which was the hope and joy of their posterity through so many suc-

Ants  
XIII. 32

ceeding ages, God hath now accomplished to us their children, in raising up Jesus from the dead. And it is manifest, that by his resurrection he has declared him, in the most convincing manner, to be indeed his Son; so that it was, as I may speak, the birth-day of his reign, as it is also written in the seventh verse of the second Psalm,<sup>a</sup> "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."<sup>b</sup> And agreeable to this, be-

cause he hath raised him from the dead, no more to return to the grave, the seat of corruption, He hath said thus by the prophet, (Isa. lv. 3.) "I will give you the sure mercies of David,"<sup>c</sup> that is, mercies which, by the resurrection of him whom I have now set upon the throne of David, are made sure to you, and shall prove eternal, as his life and reign." Wherefore also in another, and that a very

unto you glad tidings, how that the 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. 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, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he

<sup>a</sup> In the second Psalm. A few copies read it, (as Jerom and Augustine also did,) the first; but they are overcome by such superior authority, that I am surprised they should have been followed by any, who did not affect to vary from the received readings as much as possible. — It seems evident from hence, that the Psalms were then placed in the same order as now; and it is observable, that this is the only quotation of the Old Testament so circumstantially made in the New. — Beza conjectures, that neither first nor second was mentioned in the original copy.

<sup>b</sup> This day have I begotten thee. Bishop Pearson, (on the Creed, p. 224,) 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. Compare Rom. 1. 4; Heb. 1. 6; and Rev. 1. 5. Mr. L'Enfant says, that the anniversary day of kings is sometimes called their birth-day, for which Helmsius has produced some authorities. Excerpt. Sacr. in Matt. xiv. 6. Compare note <sup>b</sup> on Mark xi. 21, Vol. I.

<sup>c</sup> The grave, the seat of corruption. Beza here observes with his usual accuracy, that, as Christ never saw corruption at all, the Greek ἄφθαρτος [corruption]

must signify the grave, as מוֹתָו in Hebrew also does; Compare Psal. xcix. 15; cvii. 20; 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.

<sup>d</sup> The sure mercies of David. 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 1797 determines it, by rendering it, "I will faithfully perform the promise made to David," or as 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. Compare Jer. xxv. 31; Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24; xxxviii. 23, 25; Hes. iii. 5. 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; and the propriety of the application here is evident, as it was the resurrection of Christ which rendered the blessings he promised sure to his people, who without that could have had no hope from him, as the apostle argues at large, 1 Cor. xv. 14, & seq. See Mr. Jeffrey's True Grounds, p. 139.

saith also in another *Psalm*, 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 ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

remarkable [place] he saith, (Psal. xvi. 10,) "*Thou wilt not permit thine Holy One to see corruption.*" Now it is evident this must refer,

not to the inspired writer himself, but to some other person; for *David*, by whom this psalm was written, *having faithfully served his own generation of men, according to the will of God, fell asleep, that is, died, and was gathered to his fathers, and being laid among the dead of former ages, saw corruption*, just in the same manner as other human bodies do, when the soul is separated from them. *But he of whom*

these words were spoken, and *whom*, as I have just been telling you, *God raised up from the dead, did not continue in the grave so long as to see corruption*, being laid there on the evening before the sabbath, and raised early the morning after it. *Be it known therefore unto*

*you, men [and] brethren, that by him, even this glorious and exalted person, the remission of sins is preached unto you, even the full and assured pardon of all your offences, be they ever so great, and ever so aggravated. And by him*

*every one who believeth in him is, immediately in consequence of that faith, freely and fully justified and acquitted before God, not only from the guilt of smaller miscarriages, but even from the guilt of all those things which are in the highest degree criminal, and from which ye could not on any consideration whatever be justified by the law of Moses;*<sup>1</sup> but which expressly were pronounced by that to be capital offences, for which the criminal was immediately doomed on conviction to die without mercy, so that no room was left for any sacrifice of atonement.

<sup>1</sup> By the law of Moses. That law appointed sin-offerings to expiate smaller offences, so far as that the offender who offered them should be freed from all farther prosecution on account of them. But this very view of them shows, how absolutely necessary to the being of society it was, that they should not be admitted in cases of murder, adultery, &c. These crimes therefore were made capital; nor was the dying criminal, however repentant, allowed to offer them, which would have been quite inconsistent with the temporal pardon connected with

them. But the expiatory sacrifices of Christ takes away the guilt of all sin; and, though it by no means sancts 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 impatient sinner might present them in all their exacted forms. Compare Rom. viii. 3; Gal. ii. 16; and Heb. x. 4. See Mr. Hallet, Vol. II. Disc. 2, p. 269. 8. 174.

SECT. XXIX.

Acts XIII. 35

*But dreadful is the case of those that reject him.*

AECT.  
XXIX.  
Acts  
XIII. 40

This is the substance of the message with which I am charged: *See to it therefore, I beseech you, as ye value your own souls, that what is spoken in the prophets, as the fatal consequence of rejecting it, may not come upon you:*

For they speak in very awful language to such; Isaiah for instance, when he says, (chap. xxviii.

41 14,) "*Behold, ye despisers, ye scornful men that*

"look with haughty contempt on that corner-

"stone 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." And in like manner too the prophet Habakkuk, when he says, (chap. i. 5.)

"Behold ye, and regard, and wonder marvel-

"lously, turn pale with terror, and disappear,

"as those that shall perish at once, and vanish

"(as it were) out of sight, consumed in a mo-

"ment 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 you." And the destruction

God will bring upon you, if you reject the

gospel, would appear far more incredible to

you, should it be described in all its terrors,

than the desolation that was formerly threat-

ened; which nevertheless, as your unbelieving

fathers found to their cost, was circumstantially

executed upon them.

42 This was the substance of Paul's plain and serious address to the Jews<sup>1</sup> in their synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia, to whom they applied nothing at present: *But while the Jews were going*

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets,

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in nowise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

42 And when the Jews were gone out

<sup>1</sup> Turn pale with terror, and disappear.] There is an ambiguity in the word *παλινοστροφῆς*, which may be rendered either of these ways; and as both these senses are consistent, and would probably concur, both are inserted in the paraphrase, though, as I think, the latter more expressive. I have marked that as preferable. The attentive reader, who understands the original, will see, that I have often taken this method.

<sup>2</sup> Address to the Jews.] How impertinently Mr. Collins urges this as an instance of the apostles' arguing with the Gentiles from allegorical interpretations of prophecies, must be evident to every attentive reader on various accounts; for these Scriptures are not allegorically ap-

plied, nor are they addressed chiefly to the Gentiles, but to Jews by birth or proselytism. Compare ver. 16, and 46. Several Gentiles were indeed present, who probably came out of curiosity, drawn by the fame of such celebrated preachers; and some of them might drop in, while he was speaking: And, as in the series of his discourse, they heard of an extraordinary person, by whom all that believed in him might obtain pardon and happiness, they were desirous of having that doctrine further explained to them; and, upon a promise that it should be done, took care to engage a vast auditory against the next sabbath, as we shall presently see.



of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

out of the synagogue,<sup>a</sup> the Gentiles, who out of curiosity were many of them assembled there, on the fame of the arrival of such celebrated men, earnestly desired that these words might be spoken to them again the following sabbath:<sup>b</sup> when they promised to attend themselves, and to bring as many of their friends as they could: And thus the assembly brake up for that time.

SECT. XXIX.  
ACTS XIII. 42

IMPROVEMENT.

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 are to arise after us: From them, succeeding generations will be fully informed of that edifying story 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 to their fathers: and will also learn the ungrateful returns which they made to the Divine Goodness, when they rejected the Lord from being king over them. (1 Sam. viii. 7.)

The character of David, as a man after God's own heart, who would fulfil all his pleasure, is surely worthy of being emulated by every Christian: In this respect, may he who is able among the Lord's people, be like David! (Zech. xii. 12.) Like him may we all be solicitous to serve our generation according to the will of God; to do all the good we can in the age and station in which Providence has fixed us, though it be in a crooked and perverse generation; gradually striving to mend it as fast as we can, and waiting our summons to fall asleep, as we quietly must, and be gathered to our fathers! Were we the greatest princes upon earth, we, like David, must see corruption in the grave: But let us rejoice to think, that Jesus, whom God raised up according to his promise, saw no corruption; and if we are his people, he will ransom and redeem us from it. (Hos. xiii. 14.)

<sup>a</sup> While the Jews were going out of the synagogue. To render ἐξῆλθον ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς; as is obvious, when Paul and Barnabas were gone out of the Jewish synagogue, in both supposing the inspired historian to have made an unnecessary distinction with relation to a synagogue, which appeared before to belong to the Jews, and making him to have expressed himself in an ungrammatical manner; nor, on the other hand, can we well suppose, that Paul and the Gentiles stayed in the synagogue, when all the Jews had quitted it. I therefore render it, while they were going out.

<sup>b</sup> The following sabbath. Some interpret it, τοῦ παρῶν σαββάτου, of a day between the two sabbaths, as there is a tradition among the Jews, mentioned by Dr. Lightfoot and others, that Ezra commanded them to assemble on the second and fifth days of the week, (our Mondays and Thursdays,) for the study of the law in their synagogues. But I think, that verse 44, determines the expression to the sense our version gives it. And Lud. Capellus has shown, that it is not an unexampled manner of speaking.

- SECT. XXIX. He, though so outrageously and infamously treated by the Jews, was nevertheless in the most convincing manner declared to be the Son of God, his only begotten Son: Such a resurrection proclaimed him to be so; (Rom. i. 4.) and, in consequence of it, the sure mercies of David are now given us by him; 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 us from the guilt of those offences which the law of Moses condemned without mercy, and takes out the dye of scarlet and crimson sins!
- 28, 29  
34  
38  
39
- 40 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 the messengers of God to the Jewish and the Christian church: All the prophets, and John the Baptist superior to them all, who bore witness to Christ, and all the apostles and succeeding ministers in every age, 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.
- 24-27  
41

## S E C T. XXX.

*The Gentiles at Antioch in Pisidia, accept the gospel, which the Jews reject, and raise a persecution against the apostles, who therefore go to Iconium. Acts XIII. 43, to the end.*

## ACTS XIII. 43.

- SECT. XXX. A LARGE account was given in the preceding section of the discourse which Paul had addressed to the Jews, in their synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia; and the effect of it was, that, when the synagogue was broke up, many of the Jews, and of the devout proselytes, who, though not of the stock of Israel, had embraced the Jewish religion, followed Paul and Barnabas, professing their belief of the doctrine they taught; who gave them farther exhortations to confirm them in the faith, and speaking to them with great earnestness, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God<sup>a</sup> which they had received, and to retain that gospel which they had now embraced.
- SECT. XXX. Acts XIII. 43. NOW when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews, and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

<sup>a</sup> To continue in the grace of God. The gospel 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, and the provision he has made for our sanctification and eternal happiness. Compare Acts xiv. 3; xx. 24; Rom. vi. 14; Gal. v. 4; Col. i. 6; Tit. ii. 11; 1 Pet. v. 12.

44 And the next sabbath-day came almost the whole city together, to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from

And on the following sabbath, almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God, in consequence of the report which the Gentiles had spread abroad, of what had been delivered before, which awakened in many others an earnest desire of attending to that repetition of their extraordinary message, which the apostles had engaged themselves to make.

But the Jews, who continued strongly prejudiced against the message which had been delivered to them, seeing the Gentiles assembled in such great multitudes, were filled with zeal for the honour of their law and nation which they foolishly imagined to be hurt by this new sect, and with indignation and envy at the regard which the inhabitants of Antioch shewed to it, beyond what they had ever done to the Jewish religion; and therefore they opposed the things which were spoken by Paul and Barnabas; not only contradicting them, and cavilling at their allegations, but also blaspheming and reviling these divine teachers, as impostors and seducers.

Then Paul and Barnabas, perceiving that no good impression could be made upon them, were not concerned about saving appearances; but with great freedom of speech, and with a fervent zeal, tempered by wisdom, and animated by unfeigned charity, said, It was necessary, according to the general instructions of our divine Master, that the word of God, which we are come to deliver, should first be spoken to you Jews; for, undeserving as you are of such a favour, he has directed us, that wherever we come we should open our ministry with an address to you, inviting you to faith and repentance, that you may in the first place partake of the benefits of his kingdom: (Compare Luke xxiv. 47.) But since you thus disdainfully thrust it away

SECT.  
XXX.

Acts  
XIII. 44

o Blaspheming and reviling, &c.] The word βλασφημιῶν; in this connection with ἀνιδρυμαίαις, must signify their giving them abusive language. Probably they charged them to their faces with falsehood and villainy, and represented the cause they were carrying on as most contemptible and wicked. It may seem strange, this did not prevent the conversion of the Gentiles: But 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 these furious opposers.

ACT. XXX. *from you, and by that very action do in effect adjudge and condemn yourselves as unworthy of that eternal life and glory, which through the riches of his grace he has so freely offered to you,\* behold, we turn ourselves to the Gentiles,*† and declare to them, that they are also invited into the church of the Messiah, and shall, upon their believing in him, be admitted to all the privileges of his people, as readily as if they had been descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or had been trained up in the worship of the true God, and were by circumcision entered

47 most expressly into covenant with him. *For so the Lord hath charged us to do;*‡ (Mat. xxviii. 19; Acts i. 8;) in consequence of that prediction which was uttered by Isaiah in the name of God, (Isa. xlix. 6.) where he addresses himself to the Messiah, [saying,] “*I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation to the remotest ends of the earth.*” ¶ Thence therefore will we carry his saving name, and we doubt not but they will thankfully accept that gospel which you so ungratefully despise and reject.

48 *And the Gentiles hearing [these things,] that the way now was open for their admission into covenant with God, and they were welcome to the benefits of the Messiah's kingdom, rejoiced greatly at the happy tidings, and glorified the word of the Lord, which had invited them to share in all the blessings of his grace, and brought the knowledge of salvation to them: And as many of those who were present, as were, through the operation of divine grace upon their hearts, in good earnest determined for eternal life, and brought to a resolution of cou-*

\* *Adjudge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.* This text most plainly shows, 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 farther 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.

† *Behold, we turn to the Gentiles.* The 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, when they continued at Antioch, they should 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 there.

‡ *For so the Lord hath charged us.* They might have argued this from the texts quoted in the paraphrase; but Paul had also received a more express command to this purpose. Compare Acts xxii. 21; xxvi. 17, 18.

you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 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.

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.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honourable women, and the chief

rageously facing all opposition in the way to it, believed,<sup>f</sup> and openly embraced the gospel; which others, who were remiss and unallected about their future and everlasting concerns, stupidly neglected, though they could find nothing solid to alledge against the evidence by which it was supported. And as these new converts joined their most zealous and affectionate labours with those of Paul and Barnabas to propagate it, the word of the Lord was borne on, as with a mighty torrent, throughout all that region, which by this means was watered as with a river of salvation.

But the Jews, provoked beyond all patience at such a conduct, and at such success, stirred up [some] devout women of considerable rank, who having been proselyted to their religion, were peculiarly zealous for it,<sup>g</sup> and also ap-

SECT.  
XXX.  
Acts  
XIII. 48

<sup>f</sup> As many as were determined for eternal life, believed.] I cannot think, with Sir Norton Knatchbull, that we should take *τιναρισται*, here to signify the same with *εὐεργισται*, and placing the comma after it, render the clause, *As many as were met together, (that is, all the Gentiles,) believed to [or in] eternal life, which I think neither the import nor order of the words will permit.*—Much less can I allow of Mr. Jos. Mede's interpretation, that *τιναρισται* is; *ζωνων αιωνων* is a periphrasis to express proselytes of the gate, (supposing the distinction of such proselytes ever so well founded,) since we never meet with the phrase elsewhere as a description of them, which indeed might much better suit other proselytes, and since there is no reason to believe, that they all, and only they, were now converted, or even that the chief number of converts was among them, when almost the whole city were gathered together.—The word *εταρω* has various significations: It is rendered *ordained* only here, and Rom. xiii. 1, (where the margin, I think more properly, renders it *ordered*;) elsewhere it is rendered *determined*, Acts xv. 3; *only led*, 1 Cor. xvi. 15; and most frequently *appointed*, Mat. xxviii. 16; Acts xxii. 10; xxviii. 23. In the Greek Classics, I think, it generally in its passive form signifies <sup>1</sup> Men, <sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>3</sup> for that purpose." (See Dr. Ham-

mond's learned note here, with Le Clerc's addition to it, and Raphellus ex Herod. p. 353—364.) 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. Perhaps if one word alone were to be used for *εταρω* in all the places where it is used, it should be *ordained*. The meaning of the sacred penman seems to be, that all who were deeply and seriously concerned about their eternal happiness, (whether that concern began now, or were of longer date,) openly embraced the gospel; for surely none could be said to believe, who did not make an open profession of Christianity, especially in such circumstances; and, wherever this temper was, it was undoubtedly the effect of a divine operation on their hearts, and of God's gracious purpose thus to call them, and list them (as it were) in their proper places in his army under the great Captain of their salvation.

<sup>g</sup> Devout women of considerable rank.] I am much at a loss to know, why so many learned writers interpret this of proselytes of the gate. It is quite unnatural to suppose, either that such should be called devout, rather than those that had fully embraced the Mosaic re-

SECT.

XXX.

Acts

XIII. 50

plied themselves to *the magistrates of the city*, representing these new preachers as exciters of sedition, and innovators in religion, who might occasion danger to the state; *and thus they raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their territories with violence and infamy.*

- 51 *But they, when they were going from the boundaries of that place, shook off the dust of their feet for a testimony against them; as their Lord had commanded his apostles to do, in token of the certain ruin which should befall such despisers of his gospel: (Mark vi. 11.) And departing from thence, they came to the neighbouring city of Iconium,<sup>b</sup> and there renewed the proclamation of those glad tidings, which many of the inhabitants of Antioch had so ungratefully rejected.*

- 52 *But the disciples who were left there were filled with great joy, that so blessed a message had reached their hearts; and as Paul and Barnabas had laid their hands upon them, they were furnished with an abundant communication of the gifts as well as graces of the Holy Spirit;<sup>c</sup> whereby they were not only confirmed in the faith which they had newly embraced, but*

men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coats.

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.

ligion, or that they should be more zealous than the others, in resenting an imaginary injury done to the whole body of the Jews. But, taking them for women of fierce 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.

<sup>b</sup> *Came to Iconium.*] Raphaelius (ex Xenoph. p. 161--164.) has taken great pains to settle the geography of this place, and has fully proved, that it lay, not (as it is often pleased,) in the middle of Lycia, which occasions some perplexity in following passages, but on its western borders, and just on the confines of Pisidia, Galatia, and Phrygia, to the latter of which it seems once to have belonged.

<sup>c</sup> *Were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*] Hence both Lard. Barrington, (Miscel. Sacra, Vol. 1. p. 105, & seq.)

and Dr. Benson, (Vol. II. p. 37.) infer, that the Holy Spirit descended on these converts without the imposition of hands and perhaps in flaming tongues. But this appears to me a mere conjecture, and indeed a very improbable one. The phrase of being filled with the Spirit, can, to be sure, never prove it. (Compare Acts vi. 3, 5; vii. 55; xi. 24; xiii. 9; Luke i. 15; and especially Eph. v. 18.) And had the analogy, which (I think, quite without reason,) they suppose expedient between the imagined different cases of the first fruits of the proselytes of the gate, and of the idolatrous Gentiles, been really observed, then, according to the principles of these learned writers themselves, such an immediate effusion of the Spirit must have fallen on Sergius Paulus, as it did on Cornelius and his friends, rather than on those Antiochians, whom they (for reasons I am yet to learn,) call the harvest of idolatrous Gentiles, who were not called till the gospel had been preached through all Cyprus and Pamphylia, both to Jews and Gentiles.

were also rendered capable of carrying on the interests of Christianity in that place, when the first planters of their church could no longer continue to cultivate and water it.

SECT.  
XXX.  
Acts  
XIII. 32

IMPROVEMENT.

It is a great comfort to the ministers of the gospel, that amidst Verse 33  
that incredulity which too generally prevails, any are found who will credit the gospel; any to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed, in conquering their prejudices against it: With a chosen remnant of these God will support his faithful servants. O that the instances of that consolation may be more numerous, and more remarkable 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*. (Rom. x. 17.) 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 judge themselves unworthy of eternal life; and since they will not condescend to 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 mercies 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 indeed, if we are entirely unconcerned about its propagation in the world, we have great reason to fear, that we have ourselves no part in the saving benefits which it confers. May the silver trumpet every where sound, to awaken the nations to list themselves in this holy war under Christ, against all the enemies of salvation; and may many appear determined for eternal life, and like these converts of 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 proselyted to Christianity, though in a

SECT.  
XXX.

great fight of affliction, will have the Spirit of God and of glory resting upon them; and will be enabled to rejoice, not only in the midst of their afflictions, but on account of them. In the mean while, the dust shaken off from the shoes of the rejected ambassadors of the Prince of peace will be recorded as a witness against those that have despised their message, and will expose them to a final condemnation in the day of judgment, more intolerable than that which was once executed on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, or which their wretched inhabitants are then to expect. (Mark vi. 11.)

## SECT. XXXI.

*Paul and Barnabas, after some stay at Iconium, go to Lystra: The inhabitants of that city, struck by a miracle wrought on a lame man, could hardly be restrained from giving them divine honours. Acts XIV. 1—18.*

## ACTS XIV. 1.

SECT.  
XXXI.Acts  
XIV. 1.

IT was observed in the preceding section, that Paul and Barnabas being driven away from Antioch in Pisidia, by the persecution which the Jews raised against them, retired to Iconium, a city of Lycaonia in the Lesser Asia, to the north of Antioch. *And it came to pass, in a very little time after their arrival at Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews there, and spake on the great subject of the gospel salvation in such a manner, that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.<sup>a</sup> But the unbelieving Jews, who were greatly provoked at the growing success of the gospel, and studied all they could to put a stop to its progress, stirred up the minds of the heathen inhabitants of the place, and filled them with malignity against the Christian brethren, and especially against those celebrated teachers of a religion, with respect to which they had entertained such unfavourable prejudices. Nevertheless God was pleased to interpose in such a*

ACTS XIV. 1. *AND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue 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 there-

<sup>a</sup> *Multitude — of the Greeks believed.* Dr. Whitby and several other learned writers seem to limit this text, more than there is any reason to do, by supposing the Greeks here mentioned to have been, chiefly at least, proselytes of the gate. The argument from their being found in

the Jewish synagogues is very inconclusive; for, as was observed before, the fame of such extraordinary teachers as Paul and Barnabas might naturally draw together great numbers of people, who did not usually worship in the synagogues.



fore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use them despitously, and to stone them,

6 They were ware

<sup>b</sup> For a considerable time, therefore, &c.] Some think the second verse should be included in a parenthesis, and that the particle [they fore] refers to the success that Paul and Barnabas had met with at Iconium, (which had been mentioned ver. 1.) as what induced them to continue preaching there for a long time; while others, who would make no break in the connection, choose rather that *per se* should be rendered *for indeed*; and, supposing the rage of the Jews to have been exasperated by their long stay and preaching there, would render the beginning of this verse, *For indeed they had carried a long time, &c.* (See Dr. Whitby in loc.) But the connection may be well enough preserved, though we retain the usual sense of the particle *in*, 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

manner as to prevent their rage from running presently to an extreme, and to animate his faithful servants amidst all the opposition and hardships they met with; for a considerable time therefore they continued their abode there, speaking freely in [the cause of] the Lord Jesus Christ, who have witness to the word of his grace which they delivered, and gave a variety of miraculous signs and wonders to be done by their hands, which were of service to confirm the faith of the new converts; and to prevail with many others to receive the gospel, and might have convinced all the inhabitants, if they had exercised a becoming candour. But the multitude of the city was divided into two opposite parties, and some were of the same mind with the unbelieving Jews, whom they joined in desiring that these new preachers might be expelled as disturbers of the established religion; and others most cordially fell in with the apostles, whom they received as messengers from God, to guide men to true piety and eternal happiness. But on the whole, the magistrates favoured the contrary side; and as a violent attempt was going to be made by those who had conspired against them, both of the Gentiles and of the Jews, with their respective rulers, to injure and even to stone them as blasphemers; when the project was just ripe for execution, Paul and Barnabas having received intelligence<sup>c</sup>

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 greater 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 false aspersions of their enemies. All they proceeded to such violent methods, that they no longer could remain with any safety there.

<sup>c</sup> Speaking freely in [the cause of] the Lord.] Some would render the words *ἐλευθερῶς ἐλάλουν τῷ κυρίῳ*, being inspired with great resolution by the Lord; but, though this was undoubtedly the case, I am not sure the words themselves express it. Beza renders it, *in a dependence on the Lord*; and indeed the original will very naturally bear that sense.

SECT. XXXI.  
ACTS XIV. 5.

SECT.  
XXXI.  
Acts  
XIV. 6

of it,<sup>d</sup> prevented the attempt by withdrawing from thence, and getting away from Iconium, they fled to Lystra and Derbe, which were both cities of Lycaonia, and to the adjacent country, near the borders of Cappadocia and Galatia,

7 which were contiguous provinces. And there they preached the gospel in a very successful manner, so that the church was still propagated by the very methods taken to destroy it.

8 But there happened one circumstance while they were in these parts, which was much taken notice of; and, as it gave occasion to a remarkable occurrence, it will not be improper to relate it more particularly. *There sat a certain man at Lystra, [who was] disabled in his feet, and thereby rendered incapable of providing a maintenance for himself, being so lame from his mother's womb, that he never had walked at all.*

9 Now it so happened, that in some place of public resort, near which he was laid, to beg for alms of those that passed by, *this man heard Paul speaking, who fixing his eyes upon him, and seeing, by the ardour and humility which was expressed in his countenance, that he had faith sufficient to be healed, and finding also in himself that the power of Christ was to be displayed on this occasion, directed his speech to the*

10 *poor cripple, And said with a loud voice, in the hearing of all that were assembled there, as one that was conscious of the divine authority by which he then acted, Arise, and stand upright on thy feet: And the lame man immediately attempted it, in a believing dependence on the power of Christ, which wrought so effectually in him, that he leaped up at once from the place where he sat, with an astonishing agility, and not only stood upright, but walked about as firmly and steadily as if he had been accustomed to walk from his infancy.*

11 *And when the multitude who were present when this wonderful cure was wrought, seeing what Paul had done by only speaking a word, were all in raptures of astonishment, and lifted up their*

of it, and fled into Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

7 And there they preached the gospel.

8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked.

9 The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had 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 lift up their voices

<sup>d</sup> Having received intelligence of it. They were, as it should seem, informed of it, when the mob was actually raised, and coming towards the place where they were. Some have imagined, it might be by inspiration; but I see no necessity of having recourse to that.

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 before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would

voices in loud acclamations, saying in the Lycaonian language,\* The gods are descended from heaven to us, in the form and likeness of men.<sup>1</sup>

And, perceiving Barnabas to be a person of the better presence, and of the more majestic port, they called him Jupiter; and Paul, who was a little active man, they called Mercury,<sup>2</sup> because he was the leader of the discourse, on which account they thought he might more probably be their God of eloquence.

And the priest of that Jupiter who was esteemed the tutelary deity of that place, and [whose image] was therefore placed in a temple erected to him before their city, in the suburbs,<sup>b</sup> not far from the place where the miracle was wrought, immediately brought oxen crowned with garlands,<sup>c</sup> according to their usual manner, to the gates of the place where Paul and Barnabas

\* In the Lycaonian language.] This, as some say, was not a dialect of the Greek, but rather approached the Syrian, as that of Cappadocia is said to have done.

<sup>1</sup> The gods are descended to us in the likeness of men.] It appears from numberless passages in the heathen writers, that they suppose this often to have happened. See Homer Odys. 2. ver. 435. & seq. Herod. Op. & Dier. ver. 249, 254. & seq. Catull. de Nupt. Pel. ver. 284. & seq. and the notes of Grotius and Elmer on this place, which last great critic has shewn, that this notion particularly prevailed with respect to Jupiter and Mercury. Observ. Vol. I. p. 420—422.

<sup>2</sup> Barnabas they called Jupiter, and Paul Mercury.] Chrysostom observes, (and after him Mr. Fleming, Christol. Vol. II. p. 226.) that the heathens represented Jupiter as an old but vigorous man, of a noble and majestic aspect, and large robust make, which therefore he supposes might be the form of Barnabas; whereas Mercury appeared young, little and nimble, as Paul might probably do, for he was yet but a young man. Yet the reason given by Luke is different, and more naturally leads to the turn given in the paraphrase.—Jamblinus calls Mercury  $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omega\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\varsigma$   $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omega\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ , with a remarkable correspondence to the words of the sacred historian,  $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omega\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\varsigma$   $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\omega\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ . See other learned illustrations of this title, cited by Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. viii. § 8, p. 313, 314.—Mr. Harrington well observes, (in his Works,

p. 330.) that this persuasion might enter the more easily on the minds of the Lycaonians, on account of the well-known fable of Jupiter and Mercury, who were said to have descended from heaven in human shape, and to have been entertained by Lycaon, from whom the Lycaonians received their name.

<sup>b</sup> The priest of Jupiter, [whose image] was before their city.] Elmer has shewn, that it was customary to build temples to their deities in the suburbs, and to set up their images before the city at the gates. (Observ. Vol. I. p. 425.) See also Mr. Biscoe, chap. viii. § 9, p. 314.—It has been argued from hence, that the heathens considered their several images, of Jupiter for instance, 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; which, as Mr. Warburton well observes, may account for the dispute between two Jupiters, the Tonans, and the Capitollans, mentioned by Suetonius. August. cap. 91. see Warb. Div. Legat. Vol. I. p. 279.—281. Not.

<sup>c</sup> Oxen crowned with garlands.] It is well known, that the heathens used to crown, lest the images of their deities, and the victims they offered to them, with chaplets of flowers, as appears from a multitude of passages both in the Latin and Greek classics. See Raphael Not. ex Herod. p. 364; and Mr. Biscoe, as above, p. 315.

SECT.  
XXXI.

Acta.  
XIV. 12

LECT. were; and would, with the multitude, have offered sacrifice [to them,] to acknowledge the obligation they were under to them for this condescending and beneficent visit, and to take this opportunity of imploring their continued protection in their public and private affairs.

14 But as they were leading on the sacrificial procession towards them, the apostles Barnabas and Paul hearing of the purpose for which it was intended, were struck with a becoming horror at the proposal, and rent their mantles in token of that mixture of indignation and sorrow with which they beheld this strange abuse of a miracle, wrought to destroy that idolatry which from thence they took occasion to practise; and in this moving and expressive manner they ran in among the multitude, crying out

15 with the greatest earnestness, And saying, O Sirs, unhappy and misguided men as ye are, why do ye these things with regard to us? We are not what you imagine us to be; and far from having any title to divine honours, we assure you that we also are mere mortal men as others are, obnoxious to the same common infirmities of human life with yourselves,\* and are come hither with a design of preaching the gospel to you, that you may be directed to the proper object of religious adoration, and may effectually be taught to turn from these vanities which you now worship,† to Jehovah, the one only living and true God, who made the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and all things which are contained in them: Who in former generations permitted all the heathen nations to walk in their own ways, and left them under the darkness into which they were gradually fallen, without giving them any revelation of himself, either by a writ-

have done sacrifice with the people.

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

\* Obnoxious to the same common infirmities. This is also the meaning of the word *humanity*, Jam. v. 17, and nothing could be more absurd, or injurious to the character of these holy men, than to imagine that it refers in either of the places to any thing of ungoverned passion.

† From these vanities. A bold expression, when considered as addressed to a whole crowd of bigotted 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 immoralities, inwardly confirmed 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, a circumstance hardly to be mentioned without tears. See Mr. Warburton's Div. Legat. Vol. I. p. 329.

17 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.

ten law, or by prophetic messengers: *Though even then he did not leave himself without witness, nor were they altogether destitute of any means of coming to a better knowledge;* for he was continually testifying his deity, his presence, and his care, by the substantial fruits of his liberality, *doing good to his creatures with a bountiful hand, [and] given us all, whether Jews or Gentiles, refreshing showers of rain from heaven, which none of the idols could grant; and, through the concurring influences of the sun, producing fruitful seasons, administering thereby not only to the necessities but the delights of life, and filling our hearts with food and with gladness too.* Since therefore to all his other favours he has now added this, of sending us with these miraculous powers to instruct you in his nature, and to point out to you the way to happiness, forbear these vain and offensive rites; and set yourselves seriously to attend to the gospel, which it is our great business here to proclaim.

SECT. XXXI.  
Acts XIV. 17

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

*And saying these things, plain and reasonable as they were, they hardly restrained the people from their purpose, and scarcely could prevent their sacrificing to them.*

IMPROVEMENT.

HAPPY are the ministers of Christ, in the midst of labours and persecution too, if they have the presence of their Master with them; and if the Lord, as in this instance, 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. These repeated oppositions which

<sup>m</sup> He did not leave himself without witness. 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 sent abroad on every side, (as a late pious philosopher most justly observes,) are so many witnesses sent to attest the divine care and goodness; and they speak it in very sensible language to the heart, though not to the ear. See Nature displayed, Vol. II. p. 7. Ruffinus (ex Herod. p. 963,

306.) has a curious note here, in which he shews, that the Pagans spoke of rain as given by God, and, which is very remarkable, not as coming from the gods; and this he thinks a remnant of patriarchal piety, in a form of speech older than the first idolatry: So that there is no need, with Dr. Hammond, to have recourse to the Jewish proverb, that *the keys of life, rain, and the resurrection were always kept in God's own hand.* Compare Jer. xiv. 22.

SECT. the apostles met with in their work, seemed to threaten their  
 XXXI. destruction: but they served in effect to render their testimony  
 more credible, when borne in the midst of so many dangers: They served also to exercise the graces of these new converts; to add a growing evidence to Christianity throughout the remotest ages; and they were 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 quite different reception.

Verse 8, 9, 10  
 11-13 The cure of this cripple was but one miracle of a thousand which the power of Christ made common in those days; the effect of it one way or another was very remarkable: The multitude struck with the exertion of an energy truly divine, by an error to which human nature is (alas!) too incident, fix their eyes on the instruments, and pay that honour to mortal men which was due only to that God by whom that wonderful work was wrought. Yet a mixture of piety amidst all that superstition cannot but strike the mind with some pleasure, joined with the compassion we must feel to find it so wretchedly misguided and allayed. When they thought the gods were come down in human form, they were desirous immediately to pay honour to them. The Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh: but alas, in how different a manner was he generally received! received indeed with outrage and infamy, instead of that prostrate adoration to which he had so just a claim.

14 These his servants with an honest indignation reject the homage offered to them, and regard it with horror rather than delight. It was a courageous testimony which they bore to the vanity of these heathen deities, while surrounded with adorers  
 15, 17 and their priests. 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, the Creator and Governor of heaven and earth, of the sea, and all that is therein.* Let us adore him, as the author of all the blessings of providence, as giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons; and while our hearts are filled with food and gladness, let our hearts rejoice in him, and to him let us devote that vigour which we derive from his daily bounty. Above all, let us praise him that we have not these witnesses alone, of his presence, his power, and his goodness; but that he who once left the nations to go on in their own ways, has now revealed unto us the path of salvation, and given us *that true bread from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall live for ever.* (John vi. 58.)

## SECT. XXXII.

*Paul and Barnabas being driven from Lystra, by a persecution excited by the Jews, return through Derbe, Pisidia, and Pamphylia, to Antioch in Syria, where they make some abode. Acts XIV. 19, to the end.*

ACTS XIV. 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.

ACTS XIV. 19.

WHEN Paul and Barnabas had put a stop to that undue respect the people would have shewn them, and had instructed them to worship none but the true God, they still continued for a little while at Lystra, and endeavoured to improve that advantage which the cure of the lame man had given them, for preaching the gospel there. But though they were so happy as to make some converts to it, they were soon interrupted in their work; for quickly after this, [some] Jews came thither from the neighbouring cities of Antioch and Iconium, and persuaded the multitude to disbelieve what they taught; and representing them to be deceivers, they prejudiced their minds to such a degree against their persons and their doctrine, that the very people who but just before would have adored them as deities, now rose to put them to death as malefactors: And accordingly having stoned Paul in a tumultuous manner in the streets, they dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.<sup>a</sup> But as the disciples were gathered about him, with a view of performing the last office of affection to him, in bearing him to his funeral with proper regard, to their

SECT.  
XXXII.  
Acts  
XIV. 19.

<sup>a</sup> Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose

<sup>a</sup> Having stoned Paul, they dragged him out of the city, &c. Probably they left his body exposed to the open air, intending that he (to whom a few days before they would have sacrificed oxen) should be a prey to wild beasts or birds. There might be something extraordinary in the appearance of his body & this circumstance, which led them to conclude he was dead, while he was yet alive; for one can hardly imagine, that they would have been contented 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. But it is surely a strange thought of Wottonius, that this was permitted by God as a punishment on Paul for the concern he had in stoning Stephen. However, the apostle might well insert it in the brief history he gives us of his sufferings, 2 Cor. xi. 22—27, of which few are particularly mentioned in this book.

SECRET. 28. III. Acts XIV. 20. unspeakable surprise they found him so restored up and came into by the power of Christ, that he immediately the city: and the rose up as in perfect health,<sup>b</sup> and his bruises next day he departed were so healed, that he entered into the city with Barnabas to Derbe.

- 21 And having preached the gospel at Derbe, to the inhabitants of that populous city, and made a considerable number of disciples there, they trod back the road they had taken, and returned first to Lystra again, and then to Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia; Confirming the souls of the disciples which they had made in those places in their former journey, exhorting them to continue in the Christian faith, with a stedfastness becoming the evidence and importance of it; and [testifying] that it is necessary we should enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations, which, as God has been pleased to order matters, will unavoidably lie in our way; but which it will be abundantly worth our while to encounter in so good a cause, and in the views of so glorious a reward.
- 22 And when they had with the concurrent suffrage of the people constituted presbyters for them in every church,<sup>d</sup> who might take care of them

<sup>b</sup> He rose up, as in perfect health. ] That just after he had been stoned, and dragged about the streets, and left for dead, he should rise and walk back into the city, must certainly be the effect of a miraculous cure, approaching, as near as one can conceive, to a resurrection from the dead. This is the more illustrated by his going the next day to Derbe; whereas, in a 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 hardly have been able to turn himself in his bed.

<sup>c</sup> Entered into the city. ] Probably by showing himself alive, among the new converts at least, if not to others, he hoped, as he reasonably might, to confirm their faith in the gospel, and their courageous adherence to it. — P. 101

me to add here, that though it was not till the next journey hither, that Paul formed his intimate acquaintance with Timothy, (Acts xvi. 1, 2.) yet since he speaks of Timothy, as having been a witness of his sufferings here, and in the neighbourhood, (2 Tim. iii. 10, 11.) whereas we read nothing of any remarkable sufferings in that second progress; (Acts xvi. 4.) it seems, he began his acquaintance now with that hopeful youth, whose pious mother Eunice, and grandmother Lois, (2 Tim. i. 5.) seem now to have been entered into the Christian church, though he was not admitted till afterwards.

<sup>d</sup> When they had constituted presbyters for them, &c. ] Mr. Harrington in his (Works, p. 327.) renders the words ἐκείνοις ἐκείνους, ordained them elders by the votes of the people, urging the authority



church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. when they were gone away to other parts, *having prayed to God with solemn fasting*, that a blessing might attend their inspection and labours, they committed them, in the infant and distressed state of the church at that time, to the guardianship and care of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom they had believed, and so quitted them, with a cheerful confidence, that he would carry on that good work, which in the midst of so much opposition he had happily begun amongst them.

24 And after they had passed through-out Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. *And passing through the province of Pisidia, they came again to Pamphylia*, which was the country where they had landed when they came from Cyprus. (Chap. xiii. 13.) *And having*

25 And when they

SECT.  
XXXII.  
ACTS  
XIV. 23

of Suidas, who explains *χρηστὸν* by *ἀγαθὸν καὶ εὐσεβεῖ*, "the election of magistrates, or ratification of laws by many, signified by holding up, or stretching out the hand." (Compare 2 Cor. vii. 19.) Raphaelus has confirmed the same interpretation? (Not. ex Xen. p. 165.) And the old English Bible translates it, *When they had returned them elders by election*. The celebrated author first mentioned has endeavoured largely to vindicate this interpretation, from the exceptions of Dr. Hammond, Dr. Scamman, and others, who make *χρηστὸν* the same with *χρηστὸν* or *the laying on of hands*. See Harrington's *Prerogative of popular government*, chap. v.—This is not a place for discussing so nice a question; but, as I am in my own judgment convinced he is in the right, I chose to paraphrase the passage agreeable to that notion; though I do not fix it in the translation. I have not rendered it *ordained*, because custom has, among us especially, allied to that word in such a connection, the idea of laying on hands in prayer, to invest a person with, or mark him out for the ministerial office; and this, which I doubt not was here done, seems to be intimated in the following clause.—It seems to me, that the word [constitute] would properly express the apostles providing in that previous choice, which probably the people studied by *χρηστὸν*, the stretching out their hands. And this interpretation appears most naturally to suit the circumstances of things, as well as the import of the original words made use of; for the people would, no doubt, have a great deference to the judgment of the apostles in the choice

of those officers, who were in some degree to fill up their places in exercising the Christian ministry among them; and on the other hand, whatever extraordinary power their institution to this office by the apostles might have given, and whatever acts of direct authority it might have warranted, yet considering how touch the comfort and assistance (not to say the substance) of those officers, who had no human laws to establish them, could depend upon the free consent of the people, and what a natural authority the express declaration of that consent would give them in the execution of their office, the prevalence, as well as the known hostility of the apostles, would lead them to take that consent as expressly as they could. (Compare 1 Cor. ix. 14, 15; 9 (2e. vi. 9; 1 Thess. ii. 6; Philen. ver. 8, 9; 1 Pet. v. 3.) which it would be too more natural and expedient to do, as the civil government of these places was in a great measure popular, (as Mr. Harrington has shown, *ibid.* chap. ii.) and as the apostles, also knew, how expressly the consent of the Jewish people had been taken in the settlement of their civil and ecclesiastical affairs, which the same writer has also well illustrated, *ibid.* chap. iii.)—See Norton Knutball has an admirable note here, in which he establishes the version I have given by many incontestable authorities even of ecclesiastical writers: And though it be true, that in some cases (as Dr. Hammond has learnedly shown) *χρηστὸν* signifies to *constitute* or *appoint* to an office where there could be no *choice* at all, I cannot see any evidence, that the word is so to be interpreted here.

SECT. spoken the word of the kingdom in the city of  
 XXXII. *Perga*, where they had been before, *they went*  
 down from thence to *Attalia*, which was a mari-  
 time town on the coast of the Mediterranean  
 Sea. *And* not thinking it proper at that time  
 to travel through Cilicia, though they were  
 then on the borders of it, and some Christian  
 churches were already planted there, (compare  
 chap. ix. 30; xv. 41.) *they* took shipping, and  
 sailed from thence to the coast of Syria, and  
 went up the river Orontes to *Antioch* in that  
 province; *from whence they had*, by the divine  
 appointment, *been solemnly recommended* to the  
 grace of God for that work, which they had so  
 vigorously prosecuted, and so happily accom-  
 plished: (chap. xiii. 2, 3.) They were there-  
 fore very desirous, both of rendering a particu-  
 lar account of their ministry there, and also  
 of returning their grateful acknowledgments to  
 the divine providence and grace, to which they  
 owed their safety amidst so many extreme dan-  
 gers, and their success in such difficult labours.

27 *And when they were come thither, and had*  
*gathered the church together, they related* to the  
 brethren at Antioch *what great and wonder-*  
*ful things God had done with and by them*, in  
 the whole of their voyage and journey in all the  
 countries through which they had passed; (com-  
 pare chap. xv. 12; and xxi. 19.) *and more espe-*  
*cially acquainted them with what extraordinary*  
*success he had been pleased to bless their mini-*  
*stry among the Heathen, and how he had opened*  
*a door of faith and hope to the Gentiles*, who had  
 so long continued in ignorance, idolatry, and  
 misery, making the gospel shine into their  
 hearts, and graciously receiving them into the  
 number of his people.

28 *And Providence permitting them, after their*  
*long fatigues, to repose themselves a while in*  
*that agreeable situation amidst their dear bre-*  
*thren and friends, they resided there a consider-*

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 grace of God,  
 for the work which  
 they fulfilled.

27 *And* when they  
 were come, and had  
 gathered the church  
 together, they re-  
 hearsed all that God  
 had done with them,  
 and how he had open-  
 ed the door of faith  
 unto the Gentiles.

28 *And* there they  
 abode long time with  
 the disciples.

\* *Opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*  
 It is certain, the gospel was carried by  
 the apostles, in this journey, to many  
 celebrated countries, to which it had  
 never before reached; but as on the one  
 hand it is certain, it had been preached  
 to the Gentiles before, so on the other,  
 it seems a groundless conjecture, of Mr.

Cradock, that in this journey Paul went  
 as far as to Illyricum, [a province in  
 Europe, on the coast of the Adriatic Sea,]  
 preaching the gospel, (Rom. xv. 19.) and  
 suffered all the hardships to which he  
 refers, 2 Cor. 11, & seq. See Crad-  
 Apost. Hist. p. 85.

able time with the disciples, establishing them in their adherence to the gospel, and in a behaviour suitable to their profession of it.

SECT.  
XXXI.  
ACTS  
XIV. 28.

IMPROVEMENT.

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 prevailed upon to exchange the instruments of sacrifice for those of murder! 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 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, interposed miraculously to heal his wounds and bruises, and on a sudden restored him to perfect health. Thus could he always have protected his apostles, so that, in a literal sense, *not one 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 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 stedfast continuance in the Christian faith, through whatever tribulations we are called to pass; be the way ever so rugged and painful, let it be enough for us that it leads to the kingdom of heaven: Thankfully let us own the divine goodness in all the assistances we receive as we pass through it, 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 usually attend their ordination to it, be heard and answered! And may ministers and people flourish in knowledge and piety, under the constant care of the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls!

The success which attended these two apostles in their course, and the pleasure with which they returned to the place from whence they had so affectionately been recommended to the grace of God, may 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 let us pray, that *the door of faith* may be *opened* so wide, that all nations of the earth may *enter in, and be saved*.

## SECT. XXXIII.

*Some Jewish converts urging it as necessary that the Gentile Christians should observe the law of Moses, Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem to consult the apostles and elders upon that question: An assembly is called, in which Peter declares on the side of their liberty.* Acts XV. 1—11.

## ACTS XV. 1.

SECT.  
XXXIII.  
Acts  
XV. 1.

THE conclusion of the last section left Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, where they continued a considerable time. And now a circumstance occurred which was the occasion of very considerable consequences in the Christian church there and elsewhere; for *some persons who came thither from Judea, taught the brethren* in their public and private discourses, insisting with great earnestness, and saying to them in the strongest terms, *That except ye be circumcised according to the manner prescribed in the law of Moses, and become obedient to all the whole system of his precepts, ye cannot possibly be saved by the gospel; which was intended to make all that are converted to it Jews, and that they could not otherwise be true and genuine Christians.*

2 *There being therefore a contention upon this account at Antioch, where there were several converts from among the Gentiles, to whom this doctrine could not but be very disagreeable; and no small debate arising [on the part] of Paul and Barnabas, who strenuously opposed these Jewish zealots, and maintained against them, that Christians converted from other nations were as free from the Mosaic laws as if it had never been given at all; the church thought it advisable to get the best satisfaction they could in an affair which affected the liberties and consciences of so many; and for this purpose they resolved that Paul and Barnabas, and some others of their number, should go up to the apostles,<sup>3</sup> and*

## ACTS XV. 1.

AND certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 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 the

<sup>3</sup> They understood that Paul, &c. should go up to the apostles. It is generally al-

lowed, that this is the journey to which Paul refers, Gal. ii. 1, 2, when he says,

apostles and elders about this question. *elders at Jerusalem,*<sup>b</sup> to know their sentiments about this grand question.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phœnicæ, and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. *They therefore upon this set out from Antioch, and being brought forward on their journey by several of the church, went through the countries of Phœnicia and Samaria, which lay in their way, relating to all their fellow-Christians whom they met with in the several towns through which they passed, the conversion of the Gentiles,*<sup>d</sup> by the blessing of God on their labours; and by this account they occasioned great joy to all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things *And being at length arrived at Jerusalem, they were received with all due respect by the whole church, and particularly by the apostles and elders who resided there: And they related to them what great and wonderful things God had gra-*

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 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 a great number of converts, that 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 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 of the circumcision upon this occasion.

<sup>b</sup> *And elders at Jerusalem.* By what authority these have been concluded to be some of the hundred and twenty mentioned Acts i. 15. I am yet to learn, notwithstanding what is suggested by Dr. Whitby in loc. and Dr. Hanson, Vol. II. p. 55. It seems to me, that any officers of the church, to whom the stated inspection of it was committed, might properly be called elders, whether they were, or were not, of that number.

<sup>c</sup> *Being brought forward on their journey by the church.* This is plainly the sense of the word *προσπαρομιση*, which is constantly used to express the regard which is shewn to those, who travelled any where to preach the gospel, or to take care of the affairs of the church, whom it

was usual to bring forward on their way. Compare Acts ix. 30; xxi. 5; Rom. xv. 24; 1 Cor. xvi. 6, 11; 2 Cor. i. 16; Tit. iii. 13; and 3 John ver. 6.

<sup>d</sup> *Relating to all their fellow-Christians—the conversion of the Gentiles.* It is surprising that the author of *Miscell. Sacra*, Essay iv. p. 50, & seq. and Dr. Benson, Vol. II. p. 49, 50, should think, Paul and Barnabas told their story in so ambiguous a manner, as to leave room for those who heard them, both here, and at Jerusalem, to conclude, that the Gentiles of whom they spake were only proselytes of the gate and not idolatrous Gentiles. Had the distinction been material, it would no doubt have been inquired into, and though no inquiry had been made, yet it would have been very disingenuous in Paul and Barnabas, when, (as these writers allow) their work had chiefly lain among the idolatrous Gentiles, to conceal that circumstance, and leave the assembly in general terms to make a decree relating to Christian Gentiles, in which in fact but a very small part of them should be concerned. That indeed it is most groundless to imagine, that, if the distinction had been ever so great between proselytes of the gate and other Gentiles, it should in any circumstances, or at any time have been an obnoxious thing, or a thing that should need concealment, that the true God had been preached to idolaters. As for the argument from Gal. ii. 2, I may hereafter give my reasons for concluding, it refers to Paul's teaching, that even the Jews themselves were by Christ freed from any general obligation in conscience to observe the Mosaic ceremonies.

sect. ciously done with and by them, and gave them  
 XXXIII. an account of the success with which he had  
 blessed their ministry among the Gentiles, in  
 their late travels through Cyprus, Pamphylia,  
 Act<sup>3</sup> XV. 4. Pisidia, and Lycaonia.

5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees that believed,<sup>e</sup> who were still zealous for the ceremonial law, rose up and said, That though they heartily rejoiced in the conversion of so many of the heathen to the knowledge and faith of the gospel, yet it was absolutely necessary to circumcise them, and to instruct and charge them to keep the whole law of Moses, in its ceremonial as well as moral precepts. Others in the company opposed this, as an innovation of a very unreasonable nature, and as what might be attended with pernicious consequences: And to bring the matter to an issue, it was agreed, that at an appointed time it should be debated at large in a full assembly.

6 And accordingly when the day came, the apostles and elders were gathered together, to consult upon this affair, and to consider what was fit to be determined in it. And after much debate,<sup>f</sup> Peter rose up in the assembly, and said to them, Men [and] brethren, you very well know that some considerable time since the ever blessed God, who is so remarkably among us by many gracious tokens of his presence, chose that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the

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 command them to keep the law of Moses.

6 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, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the

<sup>e</sup> But some of the sect of the Pharisees, &c.] I cannot but wonder with Raphaelus, (ex Herod. p. 367.) that Beza and some others should think, this is a circumstance which Paul adds to his story, when the connection so evidently shews them to be the words of Luke the historian, informing us, that these messengers found some at Jerusalem, who held the same unhappy principles which had so much disturbed the peace of the church at Antioch. To support the other interpretation Mr. Infant is obliged to make an addition to the text, and render it, But [and then] some of the Pharisees, &c. See Wolf. Crit. Philol. in loc.

<sup>f</sup> After much debate.] The debate which arose in this assembly may indeed prove, that there were some in the church at Jerusalem, who had not a due regard to the authority of the apostles; but it cannot, as many have supposed, 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: And I know not any 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.

<sup>g</sup> God among us chose.] There seems, as Heinsius and many others have observed, something harsh in this expression, to take it as if Peter had said, "God chose me from among us all." The words [among us] are wanting in the Syriac Version, and some read [among you] but the sense given in the paraphrase seems so easy and pertinent, that I see no reason to wish for any authority to change the received reading.

Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. SECT. XXXIII.

8 And God which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us: Acts XV. 8

9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. *gospel,<sup>b</sup> and believe in that glorious dispensation. And in proof of this, while I was preaching to Cornelius and his family, who were uncircumcised, that God who knoweth the heart bare witness to them that they were accepted by him, by giving them the Holy Spirit in a miraculous effusion and a visible appearance, even as [he did] to us at the very beginning, on that ever memorable day of Pentecost, which fulfilled our Lord's gracious promise, and furnished us for our great and successful work. And thus it evidently appeared, that he made no distinction between us and them, having purified their hearts as well as ours, by a sincere faith, and thus sanctified them much more effectually than could have been done by any external rite, and made it manifest that he was ready to admit them to the blessings of his gospel.*

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? *Now therefore, my brethren, why do you not acquiesce in such a determination? Why do you insist on farther terms as necessary, where the divine will is already sufficiently declared; and go about to tempt God, by a proposition of imposing on the neck of the disciples a grievous and burthensome yoke, 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? But far from consenting to what some of you propose, we who are sufficiently instructed on this head by our great Master, do fully and assuredly believe, that we ourselves are saved, not by obedience to the works of the law, but by*

11 But we believe, that through the

<sup>b</sup> That the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel. It is surprising to me, that the learned authors I have so often mentioned above should argue, that, because the persons to whom Peter first preached the gospel were not idolaters, that is, because Cornelius was a worshipper of the true God, (for what his friends were, none can certainly say,) therefore the question now before this assembly must only be, "Whether proselytes of the gate were obliged to observe the whole law of Moses?" See Michael Sacri. Essay 15. and Dr. Benson, Vol. II. chap. 3. § 4, 5, 6. I see not the force of this argument, since it evidently takes it for granted, both that the assembly would know and recollect that they

were proselytes of the gate, merely from his calling them Gentiles, and also that circumcision would be indeed more necessary for such converts than for those who had before been idolaters, both which suppositions appear to me very unavailing. Peter's argument plainly is, "Circumcision cannot be necessary to Gentile converts, because God by the effusion of his spirit declared his acceptance of uncircumcised Gentiles in Cornelius's case?" And this argument will be conclusive, if Gentiles be taken in the most extensive, which we are sure was the most usual sense of the word; that is, for all who are not, either by birth, or complete proselytism, Jews.

the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the same manner as they are: And therefore we cannot consent, that while they have that faith upon which salvation depends, we should urge upon them the observation of those ceremonial precepts of the law, by which we ourselves know we cannot be justified.

grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they.

Acts. XV. 11.

Thus Peter pleaded, and James afterwards seconding his discourse, the council acquiesced in it, (as we shall presently hear,) only enjoining some easy restrictions, to avoid giving unnecessary offence to their circumcised brethren.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

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! An 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 their divine Master hath made them free*: (Gal. v. 1.) How foolish and how mischievous the error, of making terms of communion which Christ has never made; and how presumptuous the arrogance of invading his throne, to pronounce from thence damnable sentences on those who will not, who dare not, submit to our uncommissioned and usurped authority.

Prudent undoubtedly was the part which these Antiochian Christians acted upon this occasion, in sending these 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 the man of our counsel, 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: O that such joy may be renewed to us, by the success of all who with a truly apostolic self-denial and zeal go forth at any time to the vast multitudes of the Gentiles which yet remain on the face of 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 it is in consequence of what God does by us and by them; and let us adore the riches of divine grace,



to which we owe it, that we are chosen to make a part of God's SECT. XXXIII. people ourselves, and to carry the knowledge and power of his verse 7, 8, 9 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, to seal us to the day of redemption? And being under the influence of this sacred agent, animated in the most amiable manner to adorn our profession, when we have done all, may we humbly repose ourselves upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as knowing that it is only by the rich and free display of it that, after all our labour, obedience, and care, we can expect salvation.

SECT. XXXIV.

The speech of James, in the assembly of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, with their decree in favour of the liberty of Gentile converts. Acts XV. 12—29.

ACTS XV. 12. THEN all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas

ACTS XV. 12.

IT was observed in the last section, that a ANOT. XXXIV. meeting of the apostles and elders was held at Jerusalem, on account of that attempt which the Judaizing Christians had made at Antioch, to bring the believing Gentiles under the yoke of the Mosaic law; and an account was given of that speech in their favour with which Peter had opened it, wherein he recounted the story of Cornelius, and the manner in which he and his friends were admitted into the church, without circumcision, yet with most evident tokens of divine approbation. It was then judged convenient, that they who had been in a peculiar manner the apostles of the Gentiles, should proceed with their narration: *And accordingly the whole multitude which was assembled, kept silence, and attended to Barnabas and Paul,*

\* The whole multitude. I suppose this whole multitude is spoken of ver. 22, as the whole church; for I cannot enter into the force of those reasons on which the learned Beza concludes, that all that is mentioned from the sixth to the twenty-first verse, passed in a synod of ministers only, and was not communicated to the rest of the church till afterwards, when they acquiesced in the letter, which contained the result of this meeting; ver. 22, & seq. It seems to me most proba-

ble, that it was in one of their worshipping assemblies that Paul and Barnabas had declared all things that God had done with them; (ver. 4.) and that now at another, yet more numerous, and held on this particular occasion, they told the story more largely, with an account of particular miracles and other occurrences; And this the word [multitude] seems farther to imply. Yet I presume not absolutely to determine the question.

SECT. while they were relating what great signs and  
XXXIV. wonders God had done among the heathen by  
them, to reclaim them from their idolatries;<sup>b</sup>  
and with what miraculous operations he had  
Acta confirmed their method of admitting them into  
XV. 12. the Christian church, though they never made  
any effort towards engaging them to be circum-  
cised, and become Jews.

13 Then after they had done speaking, James the  
son of Alphaeus, one of the apostles, answered,<sup>c</sup>  
saying, Men [and] brethren, I desire you would  
attentively hearken unto me, while I give you  
my most deliberate thoughts on this important

14 question. Our beloved brother Simon Peter  
hath just been relating, how God first looked  
down on the Gentiles in his abundant mercy,  
to take from among them a people for the ho-  
nour of his name, who should with us be ac-  
counted to him for a generation; sending his  
servant to them in an extraordinary manner,  
and crowning his labours with such tokens of  
success, and such characters of divine accep-  
tance, as could leave no doubt as to the regu-  
larity of his proceedings; to all which the rela-  
tions made by our other brethren, Barnabas and

15 Paul, do wonderfully agree. And, though  
this may seem quite contrary to some of our  
prejudices in favour of our nation and the law  
of Moses, yet, if we will give ourselves leave  
impartially to examine and consider, we shall  
find it by no means incredible; for the words  
of the prophets harmonize with this, as it is writ-  
ten, particularly by Amos, (chap. ix. 11, 12.)

16 After this I will return to my people in mer-

and Paul, declaring  
what miracles and  
wonders God had  
wrought among the  
Gentiles by them.

13 And after they  
had held their peace,  
James answered, say-  
ing, Men and bre-  
thren, hearken unto  
me.

14 Simon hath de-  
clared, how God at  
the first did visit the  
Gentiles, to take out  
of them a people for  
his name.

15 And to this agree  
the words of the pro-  
phets; as it is written

16 After this I  
will return, and will

<sup>b</sup> *Done among the heathen by them, to re-  
claim them from their idolatries.* For  
the reasonableness of taking it in this  
extent, see note <sup>b</sup>, p. 217.

<sup>c</sup> *James answered.* It is plain from  
hence, that the matter was not deter-  
mined by virtue of any authority in  
Peter; and it seems very providential,  
that James should have made such a  
speech on this occasion, and that he  
should have used the expression, *as  
I determine, &c.* (v. 12.) which, had it been  
found in Peter's speech, would have been  
a much more plausible argument in fa-  
vour of his weakly boasted supremacy,  
than the whole scripture now affords.  
—It may not be improper also to ob-

serve, that, if Peter had introduced his  
discourse like that of James, with saying,  
*Hearken unto me,* it would no doubt have  
been strenuously pleaded in the same  
view. They who have interpreted this  
as an instance of the authoritative pro-  
ceedings of a bishop in his own diocese,  
have not to be sure sufficiently consid-  
ered the difference between the apostolical  
and episcopal office, nor how little cer-  
tence any supposed episcopal power of  
James at Jerusalem could give him, to  
dictate to Peter and his other brethren  
in deciding a cause, in which the whole  
Christian world, and not only his own  
opposed diocese, was concerned.

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 That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doth all these things.

18 Know unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

“*and will restore the house and build up the tabernacle of David my servant, which is fallen down; yea, I will rebuild its ruins, and set it upright again, with such strength and glory as shall be observed by all around:*”

“*That not the Jews alone, but all the remainder of men, may earnestly seek the Lord, even all the heathen nations upon whom my name is called, who in that day shall know my name, and be received into the number of my people, saith the Lord Jehovah, who by his almighty power, with unfailling faithfulness, doth all these things.*”

[Now] such a prediction is agreeable to the wise and steady plan of the divine government; for all his works are from eternity itself known unto God, whom no unexpected event can ever surprise, but who has fixed his schemes on so perfect and exact a foresight of the most contingent events, that he is never under any necessity of changing them in the minutest circumstance.

4 After this I will return, &c.] These words are quoted from Amos ix. 11, 12, according to the reading of the Seventy, who might probably follow a correcter copy of the Hebrew than the present; and Bishop Chandler (of Christianity, p. 174.) seems very justly to argue, that the Jews understood and admitted the words in the sense that James quotes them, or they would not have submitted to his interpretation, considering how strongly they were prejudiced against the consequence he drew from them.

5 That the remainder of men, &c.] De Dieu has a learned and curious note here, to account for the variation of this quotation from the original. If the ancient reading were, *That they may possess the remnant of Edom*, (which there is room to question,) we must suppose with Crocius, Cradock, and others, that, as the prophets declared some of the greatest enemies of the church, such as the Edomites were, should submit themselves to it, the apostles had a right to interpret these words, as in effect declaring, that all the residue of men, that is, the whole Heathen world, should be converted.—Dr. Sykes (of Christianity, p. 294.) very justly refers this to the bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles in the latter day; nevertheless, as he there well observes, they would in this view afford a very good argument for admitting in the most can-

did manner, those of them who were already converted.—The Heathen upon whom the name of God is called, is so proper a description of those that are converted to the true religion, that, when any urge that it must refer to those who were before their conversion to Christianity worshippers of the true God, it only shews how much they are distressed for arguments to support an hypothesis. See below, note 6.

6 All his works are from eternity known unto God.] It is plain, the apostle does not (as some have strangely asserted,) speak of God's works in the natural world, which had been nothing at all to his present purpose, but of his dispensations towards the children of men. Now he could not know those, without knowing the characters and actions of particular persons, on a correspondence to which, the wisdom and goodness of those dispensations is founded. Thus, for instance, he must have known, there would be Gentile idolaters, a thing as dependent on the freedom of the human mind, as any thing we can imagine, or he could not have known, that he would call them into his church. This text therefore must remain an unmovable proof, amongst a thousand more from the word of God, that he certainly foresees future contingencies.

SECT.

XXXIV.

Acts

XV. 16

17

18

SECT.  
XXXIV.  
Acta  
XV. 19

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 to 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;

20 But only to write to them, that they abstain from things grossly scandalous, and such as would give greatest offence to their brethren of the circumcision; particularly, from the abominable pollutions of things sacrificed unto idols, and fornication, and [from] eating that which is strangled, and [from] blood.<sup>1</sup> And though the

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God;

20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

[I cannot but determine in my own mind.] This the word *scize* may naturally express; and be taken to imply, *forming in our own mind*, without pretending to impose that judgment on others.

<sup>1</sup> Those who from among the Gentiles are converted to God. It is evident, this description much better suits those, who were now, as it is elsewhere expressed, (1 Thess. i. 9.) turned from idols to serve the living and true God, than those who, having had the knowledge and fear of God before, were now instructed in what was peculiar to Christianity.

<sup>2</sup> The pollutions of idols, and fornication, and that which is strangled, and blood. It is not for a note in such a work, to enter into all the difficulties and niceties of this text, or the various opinions of commentators upon it. Omitting for the present what may be said of fornication as mentioned here, which I shall refer to note 4 below, I must declare, that on the whole, the most rational interpretation of the passage seems to be this: That 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. xii. 1, 3, 9; Rom. xiv. 14, & con. 1 Tim. iv. 4; Mat. xx. 14.) 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 who used them. This is plainly the reason which James assigns in the very next words, ver. 21, and it is abundantly sufficient. This reason is now ceased, and the obligation to abstain from these things ceases with it. But, were we in like circumstances again, Christian charity

would surely require us to lay ourselves under the same restraints. As for the hypothesis which has been so largely proposed by the author of *Miscell. Sermon Essay IV.* and defended by Dr. Benson (*Hist. Vol. II. p. 58—67.*) to which Dr. Hammond's interpretation very nearly approaches, "that this decree only related to such Christians as had, before they embraced the gospel, been *praecepti* the gate, and was never intended to include those converted from among the idolatrous Gentiles;" besides what has been noted on many passages above, it shew how unreasonable such an interpretation would be, I desire it may be considered farther, that the Jews must be much scrupled to converse with one who had been an idolater, and continued, after becoming a Christian, to eat of the supposed unclean things, as with one who had before been a worshipping of the true God, and used them; and consequently that, if this decree were to be interpreted under such a limitation as these authors propose, it would have been quite insufficient for the intended purpose of accommodating affairs between Jewish and Gentile Christians, as nothing would have been done with respect to those of the latter who had been idolaters, though they were by far the more numerous of the Gentile converts.—This will more evidently appear, if the opposite opinion in question be compared with the occasion of enacting this decree. The Jewish zealots insisted upon it, that Gentile believers should be circumcised. This council determined, that they should only observe those necessary things. Now, as it is certain the demand of circumcision was, and would be, made on all Gentile converts, and not merely

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath-day.

later of these have no moral and universal use in them, yet it is necessary to join the prohibition of them to that of the former; or we know that *Moses hath from ancient generations had, 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 requires.

SECT.  
XXXIV.  
Acts  
XV. 21

22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

This advice was very acceptable to the whole assembly, who unanimously declared their approbation of it: *Now then it seemed good to the apostles and elders, and all the church there met together, to send to Antioch, with Paul and Barnabas, some chosen men from among themselves, to add the greater authority to the report made in a matter of so great importance; and the persons they selected on this occasion were Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, who were both men of principal account among the brethren, and persons who well deserved the high reputation they possessed.*

23 And wrote letters by them after this manner. The apostles and elders, and brethren, send

These therefore they dispatched to Antioch, *writing by their hand these things that follow:* "The apostles, and elders, and other brethren assembled at Jerusalem, send greeting to all

on those who had known the true God before they became Christians, these injunctions must be as extensive as that demand.—Grotius has a learned and curious note on this text, which I could wish might be consulted by those that have opportunity.

[*Judas surnamed Barsabas.*] Some have thought, this was the same with Joseph called Barsabas, (Acts i. 23.) candidate with Matthias for the apostleship, the son of Alphaeus or Cleopas, and brother to at least two of the apostles, James now present and Jude; than whom we know not any one person, not an apostle, of greater note in the church at this time. Others suppose that he was brother to him. See Dr. Benson, Vol. II. p. 55.

[*Silas.*] This seems to have been the person elsewhere called Sylvanus; (9 Cor. i. 19; 1 Thess. i. 1; 2 Thess. i. 1) 1 Pet. v. 12; a most intimate friend and believ-

ed companion of Paul, and as it seems also a citizen of Rome; Acts xvi. 37.

[*By their hand.*] As for the construction of *apostolicis* with *scripturis*, and some other supposed adusions of this kind, I with pleasure refer the learned reader to Raphaelus, Not. ex Herod. p. 370—372, and p. 510—515.

[*And other brethren.*] I conclude with Mr. L'Enfant, that these brethren, who were neither apostles nor elders, were private Christians, whom the apostles in their great condescension joined with them on this occasion; as well knowing, that their declared concurrence would strengthen their obligation not only to acquiesce in this decree, but to support it. And it was the more prudent to do it, as the liberty this gave to the Gentile Christians would something affect these regular interests of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

11. F. "the brethren converted to the Christian faith,  
 XXXIV. "from among the Gentiles, and particularly  
 "those in Antioch, and the other parts of Syria,  
 "and in the province of Cilicia. Forasmuch  
 "as we have been informed, that some going out  
 "from among us, with a pretence that we had  
 "sent them forth, to whom nevertheless we gave  
 "no commission to make use of our names,  
 "have troubled you with their discourses, unset-  
 "tling your minds, by confidently saying that  
 "[you must] all be circumcised and keep all the  
 "precepts of the law of Moses, or otherwise  
 25 "you cannot possibly be saved: We being  
 "unanimously assembled to debate this matter,  
 "have thought proper to send you chosen men of  
 26 "our own body, with our beloved brethren  
 "Barnabas and Paul; Whom, by the way,  
 "we highly esteem, as men that have courage-  
 "ously, in repeated instances, exposed their lives  
 27 "for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. With  
 "them we have therefore sent two of our bre-  
 "thren, Judas and Silas, the bearers hereof,  
 "who will also tell [you] by word of mouth the  
 "same things that we now write, together with  
 "the circumstances of our consultation on this  
 "head, which we pass over, as the particu-  
 "lar detail of them would carry us beyond the  
 28 "proper bounds of a letter. For it hath seem-  
 "ed good to the Holy Spirit,<sup>9</sup> and therefore  
 "to us, who desire in all things to conform our-  
 "selves to his sacred direction, to impose no  
 "further burthen upon you besides these neces-  
 29 "sary things;<sup>10</sup> Namely, that you abstain from

greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia.

24 Forasmuch as 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.

25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with an accord, to send chosen men unto you, with our beloved Barnabas and Paul;

26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have sent therefore Judas, and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

29 That ye ab-

<sup>9</sup> To whom we gave no commission.] This was directly lying the lie upon them, if they had pretended to use the apostles' names in opposing 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.

<sup>10</sup> That have exposed their lives, &c.] 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, who, as it appears from many passages of the epistles, endeavoured as much as possible to blot out the character of these apostles. It would also be an useful expres-

sion of the harmony between them and those of the circumcision.

<sup>11</sup> It hath seemed good to the Holy Spirit.] This may include the decision which the Spirit had given by his descent on Cornelius and his friends, but seems more directly to express the consensus which this assembly had of being guided by his influences on their minds in their present determination. But it cannot be extended to any ecclesiastical councils that have not inspired apostles to preside, as they did here. See Bp. Burnet on the Articles, p. 196.

<sup>12</sup> These necessary things.] They were all 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

stain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if you keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

“ things offered to idols, and from blood, and from any thing that is strangled, and from fornication: from which you will do well to keep yourselves at the greatest distance that may be.” And so we bid you heartily Farewell; wishing you, with the sincerest affection, all peace and prosperity in our common Lord, which, in the observation of these directions, you may expect.”

SECT. XXXIV. Acts XV. 29

IMPROVEMENT.

LET us adore the divine condescension in looking with pity upon the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. We are that people; let it 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! (2 Tim. ii. 19.) May the fallen tabernacle of David also, in due time be raised up, and all its ruins repaired; that, when God's ancient people are remembered by him, the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and the fulness of the Gentiles

Verse 14 16, 17

Lord, where we cannot imagine that Jews would have eaten and drank with persons, when they thought in so polluted a state, as those who indulged themselves in the things here prohibited. On the other hand, it seems the Jews on these conditions gave up any farther debate about the rest of forbidden meats, as well as circumcision, and many other articles.

[And from fornication.] As the infamy of what is commonly called simple fornication 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 to do it. Others interpret the word of marriage within the degree of kindred prohibited by the Mosaic law. (Lev. xviii. 6-18.) Mr. J. Infant would explain it of victims offered by prostitutes out of their scandalous hire; (Deut. xxiii. 18.) which, he says, makes a beautiful sense, and obviates a very considerable difficulty. He also vindicates this interpretation at large, and shows that Athanasius uses *scortia* for *scortia* *scortia*. I pretend not absolutely to determine the question; but think it material to observe, that, if it be taken in the worst sense that can be imagined, it cannot prove the universal unlawfulness of eating blood, since

not only that, but eating things sacrificed to idols, and strangled, are joined with fornication; and yet we are sure, that neither of them were absolutely evil in themselves, or universally forbidden. (Compare 1 Cor. xii. 1, 3, 9, and the other texts cited above in note\* on ver. 26.) It is remarkable, that both Irenæus, (adv. Hæc. lib. III. cap. 12.) and Cyprian, (Testimon. lib. iii. cap. 119.) in quoting these words, add, “And do not do this to others, what you would not have done unto yourselves.” But, as no ancient version, or valuable manuscript, has this addition, and it seems not to suit the connection in which it stands, I cannot but conclude it the spurious interpolation of some, who admitted this noble maxim so highly, as to attempt, though in an irregular method, to recommend it to the utmost.

[From which you will do well to keep yourselves.] 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, I doubt not, 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.

SECT. XXXIV. may be brought in! God who hath a complete view of all his schemes, and of all his works from the foundation of the world, will accomplish this also in its season. In the mean time, let us gratefully acknowledge what he has already done.

- 19, 21 Let us be peculiarly thankful that we are freed from the burdens of the Mosaic institution, and called to a law of liberty. Yet let us take due heed that we do not *abuse it to licentiousness*. (Gal. v. 13.) Let us learn from the tenor of this decree, tenderly to regard even the prejudices of our Christian brethren, and to be careful that we do not violently overbear them; but rather that, so far as honour and conscience will allow, we become all things to all men, and be willing in some respect to deny ourselves, that we may not give unnecessary offence to others.
- 25 Most prudently did the apostles determine this affair, under the influence of the Divine Spirit: and whatever hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to them, let us treat with all becoming regard.—The messengers from Antioch, by whom they returned this decree, were persons of an amiable character indeed: They had hazarded their lives in the service of Christ, and joyfully went on to expose them to new dangers; thinking themselves, no doubt, exceeding happy in the success of this negotiation, as also in the society of those pious brethren of the circumcision, who accompanied them in their return with this
- 27 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 the things 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.

## SECT. XXXV.

*The messengers from the assembly at Jerusalem arrive at Antioch, and after continuing there some time, Paul with Silas, and Barnabas with John surnamed Mark, set out different ways, to visit the churches they had lately planted. Acts XV. 30, to the end.*

ACTS XV. 30.

SECT.  
XXXV.  
Acts  
XV. 30

THE reader has been just presented with a copy of that important letter which the apostles, and elders, and church at Jerusalem sent to the Gentile Christians, by two of their own body, in conjunction with Paul and Barnabas: *They therefore being thus dismissed, came to Antioch, and assembling the whole multitude of the church there, they delivered the epistle to*

ACTS XV. 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 consolation.

32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.

34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching

them: And when they had read [it,] they all rejoiced for the consolation [it brought,] in assuring them, that so venerable an assembly concurred in vindicating their liberty from the yoke of the Mosaic ceremonies.

And at the same time Judas and Silas, who were the special messengers from Jerusalem thither, being prophets also themselves, (persons of great ability in the knowledge of the scriptures, and eminently qualified for the work of the ministry,) did not only deliver the particular message with which they were charged, but on occasion of such a numerous and solemn auditory, each of them in a copious discourse exhorted and strengthened the brethren, most affectionately endeavouring to confirm them in their adherence to that gospel which they had embraced, and pressing them to a conduct answerable to it.

And having made some stay there, they were dismissed with great respect and most affectionate desires of prosperity and peace from the brethren at Antioch, to return to the apostles from whom they came; whose friendly care of them the church at Antioch most gratefully acknowledged. But Silas, having formed a most intimate and endearing friendship with Paul, thought proper to continue there a while longer than his companion Judas, who had come with him from Jerusalem.

Paul also and Barnabas continued with the disciples at Antioch,\* and employed their time

\* Continued at Antioch. It is generally thought, that during this time Peter came to Antioch, and, after having for some time conversed freely with the Gentile Christians, changed his behaviour towards them on the arrival of some Jewish zealous men from Jerusalem, according to the account we have, Gal. ii. 11, &c. which, if the first verse of that chapter refer to the journey to the council described above, seems indeed to have been the case. Nor do I think that visit can be referred to Paul's second journey to Jerusalem after his conversion, Acts xi. 30, though Barnabas also attended him then, because it was not till after that journey, that the gospel of the Antiochian mission was solemnly committed to him; (Acts xii. 3, 4,) which the apostles at Jerusalem acknowledge it to have been at the time spoken of, Gal. ii. 7.

it be asked, why Paul, in his rebuke to Peter, did not cut short all further arguments, by referring roundly to the Jerusalem decree if those made? I answer, he might perhaps do it, though not in that part of his speech, which he mentions in the Epistle to the Galatians; yet even there he refers to what Peter himself had laid down as the foundation of that decree: Compare Gal. ii. 16-18, with Acts xv. 11. And it likewise seems to be intimated, that Peter had gone farther in his concessions, than the Jerusalem decree extended its decision, not only in receiving the Gentiles to church and communion, or admitting them to converse with him, but in expecting salvation in a manner, as if he had not been also taught, the law to observe them at all, except in cases

SECT.  
XXXV.

Acts  
XV. 31

SECT. XXXV. there in teaching and preaching the good word of the Lord, in conjunction with many others also, that were prophets and teachers, (Acts xiii. 1.) who, perceiving the readiness which there was in the people to receive the gospel, were gladly employed in dispensing it.

Acts XV. 35

36 And after they had continued some considerable number of days there, Paul, whose active spirit was ever forming some new scheme for the advancement of the Christian cause, said to Barnabas his beloved associate, *Let us return and visit our brethren in all the cities where we have been, and in which we have preached the word of the Lord, [that we may inquire] how they do,* and see what is the state of religion

37 among them. And Barnabas was heartily willing to fall in with the proposal; yet, notwithstanding what had happened in their former progress, he was so far influenced by his particular affection to his nephew, that he advised to take along with them John, surnamed Mark, who had set out with them before. (Chap. xiii.

38 5.) But Paul accounted him not worthy of that honour, and did not think it by any means proper to take with them that person, who, on some consideration or another which seemed to him not very honourable, had withdrawn himself from them, returning back from Pamphylia, as was related above, (chap. xiii. 13.) and went into the effects of which they were now going to enquire.

39 This was an affair not easy to be accommodated, as each insisted on his own scheme and reasons; there was therefore on the whole a sharp fit of anger between them,<sup>b</sup> so that they at last

and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

36 And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, 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 John, whose surname was Mark.

38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asun-

conduct as being solicitous to make a secret of it; whereas Paul, though just at the crisis of the Jerusalem decree he had thought it his duty to keep on the reserve, and wove a declaration of his sentiments on this head, lest unnecessary debates, as to the obligation on believing Jews to observe the law, should have diverted the council from the business in hand, and have frustrated the OWN <sup>of</sup> that journey (Gal. ii. 27) his: They point was carried, and he to Antioch, and useth great freedom of the church there, they deterr.

Acts XV. 39

even to the Jews themselves they were indifferent, any farther than as the peace and edification of others were concerned." I hope the reader will excuse my digressing to clear up this great difficulty here, which I have not seen elsewhere stated in what I think the fairest light, especially since it is so uncertain, whether I may live to publish the remainder of this Exposition on the Epistles.

<sup>b</sup> A sharp fit of anger. So the word παραφύρα properly signifies, being a medical term. Yet, if I had rendered it by the English word paroxysm derived from it, I fear it would have been unimproving to many readers.

der 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.

separated from each other:<sup>c</sup> And Barnabas taking Mark along with him, sailed to his native country of Cyprus, where the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus had some time since been converted, and Elymas the sorcerer had been struck with blindness. (Sect. 28.)

But Paul made choice of his faithful friend Silas for the companion of his travels, and departed from Antioch, being, as before, (chap. xiii. 3.) commended to the grace and blessing of God by the brethren there. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, which was his native country, confirming and establishing the churches<sup>d</sup> which had been planted in those parts, in their adherence to the Christian faith; and so proceeded on to Lycaonia, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, and other more distant parts, in the manner and with the circumstances which will be related hereafter.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

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 thou Father of mercies, from loading 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 at least something of the generous pleasure of these faithful messengers, though it should be with all their labour and persecutions.

While we endeavour to comfort, may we be also ready to exhort and quicken one another: May Christians animate each other in the work and warfare to which they are called: and may ministers remember, how great a part of their work consists

<sup>c</sup> They separated from each other.] Yet it appears not only that Paul and Barnabas were afterwards thoroughly reconciled (compare 1 Cor. ix. 6; Gal. ii. 9.) but also, that John was taken into Paul's favour again, and admitted by him as a companion in his labours. Compare Col. iv. 10; Philom. vor. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11. It is probable, the exhortations of Barnabas, might concur, with these remonstrances of Paul, to recover him from his former indolent and

tion. See note<sup>b</sup> on Acts xii. 25, p. 195.

<sup>d</sup> Confirming the churches.] Mr. Crodock (in his Apost. Hist. p. 99.) and many others think that 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.) which, if he did, might lead us to suppose his Epistle to Titus one of the first he wrote; but we may elsewhere give my reasons, and cannot be of this opinion.

... expect salva-  
... no also taught,  
... are not in conscience obliged  
... observe them at all, except in cases

sect. in practical addresses, to which, like Judas and Silas in the instance before us, they should choose to digress, rather than entirely omit them.

Verse

36

None can wonder that Paul and Barnabas were desirous to visit the churches they had planted; for it is natural for those who have been spiritual fathers to have a peculiar affection for their offspring, as it also is 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 of ministers, 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.* (Phil. ii. 16.)

39, 40

It is with sensible regret that we read of any difference, and much more of a sharp contention arising between Paul and Barnabas, so dear to each other in the bonds both of human and Christian friendship: But 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, yea, probably of both; they separated therefore, 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 Paul, would take care to behave in such a manner, that this great apostle might have no reason to repent of the preference which he had given to him.

41

To conclude, we see that both Barnabas and Paul go to their native country: Some peculiar affection to it, when it is not injurious to the general happiness of mankind, is natural and allowable; and it is certain 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.

Acts  
XV. 30

own to

bas: *They*

*to Antioch and asse.*

*of the church there, they ac*

S E C T. XXXVI.

*Paul and Silas passing through several Provinces of the Lesser Asia, and having associated Timothy with them, as the companion of their labours, pass over into Europe, and arrive at Macedonia, by the special direction of a divine revelation. Acts XVI. 1—12.*

ACTS XVI. 1.  
**T**HEN came he to Derbe and Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess; and believed; but his father was a Greek:

2 Which was 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 circumcised him, be-

And circumcised him.] In order to judge rightly of Paul's conduct in this affair, which some have censured, (as they do other things in Christianity,) because they did not understand it, we must recollect, that he always openly avowed,

ACTS XVI. 1.

**W**HEN Paul set out with Silas on his journey, it was observed before that he went through the regions of Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches; and passing on from thence he came to Derbe and Lystra, where he had preached the gospel in his former progress. And while he was at Lystra, behold a certain disciple was there, whose name was Timothy, the son of one Eunice, a believing Jewess, but of a Grecian father; and we mention it as a circumstance worthy of note, because he afterwards became a very considerable person in the church, as well as a faithful and useful friend to the apostle. He was an eminently serious and devout young man, who was remarkable for his early piety, having been trained up by his good mother, and his grandmother, whose name was Lois, in an acquaintance with the holy scriptures from his childhood; (2 Tim. i. 5; iii. 15.) and, upon the whole, was one who had an honourable character given him by all the brethren in Lystra and Iconium. Him therefore Paul, who had before contracted some intimacy of acquaintance with him, (2 Tim. iii. 10, 11.) determined he would have to attend him in his progress, and to go forth to preach the gospel with him; and that he might not give an unnecessary offence to the Jews, by appearing so intimate with an uncircumcised person, he took him to the place where he dwelt, in order to his more constant attendance upon him, and circumcised him with all due solemnity, and before proper witnesses,\* according to the usage

SECT.  
 XXXVI.  
 Acts  
 XVI. 1

“ 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

SECT. of the Jews in those days; which he did (as cause of the Jews  
 XXXVI. was hinted before) not that he thought circum- which were in those  
 Acts cision in itself necessary, or of any avail to sal- quarters: for they  
 XVI. 3 vation, but on account of the Jews, who were in knew all that his fa-  
 those places, for they all knew his father, and ther was a Greek:

were apprized that he was a Greek: They would therefore naturally conclude, that his son had not received the rite of initiation into the Jewish religion, and consequently looking upon him as a Gentile, would be offended themselves at Paul's intimacy with him, and propagate that offence to others. After this, Paul laid his hands upon him, and set him apart to the ministerial office, conferring upon him extraordinary gifts, (2 Tim. i. 6.) which were attended with prophecies of his eminent future usefulness. (1 Tim. i. 18; iv. 14.)

4 And as they passed through the several cities of those regions, that peace might be secured among the brethren, and no unnecessary burden might be laid upon the Gentile converts, they delivered to their custody an exact and attested copy of the decrees,<sup>b</sup> which were determined as

“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, publickly, to show how far he was from condemning it as evil; an extravagance, which some Christian heretics early ran, and with which the apostle himself has been most unjustly charged of late by a writer too contemptible to be named. This is the true key to his conduct, here, and Acts xxi. 21—24. And though, when the Jewish zealots would have imposed it upon him to compel Titus, who was a Greek, to be circumcised, even while he was at Jerusalem, he absolutely refused it; (Gal. ii. 3—5.) yet here he voluntarily persuaded Timothy to submit to that rite, knowing the omission of it in him, who was a Jew by the mother's side, would have given offence; and being 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.—Grotius ob-

serves, this was probably the beginning of Luke's acquaintance with Timothy, though Paul knew him long before. See note c. § 32. p. 210.

<sup>b</sup> They delivered—the decrees.] The author of Miscell. Sacra. (Essay IV. p. 4.) first taking it for granted, that the decree was particularly intended for the churches of Syria and Cilicia, and not for any converts from the idolatrous Gentiles, would have this verse and the next transposed to the conclusion of the foregoing chapter, or the three intermediate verses that begin this chapter included in a parenthesis. But it is plain from the contents of that decree, that it was intended for all Gentile Christians living among Jews; and it appears from the preceding story, that great numbers of Jews were to be found in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and the neighbouring places; and therefore, as the transposition would be most unwarrantable, the parenthesis is quite unnecessary, and would pervert the sense.—Mr. L'Enfant observes, that the word *decrees*, which is here used to express temporary and ceremonial, and not laws of perpetual and universal obligation. Compare Eph. ii. 15; Col. ii. 14.

ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

5 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 forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

\* *Forbidden to preach in that*—called the Proconsular Asia. [As all the places mentioned in the former verses lay in Asia Minor, it is evident that the word Asia must be thus explained. 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

a rule for their direction, by the apostles and elders that were assembled lately in full council at Jerusalem. The several churches therefore where they came, being watered by such faithful labourers, and encouraged with so favourable a decision of the grand point in question, were much confirmed in their adherence to the Christian faith, and increased more and more in number daily.

And with such views and such success they cheerfully pursued their journey, and went through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, which had never before been visited with the light of the gospel, as the provinces before-mentioned had been; and in their travels through Galatia they were received with such peculiar affection, as if an angel from heaven, or Jesus Christ himself had come among them; and such readiness was shewn to hear the word, that they made a considerable number of most zealous converts. (Compare Gal. iv. 14, 15.) [And] after this, being forbidden by the Holy Spirit, (who at that time had other work for them to do) to preach the word in that part of the country which is called the proconsular Asia,\* in which Colosse, Laodicea, and some other cities lay; When they were come to Mysia, which was the most western province of the Lesser Asia, and lay on the coast of the Aegean sea, they attempted to turn northward, and to go to Bithynia, that they might visit the flourishing cities of Nice, Nicomedia, and Chalcedon, and so pass into Europe by the streights of the Euxine sea; but the Spirit [of Jesus<sup>†</sup>] let them know that it did not permit

then in the neighbouring parts; while in the mean time the Asian 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 Paul afterwards did. (Chap. xviii. 23, & seq.) 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.

† *The Spirit [of Jesus.]* So many ancient versions, readings, and citations, add the words [of Jesus,] that I thought myself not only authorized, but obliged, of

SECT.  
XXXVI.  
ACTS  
XVI. 5.

SECT.  
XXXVI.Acts  
XVI. 8

them to do it. And therefore passing by the northern borders of Mysia, without visiting many places there, they went down to Troas, which lay on the shore of the Ægean sea, near the ruins of ancient Troy, so celebrated in history and poetry.

8 And they passing by Mysia, came down to Troas.

9 And while they were here, undetermined to what coast of Europe they should sail, if according to their intention they crossed the sea, a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a certain man before him, whom he perceived to be a Macedonian, intreating him; and saying with great earnestness, We beseech you to come over the sea to Macedonia, and help us; for we stand in great need of your assistance, and shall joyfully receive you.

9 And 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 this is a circumstance which the author of this book well remembers, for he attended Paul in this journey, and can relate what follows from his own knowledge: As soon then as he had seen this vision and declared it to us, we immediately agreed that it was to be regarded; and accordingly we endeavoured to go out from the port of Troas, where we then lay, to Macedonia; assuredly inferring from this vision, that the Lord Jesus himself called us to preach the gospel to them. Setting sail therefore from Troas, with the advantage of a strong easterly wind, we ran directly to the island of Samothracia,

10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering, that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

11 Therefore leaving from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia.

least to insert them thus, and perhaps might well have omitted the crotchets. See Boxa and Dr. Mills in loc.<sup>ar</sup>

[A certain Macedonian.] See <sup>ar</sup> we think, Paul knew his country by his dress or language, or by his naming it, as we find he did. Yet perhaps the word <sup>ar</sup> may intimate, that it was some particular person whom Paul knew; for which reason I render it literally, and wonder that Grotius should explain it, as if it were the guardian angel of Macedonia that now appeared.

[He immediately endeavoured. &c.] This is the first place, in which Luke intimates his attending on the apostles; and it is very remarkable, that here he does it in an oblique manner; we do not indeed, throughout the whole history, once mention his own name, or relate any one thing which he said or did for the service of Christianity, though Paul speaks of him in most honourable terms, Col. iv. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 11, and probably,

2 Cor. xiii. 13, as the brother, whose praise in the gospel went through all the churches. The same remark may be made on the rest of the sacred historians, who every one of them show the like amiable modesty; nor is the charming story St. John tells of himself, (John xxi. 20, & seq.) by any means an exception: See note on that passage, Vol. II. § 201. And when 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, should be preserved, and preserved in such a manner, as to carry the strongest evidence along with them. Such instances of divine wisdom, occurring in Scripture, are worthy our attentive observation, and our thankful acknowledgment.



cia, and the next day to Neapolis :

12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

which lies near the Hellespont; and having thus dispatched the larger part of our little voyage, we came the next day to the celebrated port of Neapolis, on the Thracian shore, near the borders of Macedonia: And landing there, we came from thence to Philippi, which is a city of the first part of Macedonia; for it is well known, that the province is divided into four parts, [and] this is a Roman colony; And we continued in this city for some days, and met with several remarkable occurrences, which we shall relate in the next section.

SECT. XXXVI.  
Asia  
XVI. 12

IMPROVEMENT.

LET us with pleasure observe the prudent condescension of the apostle Paul, in becoming all things to all men, and particularly, to the Jews as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; (1 Cor. ix. 20.) for this purpose circumcising his companion Timothy, that he might give them no unnecessary offence: Nor was the condescension and zeal of this pious youth to be less esteemed, who was willing to submit, not only to that painful rite, but to all the yoke of ceremonial observances to which he was obliged by it, in a view to usefulness in the church; Well may it expect eminent service from those ministers of the rising generation, that set out with such a spirit; while, on the other hand, when a fierce and haughty sense of liberty is the reigning, darling character, and a determination is formed to submit in nothing, to oblige in nothing, as the first elements of the Christian temper seem as yet to be unknown, there is great reason to believe, that the doctrines and precepts of the gospel will not, cannot be successfully taught; great reason to fear, that such instructors will have their reward in the empty applauses which they give to themselves and each other; while they brand those who are sollicitous to become wise that they may win souls, with reproaches which

[A city of the first part of Macedonia.] As Amphipolis is mentioned by Livy, lib. xlv. cap. 29, as the chief city of this first region of Macedonia, in which Philippi lay, I chuse with Mr. Pierce (Pref. to his Notes on Phil.) to follow the Syriac here, as Chrysostom also does, reading *αμφίπολις* instead of *φίλιππος*, though it be true, as Mr. Biscoe well observes, Chap. 4. sect. 2, p. 367, 368. that Amphipolis was then on the decline. Eusebius (x. Hierod. p. 374.) supposes it may signify only, It was the first city they met with in their journey; but the authorities he produces seem by no means satisfactory.

Grotius explains it of the first city that was a colony.

[A colony.] Luke by using a word originally Latin, *colonia*, instead of the corresponding Greek word, *καστρα*, plainly intimates it was a Roman colony, which ver. 21. certainly proves it to have been; and, though the critics were long puzzled to find any mention of it in that view, some coins dug up, I think, within the last century shew that a colony was planted there by Julius Caesar, and afterwards much augmented by Augustus. See Spanheim de Usu & Praest. Numism. Diss. II. p. 102, 106, and Dr. Bengon, Vol. II. p. 14.

SECT. God will remember *in the day in which he shall judge the secrets*  
 XXXVI. *of all hearts*; and will find many of them far different from what  
 such rash men have presumed to pronounce them.

Verse Indefatigable were the journeys and labours of these ambas-  
 4, 5, — sadors of Christ; they travelled through wide-extended regions,  
 6, 8 and sowed the seeds of knowledge and of life wherever they  
 came, and God gave the increase. But the economy of divine  
 6, 7 providence was very remarkable, in not permitting them to  
 preach in Bithynia, and forbidding them to do it in Asia: What  
 were the particular reasons of this determination we know not;  
 perhaps the inhabitants of these places were remarkably  
 conceited of their own wisdom; perhaps they had treated the  
 flying reports of the gospel with contempt; or, possibly, with-  
 out any particular displeasure against them, their visitation might  
 be delayed in a view to more general good. But happy was it  
 for Galatia, Phrygia, and the neighbouring parts, that they were  
 not included in the prohibition: And happy is it for this sinful  
 land of ours, that the abused, insulted gospel, is not taken away,  
 and that its ministers are not one way or another forbidden to re-  
 peat those offers, which have so long been rejected and despised.

9, 10 The visit of a Macedonian imploring the help of the apostle,  
 was justly regarded by him and his associates as an intimation of  
 the divine pleasure that they should pass over thither. And  
 surely did those nations of the earth, that have not yet received  
 the gospel, know in the general how great a blessing it is, instead  
 of opposing those messengers of it who might offer to spread it  
 among them, they would rather in the most pressing manner  
 urge and intreat their presence, and with the greatest joy sit  
 11, 12 down at their feet. May they who are entrusted with this glo-  
 rious embassy imitate the pious zeal of these holy men, and be  
 willing, when called by Providence, to cross lands and seas on so  
 pious and so charitable an errand!

## SECT. XXXVII.

*Paul and <sup>part</sup> Silas preach the gospel at Philippi, but some of the in-  
 habitants<sup>part</sup> provoked at their casting out a spirit of divination  
 from a damsel there, rise tumultuously upon them, scourge  
 them, and cast them into prison. The jailor is awakened by  
 an earthquake, and converted by the preaching of Paul.  
 Acts XVI. 13—34*

## ACTS XVI. 13.

SECT. IT was observed in the close of the preceding  
 XXXVII. section, that Paul and Silas, in company with

Timothy and Luke, the penman of this history,  
 Acts arrived at Philippi, and made some stay there.  
 XVI. 13 And now we go on to relate, that on the

ACTS XVI. 15.  
 AND on the Sab-  
 bath 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 divi-

sabbath-day we went out of the city to the side of the river Strymon, where, according to the custom of the Jews, there was an oratory or a place of public prayer; \* and sitting down, when the devotions were over, we spake to the women that were assembled there, for most of the congregation were of that sex.

And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, who was a native of the city of Thyatira in Asia, and a devout worshipper of the true God after the Jewish manner, was present at that time and heard the [discourse;] whose heart the Lord opened, by the secret and gentle influences of his grace, to attend in such a manner to the things which were spoken by Paul, as to be effectually wrought upon and converted by them. And when she was baptized with her family, she earnestly intreated us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord Jesus in the profession I have made, and really esteem me a sincere Christian, I beg that you would enter into my house, and continue to make your abode [there] as long as you stay in this city. And she was so extremely pressing and importunate, that she even compelled us to comply with her proposal.

Now, while we continued her guests, it came to pass that as we were one day going to the oratory or praying place mentioned before, we were met by a certain girl, who had been for some time under the influence of what the Greeks call a Pythonic spirit, that is, a spirit of divi-

\* Where according to custom there was an oratory. The original words are remarkable, and much controverted, *κατασκευασμένης ορατορίας*. But would prove *κατασκευασμένης* a mere exploitive, and only renders it, *Where the oratory was*: *Βοη. Ezerak. p. 11—33.* But I think with Elmer, that his authorities do not fully answer. Mr. Mead renders it, *Where the law permitted the Jews to have an oratory*; and the translation of 1727, *Where they were allowed to have it*. But as the word generally refers to custom, and as it is certain that the Jews had a custom of building their oratories or προσευχάς, or places of public prayer, by the sea-side, or near rivers, for the sake of purifications (which were practised also by the Heathen before solemn devotions; see Isa. 144. 5. 6.) I have found no reason to recede from the

version I have given before, Luke vi. 12. (see note \* on that text, Vol. I.) and with pleasure refer my reader to the admirable critic mentioned above, for the abundant indication of it, and for a beautiful explanation of the phrase *jurare per Anchusionem*, which he supposes to refer to this Jewish custom. See Elmer, Obsery, Vol. I. p. 400—424, and Dr. Lardner's Credibility, Book I. chap. 3. § 3, Vol. I. p. 235—250; I have chosen the word oratory, rather than προσευχή, as more familiar to an English ear, and refer my reader to Philo. Opor. p. 752, 753, and 760, to Dr. Hammond and Drossus in loc. to Dr. Benson's History, Vol. II. p. 85, 86, and especially to Dr. Prichard's Connection, Vol. I. p. 387—389, for a further account of these places.

ACT. XLVII.  
ACTS XVI. 13

tion,<sup>b</sup> which they suppose to be an inspiration from Apollo, whom they call Pythius:<sup>c</sup> And though she were but a slave, she was a person well known in the city, and one who brought her owners much gain by her pretended proph-

ACTS  
XVI. 16

17 saying. And following after Paul and us, when (as was said above) we were going to the worshipping assembly, she cried out, saying with great earnestness of voice and gesture, *These men are the servants of the Most High God, who declare unto you the only true way of salvation.*

18 And this she did for several succeeding days; but at length Paul, being wearied with so tedious a circumstance, and grieved under an apprehension that this stratagem of Satan might lead the people to imagine, that the preachers of the gospel acted in a confederacy with the evil spirit, to whom the heathen worship was addressed, turned towards the damsel, who was then very near him, and said to the evil spirit, by whose emotion she spake, *I charge thee, O thou invisible power, under whose influence this unhappy creature is, in the name of Jesus Christ whose gospel I preach, to go out of her immediately.* And it went out that very hour, so that she had never

nation, 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 she did many days. But Paul being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, *I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.* And he came out the same hour.

<sup>b</sup> *Ascertain a girl who had a Pythonic spirit.* As Plutarch (*De Delect.* Opac. p. 414.) tells us, those who were inspired with this spirit were *επιλαλοειν*, or spake as seeming to send the voice from their bellies and Galen mentions the same fact, some late writers have supposed, the whole pretence to such inspiration to have been founded on the art of throwing out the voice in some extraordinary manner, which has been practised by some of late among ourselves, and that all the cure wrought by the apostle was only discovering the cheat, and disabling her from playing this trick any more. See the Enquiry into the Case of Demoniacs, p. 54. And Mr. L'Enfant seems to favour this notion, though he says, in terms of remarkable ambiguity, "it was an imposture which must be the work of a malignant spirit," as also Dr. Benson, who calls her "a lunatic person who was reckoned by the people to be possessed," &c. *Hist. Vol. III. p. 87.* But the manner in which Luke relates the story plainly implies, that he thought it a real possession, and that Paul took it himself in that view. Nor can I apprehend that her behaviour to him, or that of her masters afterwards,

can be accounted for without allowing it to have been the case. See Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. viii. § 2. p. 294—300. Essay towards Vind. lit. Sense of the Demons 67—70. Parther Enquiry p. 84—99. Reply to it, p. 79—89. It is well known, that the Hebrews call the spirit, with which such persons were supposed to be agitated, *זין*, *Oh*, because the bodies of those who appeared to be possessed by them were violently distended, like leathern bottles full of wine, and ready to burst. Compare Job xxii. 18, 19.

<sup>c</sup> Apollo, whom they call Pythius. This title, it is generally said was given to Apollo, on account of his having destroyed a monstrous serpent, that was called Python: See Erasmus, *Qualquibus* and Le Clerc's Supplement to Dr. Hammond in loc. But it seems rather, that this story of the Python was a fable grounded on his killing one, who for his cruelty was surnamed Python, that is serpent or dragon, from whence Apollo had the name of Pythius. See Strab. Geogr. lib. ix. p. 291. Bochart. *Hieroz.* Part II. lib. 3. cap. 5. and Mr. Biscoe, as above, chap. viii. § 2. p. 294.

such kind of supernatural agitations any more, nor pretended to any gift of prophecy for the future.

SECT.  
XXXVII.

Acts  
XVI. 19

19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place, unto the rulers.

20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21 And teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes,

But when her owners saw that the hope of their gain was gone out with the evil spirit, laying hold of Paul and Silas, whom they looked upon as much more considerable than Timothy and Luke, the two evangelists that attended them, they dragged them away to the market place, to accuse them to the magistrates, <sup>d</sup> who held their court there. And having brought them thither 20 to the officers intrusted with the government of the city by the Romans, they charged them as disturbers of the peace, and introducers of a new religion that was inconsistent with the laws, and said, *These men being Jews, disturb our city, in an insufferable manner. And take upon 21 them in an unwarrantable way to teach customs which it is not lawful for us, as we are Romans, to receive and observe;* <sup>e</sup> being such as would lead us to renounce the gods of our country, and to abstain from many things which the laws of Rome require. And the populace rose up 22 together against them, and joined the cry, as if they had been guilty of the worst of crimes: And upon this the officers, <sup>f</sup> without any legal trial, immediately gave orders that they should be punished; and violently tearing off their

<sup>d</sup> To the magistrates.] Though the Syriac and Arabic versions omit these words, the most authentic copies insert them. These magistrates are here called *αγορευται*; and afterwards *κατακυβητεις*; the latter of which words the Greeks used to denote Roman pretors; and if it were applied to the *δαμωσιρι*, who were the governors of colonies, it was by way of compliment. But Mr. Biscus has well proved, there are examples of such an application. Boyle's Lect. chap. ix. § 3, p. 146.

<sup>e</sup> Teach customs, which it is not lawful, &c.] The masters of this girl had not only lost all the gain they might have made by her practice of the arts she possessed, but likewise what they might have sold her for, in consequence of those extraordinary qualities which were now ceased. Yet, as the laws made no provision for an event of this kind, they thought it proper to ground their accusation on an attempt to introduce a new religion, which was indeed forbidden by

the Roman Law, (Cicero de Leg. lib. ii. cap. 8, 10, 14, 27; Liv. lib. xxxix. cap. 16; Sueton. August. cap. 91.) though every one was tolerated in worshipping what deities he pleased at home. (See Mr. Biscus, chap. ix. § 2, p. 314. Grotius and Dr. Whitby to be.) The conquered provinces were left at full liberty in this respect; yea, and the Romans themselves were sometimes severely punished, by their generals or other magistrates, for insulting places, or rites, or even animals accounted sacred.

<sup>f</sup> And the officers.] De Dieu supposes indeed, that the *αγορευται* or magistrates mentioned ver. 19, were the civil rulers, and the *κατακυβητεις* spoken of here were military officers, to whom the former sent them to execute their sentence. But the contrary is plain from ver. 19, compared with ver. 23, & seq. and especially with ver. 37, where Paul insists on their being uncondemned.

SECT. garments in a shameful way,<sup>e</sup> commanded them and commanded to  
 XXXVII. to be beaten with rods by the hands of the lic- beat them.  
 tors, or public beades, to whom that office be-  
 longed. (Compare 1 Thess. ii. 2; and 2 Cor.  
 Acts xi. 23, 25.)  
 XVI. 22

23 And when they had severely scourged and laid many stripes upon them, the officers were so incensed against them, that they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them as safely as possible, lest amongst their numerous

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely.

24 friends any rescue should be attempted: Who having received such a strict charge from persons of so great rank, threw them into the inner prison, and secured their feet in the stocks,<sup>h</sup> that they might not be able by any means to escape; and such was the fierceness of his temper, that a command of this kind would be no way disagreeable to him.

24 Who having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 But at midnight Paul and Silas being kept awake by the painful circumstances in which they were placed, sought their relief in devotion; and having prayed, they also sung an hymn to God, praising him for the honour they had of suffering in his cause, and for the support he gave them under those sufferings: And the other prisoners heard them, with surprise at that serenity and cheerfulness which they discovered in the midst of so many calamities.

25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: And the prisoners heard them.

26 And on a sudden, while they were thus engaged, there was a great earthquake, so that the very foundations of the prison were shaken; God thereby testifying his gracious regard to them, as the faithful ambassadors of his Son, who for his sake were used in so outrageous a manner; and immediately by the force of the earthquake all the doors were opened, and the bonds of all the

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.

<sup>e</sup> *Teasing of their garments.* It is well known, this was the Roman method of proceeding in such cases. (See Mr. Bunsen, chap. ix. § 4, p. 347; Grotius, and Dr. Whitby in loc.) De Dieu shows from the Mishna, that it was also practised among the Jews; but that was not regarded in the present case.

<sup>h</sup> *Secured their feet in the stocks.* It is generally supposed, that these were the stipes, or large pieces of wood, used among the Romans, which not only loaded the legs of prisoners, but sometimes distended them in a very painful manner. (See Grotius in loc. Mr. Bunsen,

chap. ix. § 5, p. 348; and Elsner, Observ. Vol. I. p. 439, 440.) So that it is highly probable, the situation of Paul and Silas here might be much more painful, than that of an offender sitting in the stocks among us, especially if (which is very possible,) they lay with their bare backs so lately scourged, on the hard or dirty ground, which renders their joyful frame expressed by songs of praise so much the more remarkable.—Heza, explains it of the humelle, in which both the feet and the neck were fastened in the most uneasy posture that can well be imagin-

prisoners were at the same moment miraculously loosened,<sup>1</sup> yet their spirits were impressed with such astonishment that none of them attempted to flee away.

SECT.  
XXXVII.  
Acts  
XVI.

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.

And the jailor awaking out of his sleep upon this violent concussion of the earth, and seeing the doors of the prison opened, was in such consternation that he drew his sword, and was going to kill himself;<sup>k</sup> naturally supposing, that the prisoners, embracing so favourable an opportunity, were fled, and fearing lest their escape should be imputed to his connivance and treachery, and he should be proceeded against with the utmost severity, and be brought out to a painful and ignominious execution.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.

But Paul, being aware of that horrid act which his rashness intended,<sup>l</sup> and anxious to prevent it, cried out with a loud voice, and with the utmost earnestness, saying, Stay thy desperate hand, and do thyself no harm; for we are all here, and none of us shall take the opportunity of escaping, while the hand of God is working thus awfully around us.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas;

And upon this he called for lights,<sup>m</sup> and eagerly sprang in with a violent and impetuous motion; and being in a perfect tremor, he fell down with the humblest reverence before the feet of Paul and Silas, and lay a few moments in speechless consternation and confusion: And 30 then, in the most respectful manner bringing them out from the inner prison in which they

30 And brought them out, and said,

<sup>1</sup> There was a great earthquake—and the doors were opened—and the bonds loosened. Elsevier has most happily shewn, in his notes on this text, (Usher, Vol. I. p. 441—443.) that each of these three things was esteemed, even by the Pagans, a token of some divine appearance in favour of the oppressed and afflicted, who suffered wrongfully, and were dear to them.

<sup>k</sup> Drew his sword, and was going to kill himself. Though it is true, that some of the philosophers condemned self-murder, yet it was not only justified by many others, (see Grotius in loc. and Mr. Biscoe, chap. ix. § 8. p. 340.) but had in fact prevailed much among the Romans, especially about that time, and had, in the opinion of some then living, been (as it were) dignified at Philippi by the example of those great men, Brutus and Cas-

sius among others, who fell on their own swords there.

<sup>l</sup> Paul, being aware of that horrid act, &c. As they were all at present in the dark, it is not easy to say, how Paul knew of the jailor's purpose, unless it were by hearing some desperate words that declared it, or by some immediate suggestion from God, which would such a scene of wonders is by no means incredible.

<sup>m</sup> He called for lights. As this is the plural number, 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 all his domestics, at the feet of these his holy prisoners, who were so evidently honoured by the God of nature.

XXV. were confined, he said, O sirs what must I do that I may be saved; for I see nothing but danger and misery, both temporal and spiritual, surrounding me?

Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

XVI.

31 And they said to him, answering together as with one voice, Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom it is our office to preach as the great and only Saviour, and humbly commit thyself to his almighty protection, and thou shalt be saved from every evil, and thine house

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 too, if they also believe. And as he discovered a most humble desire to be farther instructed in the faith which they taught, they readily embraced the happy opportunity, and spake to him and to all that were in his house, the word of the Lord, declaring the contents and purport of the gospel.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And the word came with such a power, that his rough heart was melted at these gracious

33 And he took

\* *What must I do that I may be saved.*] Grotius thinks, that in this inquiry the judge went upon the natural principles of the immortality of the soul. Dr. Whitby, with much greater propriety, supposes that he spake thus to them, as referring to the testimony of the Pythones, (ver. 17.) which had been so often and so publicly repeated, that these servants of the most high God taught the way of salvation. I apprehend the sense of what he says to be very extensive, as if he should have asked, "What methods shall I take for my security?" 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, and their generous solicitude for the life of one who had used them so ill, were all circumstances fit to strike powerfully on a mind so passionate as his seems to have been, and might all do their part toward 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, might have uttered while he was fastening their feet in the stocks, might throw farther light on his mind, when recollected amidst such

extremity of danger: and no doubt, the Spirit of God added conviction and energy to all.

o *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.*] To believe in Christ does undoubtedly in its primary signification imply, trusting in him, or committing ourselves to his protection, as I have here paraphrased it. (See Dr. Watts's Harmony of all Relig. chap. viii. p. 65.) In this connection it would immediately imply, submitting to the farther instructions of these his special ambassadors, and authorised messengers: and it always includes a desire to be delivered from the power of sin, and a disposition to comply with his scheme of salvation, which is to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works: The full import of which scheme Paul and Silas would not fail to open to this new convert as soon as possible; and accordingly it is presently added, that they spake to him the word of the Lord.

v *Thou shalt be saved, and thine house.*] 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 Paul might the rather add, as it is probable, that many of them, under this terrible alarm, might have attended the master of the family into the dungeon.



them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straight-way.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house.

tidings, and the tenderness of it immediately flowed forth toward these messengers of them, so that *taking them that very hour of the night, he washed their stripes*, which still remained unhealed,<sup>a</sup> and was immediately baptized, himself and all his domestics with him.<sup>b</sup> And having brought them into his house, after this solemn rite had been performed, he spread the table before them with the best provisions he had at hand; and believing in God with all his house, he was even transported with unutterable joy, at the sudden light which had sprung in upon him, and at the happy prospects which were by divine grace presented to his view as a Christian.

SECT.  
XXXVII.  
Acts  
XVI. 35

## IMPROVEMENT.

WE see remarkably in this period by what various methods Verse 14  
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 jailor, who 24 seems to have taken a barbarous pleasure in afflicting his pious prisoners, he came in the whirlwind, the tempest, and the fire. (1 Kings xix. 11, 12.) His soul, as well as his house, was shaken 26, 27 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 28 moment in which he was rushing on to seek a refuge in hell from the seeming dangers of earth; and being taught by a secret grace 29 which he had not as yet been instructed to seek, he falls down before Paul and Silas, honouring them as among the first of mankind, whom he had just before treated, not only as slaves, but as the worst of villains; yet he is now ready to receive the law

<sup>a</sup> He washed their stripes, which still remained unhealed. I mention this circumstance, as it serves to shew, what I have elsewhere observed, (and it is of great importance to remember it,) that the apostles had not a power of working miraculous cures whenever they pleased; nor, not even on their own bodies, or those of their dearest friends. See note <sup>a</sup>, p. 17, B. 111. Had they possessed such a power, it would have been their duty to have used it, unless they had, (as Christ with such a power in fact had, in discovery of the divine will, that in such or such instances the use of it should be waved. On the other hand, the continual use of

such a power would have frustrated many of those noble purposes in providence, which their sufferings answered, and would have introduced many inconveniences, which an intelligent reader will easily apprehend from this general hint.

<sup>b</sup> And was immediately baptized, himself and all his. His being thus baptized with his household seems to be the only reason which the Greek commentators had, to think this jailor's name was Stephanas, and that he is the person referred to, 1 Cor. i. 16; xvi. 15, 17. But it is much more probable, that Stephanas was a Corinthian, from all the places he is cited.



strates sent the ser-  
jeants, 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 open-  
ly uncondemned be-  
ing Romans, and have  
cast us into prison;

quake,<sup>a</sup> sent the lictors or bealdes<sup>b</sup> by whom  
they had been scourged the day before, to the  
keeper of the prison, saying, *Dismiss those men*  
with the custody of whom thou wast yesterday  
charged; for this correction and confinement is  
all the punishment we shall inflict upon them.

And the keeper of the prison told these things  
to Paul, saying, *The prators, our chief magis-  
trates here, have sent orders that you may be  
dismissed, and I inform you of it with great  
satisfaction: Now therefore you are at full liber-  
ty to go out whenever you please, and may  
pursue your journey in peace, sure of our ear-  
nest prayers that all prosperity and happiness  
may attend you, wherever you carry those good  
tidings which have been so comfortable to us.*

But Paul judged it proper to animadvert on  
the manner in which they had been used, and  
therefore called for the bealdes, and said to  
them, *As for these magistrates from whom you  
come, they have beaten us who are Romans and  
free citizens as well as themselves; and this  
they have done publicly in the most ignomini-  
ous manner, as if we had been common slaves,  
though we had never any legal trial, [and] were  
uncondemned of any crime at all; and after this  
they have cast us into the common prison:*

<sup>a</sup> Were terrified by the earthquake. ]  
Two ancient manuscripts mention this  
circumstance; and it is in itself very  
probable, separate from their authority.

<sup>b</sup> The lictors or bealdes. ] Perhaps the  
word *galexi*, which Grotius would have  
to be retained in its Greek form, might  
have been rendered *vergers*, most agree-  
ably to its etymology; but, as such offi-  
cers only bear a little wand, or some-  
thing resembling one, and the Roman  
lictors had a large bundle of them tied  
together, I thought the word bealdes, as  
it is also the name of the officers by  
whom offenders among us are generally  
whipped, would present to an English  
reader the most genuine idea.

<sup>c</sup> They have beaten us who are Romans. ]  
It is well known that the Valerian law  
forbad, that a Roman citizen should be  
bound, and the Sempronian, that he  
should be beaten with rods. (See Dr.  
Lardner's *Credib.* Book I, chap. x. § 3, 4,  
Vol. 1, p. 498—500.) (If it be asked,  
Why Paul and Silas, who had the same  
immunity, did not plead this privilege  
before? I must answer with Mr. Biscoe,

That the hurry and noise of the execution  
prevented it; and perhaps amidst such a  
tumult it might be apprehended, that the  
people would have murdered them, if  
they had not been in some measure ap-  
peased by their sufferings; not to say,  
how possible it is, that the plea it made  
might not be regarded amidst such a riot-  
ous mob. The circumstances of Paul,  
when he pleaded it, Acts xxii. 25, were  
much different.—If it be further asked,  
Why it was now so soon believed? It  
may be replied, not only that it was an  
extremely hazardous thing to make such  
a claim falsely, (for Claudius punished  
it with death; Sueton. Claud. cap. 25.)  
but also, that there was a certain dignity  
in the manners in which Paul made this  
plea, which added a sensible credibility  
to it, especially as they had now no fur-  
ther sufferings to apprehend, and as the  
earthquake which might perhaps affect  
the whole city, seemed to have so evi-  
dent a reference to their case. See Mr.  
Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. ix. § 5, p.  
350, & seq.

SECT.

XXXVIII

Acts

XVI. 36

SECT. XXXVIII  
Acts XVI. 37

And do they now think to thrust us out of the city privately? By no means; it is not at all fit that magistrates should be encouraged in such oppressive and arbitrary proceedings as these, which may be so injurious to the most innocent and worthy citizens, whenever a popular cry is raised against them: They cannot *but* know that this their illegal proceeding hath given us a great advantage against them, if we are disposed to prosecute them to the utmost, according to the Roman law; if therefore they desire to accommodate the matter, let them at least come themselves, and conduct us respectfully out of this place of confinement,<sup>d</sup> into which we have been so unjustly thrown, and thus let them make the best amends they can to our reputation and character, after having irreparably injured us in our persons.

38 And the beadles reported these words to the praetors, who (as we observed above) were the magistrates from whom they came: And when they heard that they were Romans, they were afraid, well knowing, that even to have torn the garments of a citizen, and much more to have scourged him, especially thus publicly, and without hearing his defence, was a crime which might have exposed them to very high penalties, if the person injured had entered a complaint against them in the legal forms.

39 And they came therefore in their own persons to the prison where Paul and Silas were, and comforted them<sup>e</sup> in the best manner they could, acknowledging their innocence, and commending the patience and fortitude with which they had borne the punishment so rashly inflicted upon them. And conducting them out with the

and now do they thrust us out privily? Nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

38 And the sergeants 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

<sup>d</sup> Let them come themselves, and conduct us out. In all this Paul seems to have had a regard to the honour and interest 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 would undoubtedly encourage the new converts, and remove a stumbling block out of the way of others, who might not have decried the true lustre of the characters of Paul and Silas amidst so much infamy as they had before suffered.

<sup>e</sup> They came out and comforted them. So our translators render the word *παρηγορήσαντες*

in the next verse, as well as in many other places. Compare Acts xx. 12; Rom. i. 12; 2 Cor. i. 4; vii. 6, in all which texts and many others, it can have no other signification, though in several others it must signify exhorted, as it is justly rendered, Acts xi. 21; 1 Thess. ii. 11; Heb. iii. 13, and elsewhere. There are other instances, in which it signifies to entreat, 1 Cor. iv. 13; 1 Tim. v. 1. But I prefer the first sense here, as the latter is expressed in the following clause, and as it gives us an idea of a more respectful treatment, as De Dieu also has hinted.

out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

most respectful treatment, they requested that they would excuse what was past, and would with all convenient speed depart from the city, to prevent any of those popular tumults which might be the consequence of their longer abode there; where perhaps the rage of their former accusers might occasion farther embarrassment, both to the magistrates and to them.

ST. PAUL.  
XXVIII.  
ACTS  
XVI. 39

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

And upon this, coming out of the prison in 40 the honourable manner we have described, they candidly agreed to excuse what had been done in prejudice of their rights; and only entered into [the house of] Lydia, their convert and friend, with whom they had lodged before: And when they had seen the brethren whom they were to leave behind them, they comforted them with an account of what God had done both for them and by them in the prison, and exhorted them<sup>t</sup> to such a stedfast faith and exemplary life, as Christianity always required, and was peculiarly suitable to their present circumstances; and then they departed out of Philippi, and directed their journey westward towards Thessalonica, where they met with new difficulties, which will be related in the following section.

IMPROVEMENT.

WE have seen Paul and Silas suffering, not for doing evil but good; for great good undoubtedly it was, to cast out the demon which possessed the young woman, of whom we have been reading, and made her an instrument of mischief, though to her mercenary masters a means of gain. Could she indeed have foretold future events, as perhaps she very falsely pretended, it had been a curse rather than a benefit to mankind to know them; but it is exceedingly probable that this evil Spirit, being himself unacquainted with them, did, like many of his brethren,

Verse  
16, 19

[They comforted and exhorted them.] I unite the two senses of the word here, as they would, to be sure, mingle on such an occasion *consolations* and *exhortations*. 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, appears from 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 religion, in some considerable degree correspondent to such encouragements and obligations; Philip. i. 7-9, 29, 30; iv. 10. 15-18.

\* And departed.] 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 (as Beza well observes,) to express any degree of obstinacy or revenge, and might give no suspicion of any design, to stir up the people to any kind of sedition.

only delude his votaries with ambiguous answers, which proved the occasion of false expectations and numerous inconveniencies. At least, it diverted them from all proper regards to the true God, the supreme Disposer of all events, and confirmed them in their unhappy attachment to those which are by nature no gods, to those vain idols, by a regard to whom Satan was honoured, and the living Jehovah injured and affronted.

- 18 Wisely did Paul, in imitation of his Master, refuse applause from so impure a tongue. Yet with what consistency could these heathens persecute him? If this damsel spake under a divine direction, why should she not be credited, when she testified, that *these were servants of the true God, that taught the way of*
- 17 *salvation*? If they were indeed so, how absurd, how impious, and how dangerous must it be, to treat them with outrage, instead of reverence! What an affront to God! What defiance of salvation! If Apollo was indeed any thing more than an empty name, if he was judged to have any power and any deity, what regards were owing to that Jesus of Nazareth, who appeared so much superior, that Apollo fled at his very name! but the god of this world had blinded their eyes, and reason and conscience remonstrated in vain, so long as the hopes of gain lay the opposite way. Deliver us, O Lord, from such fatal madness, and teach us, how much more valuable salvation is, than any worldly interest which must be sacrificed to it!

22, 23 The ministers of Christ, Paul and Silas, had been injured in their reputations, and abused in their persons; and in this instance, as in many others, were *treated like the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, while the ploughers ploughed upon their back, and made long furrows.* (1 Cor. iv. 13; Psal. cxxix. 3.) The plea of privilege amidst so tumultuous a multitude, might have been in vain, and therefore was for the present prudently waved; but it was justly afterwards urged, and the

37 magistrates challenged for their arbitrary proceedings, before they knew who and what they were, and required to attend upon them in person, to acknowledge and atone for their fault. Here was a true magnanimity, proceeding not from pride but from humanity: Their reputation as ministers of Christ was worthy of a guard, and worthy of some reparation where it had received so notorious an insult. The rashness of the magistrates was also worthy of being rebuked and mortified; which might have proved an occasion of suffering to other innocent persons, had not this instance of it been animadverted upon; yet no revenge was sought, nor were they, as some have been in the like case, laid under a necessity of buying their peace, to avoid a prosecution which might have ended in their ruin. Paul knew how to join the tenderness of the Christian with the dignity of the Roman citizen, and contended for his own rights no farther than that very conten-

tion might be an act of general goodness. Let us go and do likewise: Let us learn, even from the example of these unjust rulers, to be willing to hear reason and truth from those who seem most our inferiors, and openly to retract any ill-concerted steps which we may have taken; especially, let us be willing to make the best reparation in our power to the innocent and the deserving, if through imprudent heat, or weak credulity, we have been engaged in any degree to injure them.

SECT.  
XXXVIII.  
Vers:  
38, 39

SECT. XXXIX.

Paul preaches at Thessalonica and Berea, but is soon chased from both these places by the violence of the unbelieving Jews.  
Acts XVII. 1—15.

ACTS XVII. 1.  
NOW when they had passed through Amphipolis, and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.

ACTS XVII. 1.  
WHEN Paul and Silas had quitted Philippi, in that honourable manner which was described in the former section, they went forward in their progress; and taking their journey westward through Amphipolis and Apollonia, which were likewise considerable cities of Macedonia, (the former of them having been once the capital of the first part of it,) they came to the celebrated Thessalonica; a city which lay near the coast of the Aegean sea, where the Roman governor held his residence, and where there was also a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's usual custom of applying first to the Jews, he entered in to their assembly, and made one among them, and strongly argued and discoursed to them for three succeeding sabbaths,\* from various passages out of the scriptures, for

SECT.  
XXXIX.  
Acts  
XVII. 1

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.

\* For three succeeding sabbaths.] It has been concluded from hence, that 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 a subsistence, 1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8; but also received supplies more than once from Philippi; (compare Phil. iv. 16.) I think it much more probable, (as Dr. Benson well argues, Hist. Vol. II. p. 94, 95.) 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 Thess. i. 9, 10; so that a church was founded, in the midst of their persecutions, which became famous in all Macedonia and Achaia: (Ibid. ver. 3—8.) And though the apostle, after having treated these new converts with extraordinary tenderness during his abode with them, was quickly forced to leave them, (chap. ii. 7, 8, 11, & seq.) and they about the same time lost some Christian brethren by death, who were dear to them, and might have been remarkably useful, (chap. iv. 13, & seq.) yet they continued to behave well, so that Paul received a

SECT. which they professed so great a regard; *Opening* [them] with great exactness, and *evidently* *showing* them<sup>b</sup> by clear and incontestible arguments, taken from those sacred oracles, *that the Messiah ought*, according to the whole tenor of the prophecies, *to suffer* the last extremities from the unbelieving generation among whom he was to appear, *and then to rise from the dead*, how contrary soever it was to their prejudiced apprehensions; *and that this is the true expected Messiah*, [even] *Jesus of Nazareth, whom*, said he, *I make it my business to declare unto you*, and to all to whom I come.

XXXIX.  
Acts  
XVII. 3

4 This was the substance of what he inculcated upon them in repeated discourses, and the success was various; for notwithstanding all the prejudices of the Jews, such was the evidence of what he said, that *some of them believed and adhered to Paul and Silas*; and also a considerable number of the devout Greeks, who had either embraced the Jewish religion, or at least worshipped with those that had, *and not a few of the principal women of the city*.

5 But, on the other hand, there were many who rejected the gospel, and that, as it afterwards appeared, with great malignity of heart: For after some time, *the unbelieving Jews, filled with indignation*, and in a wild transport of ungovernable zeal on the occasion, *gathered together some mean and profligate fellows, and making a mob, threw the whole city into a tumult*; and *assaulting with great violence the house of Jason*;<sup>c</sup>

very comfortable account of them by Timothy; chap. iii. 6, 7. and they afterwards advanced in faith, charity, and courage, amidst their growing trials; 2 Thess. i. 3, 4. though some few behaved irregularly, and got into an idle and negligent way of living, which brings much reproach upon a Christian profession, and therefore required church discipline. 1b. iii. 6-15. It also appears that, when Paul was with them, he took an opportunity of hinting to them the rise of Antichrist, which as they a little mistook his meaning, gave occasion to that celebrated prophecy, 2 Thess. ii. 1-12.—I conclude, that these hints from the Epistles, to complete and illustrate the short account given in the Acts, will not, here or elsewhere, be disagreeable to my

3 Opening and acknowledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of

readers, but that they will rather be pleased, to have as complete a view as may be of the Scripture history of the Christian church in the apostles' time.

<sup>b</sup> *Evidently showing them.*] This imports the proper import of the word *ἀνεῳξεν*, which signifies *laying a thing open before the eyes of spectators*. Grotius and Elancer think, the last words of the preceding verse should have begun thus; *ἀνεῳξεν τοὺς ᾠδοὺς τῶν ἁγίων, opening and relieving from the Scriptures, &c.*

<sup>c</sup> *Jason.*] As Jason seems by Rom. xvi. 21; to have been a relation of Paul's it is not improbable, that he was an Hellenistical Jew; but Mr. L'Enfant's argument from his name seems not sufficient to prove him to have been so.



Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

where Paul and his companions lodged, they endeavoured to bring them out to the people, with a design to have exposed them to the fury of the mob, whom they had so incensed against them, that they were ready to have torn them to pieces. *But not finding them as they expected in the house, they dragged out Jason and some others of the brethren who were with him, to the rulers of the city, crying out with great fury, These turbulent, mischievous men, that have turned the world upside down, and thrown every place through which they have passed into the utmost confusion, are now come hither also, to create the same disturbance among us: And this Jason has privately received and sheltered them under his roof, and so hath made himself responsible for all the mischief they may do here: And it is highly necessary that an immediate stop be put to their proceedings, as all these men are certainly engaged in some design that may be dangerous to the state, and are in effect guilty of high treason against the emperor; for they act directly contrary both to the decrees and interest of Caesar, saying, that there is another independent and even superior king, [one] Jesus: whom though he were crucified at Jerusalem several years ago, they foolishly assert to be raised to universal empire, and demand the obedience of all men to him as their supreme Lord.*

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason, and certain brethren, unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also;

7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying, That there is another king, one Jesus.

8 And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

And as the charge was formed in such a manner, that their neglecting it might render them obnoxious to the Romans, they troubled and alarmed both the multitude and the magistrates of the city when they heard these things; which seemed to contain something of a formidable nature, which they could not fully understand. But they were not willing to proceed to extremities against a neighbour, merely for harbouring persons who, whatever might be alledged against them, were in a manner strangers to him; and therefore, having only taken security of Jason and the rest of the brethren who were

a Another king. Though the Roman Emperor did not pretend to be the only king or monarch, yet in all the conquered provinces, or dependent 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.

sect. brought before them, to bind them to their good  
xxxix. behaviour, and to appear when they were called  
to answer to the charge exhibited against them,  
they dismissed them for that time.

Acts  
XVII 10

But the brethren, perceiving to how great personal danger the apostle and those that attended him would necessarily be exposed by a longer abode there, *immediately* without any farther delay, where such important lives were concerned, *sent away Paul and Silas by night* to the neighbouring city of Berea, where they hoped they might pursue the charitable design of their journey with less opposition; and accordingly, *when they came thither, they went into the synagogue of the Jews*, not discouraged by the ill usage they had met with upon their addresses to them elsewhere.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11 Here, therefore, as in other places, these messengers of Jesus gave them an account of the general contents of the gospel, and of the commission which they had in charge, always to open it first to the Jews, where-ever they came. And they had the satisfaction to find, that *these people were of a nobler and more generous disposition than those of that religion at Thessalonica*,\* by whom they had been so ungratefully chased away; *for they received the word with all readiness of mind, daily examining the scriptures,*†

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether

\* *Of a nobler and more generous disposition, &c.* There is, as Dr. Whitby has observed, a peculiar spirit and propriety in this expression, as the Jews boasted that they were *laudati sui iure*, 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 *ayvrioi*, his more genuine offspring.

† *Daily examining the scriptures.* It is very unjust to argue, from the conduct of the apostle with respect to the Jews, and from that of these free and generous inquirers, that Christianity cannot be proved otherwise than from the prophecies of the Old Testament. It might be demonstrated from various topics of external and internal evidence, to those who never heard of any former revelation. Another very important additional argument does indeed arise from the accomplishment of prophecies; and when it has been asserted (as we know it has,) by the authorized teachers of the gospel, not

only that Christ is a divine messenger; but also that his appearance was foretold to the Jews, then it is impossible to vindicate Christ's mission without showing that it was so. But, in examining the particular texts in question, we are not only to inquire, whether the sense given by the apostles be, in itself considered, most easy and natural, which is generally the case; but (especially on account of the obscurity which must of course attend prophecy,) we are to consider whether the improbability of the sense they give in any particular instance, or in all instances, be sufficient to balance the other proofs they produced of being under a divine guidance, before we can draw any conclusion to the prejudice of their prophetic inspiration; so very far should we be from concluding, without such an overbalance, that Christianity is false, which yet has generally been the way of our idolent half-thinkers, and of Mr. Collins in particular, whose reflections on this text gave occasion to this remark.

those things were so. *whether those things which Paul and Silas in their repeated discourses asserted, were indeed so. Many of them therefore finding how exact a correspondence there was between the words of these Christian preachers, and those of their own prophets to which they referred, believed the gospel; and also several of the Grecian women of considerable rank, and of the men not a few; so that there was on the whole, a fair prospect of founding a flourishing church in this place.*

SECT.  
XXXIX.  
Acts  
XVII. 12

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

*But an unhappy opposition soon arose from the malice of their persecutors; for as some of the Jews of Thessalonica understood that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea with such promising success, not content with what they had done to oppose it at home, they came thither also, raising [a storm among] the populace, and representing Paul and his associates as factious and turbulent people, to whom it was dangerous to give any the least shelter or countenance. And then immediately the brethren equally solicitous with those of Thessalonica in the like case, as to the danger he might incur in consequence of the growing influence of his unjust accusers, and the peculiar malice which they had against him, sent away Paul, as if he were to go by sea to some of the southern cities of Greece; and they chose to direct him to the road which led to the sea, that if he had not an opportunity of embarking, or did not think proper to do it, his malicious enemies might at least be discouraged from any farther attempt to pursue him; which they might probably have done, if they had known he would have travelled by land. But Silas and Timothy, as their characters were not so public, or their persons so obnoxious, did not go with him from Berea, but continued there a while longer, to settle the new-planted church, and to instruct them more fully in the doctrine of the gospel.*

15 And they that conducted Paul, brought him unto land as far as the celebrated city of Athens, that

[Raising a storm among the populace.] sea, and admirably illustrates the rage and fury of a seditious multitude. Compare Psal. xciii. 3, 4; Isai. xvii. 12, 13; Jer. xlv. 7, 8. See Eisner, Observ. Vol. I. p. 446.

Mr. Blackwell has rightly observed, (Sac. Class. Vol. I. p. 230,) that this is the exact import of the word *stir up*, which expresses a violent agitation of the

SECT. unqualified seat of learning among the Greeks; Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

XXXIX. *and having received an order from him to Silas and Timothy, that they should come to him as soon as might be,*<sup>b</sup> to inform him of the state of the new converts he had left behind him at Thessalonica and Berea, *they went away*; and he continued alone at Athens, with a heart full of solicitude on account of his brethren, and of these infant churches.

## IMPROVEMENT.

- Verse  
1, 2 WITH how much grace and propriety might the apostle say, *of bonds and imprisonments, in the most grievous circumstances that could attend them, None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* (Acts xx. 24.) He gave a remarkable proof of this heroic temper, when having (as he himself expresses it) *been shamefully intreated at Philippi, he was bold in his God to preach the gospel of God at Thessalonica too, though it were with much contention,* through the perverse opposition of these unbelieving Jews. (1 Thess. ii. 2.)
- 3 He boldly declared to them, and proved it by unanswerable evidence, that the Messiah whom they so eagerly expected, and of whose temporal kingdom they so fondly dreamt, *must, in order to establish his claim from the accomplishment of prophecies, suffer, and rise from the dead*: And then he shewed, agreeably to these important premises, that Jesus whom he preached to them was that very person; but instead of receiving his testimony with thankfulness, and the word of God with obedience, what iniquity and obstinacy of heart did these Jews shew! Unhappy nation, who, as Paul most justly speaks of them, (1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.) having killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, persecuted the apostles also; not pleasing God, and being contrary to all men, forbidding, so far as in them lay, the appointed messengers of this glorious salvation to preach to the Gentiles that they might be saved; thereby, alas, filling up the measure of their iniquities, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost, and avenged at once the blood of Christ and that of his ministers, whom they had slaughtered, and those immortal souls whom they had laboured to destroy.

<sup>b</sup> *An order to Silas and Timothy, that they should come to him, &c.* Perhaps Paul expected, some considerable success would attend his labours at Athens, and was therefore desirous to engage the assistance of these pious and excellent persons. Nevertheless God did not see fit

to answer these hopes; and though they came to him, as he had ordered, or at least one of them, that is, Timothy, he was quickly obliged to send him away, especially as he was so solicitous about his dear friends at Thessalonica. See 1 Thess. iii. 1, 2.

Their blind and furious zeal for the law, to which, after all, the apostles did a much greater honour than they could possibly do, engaged them to list under their banners the vilest and most infamous of mankind, certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, the pitch of whose understandings, as well as the turn of their tempers, rendered them the proper tools upon such occasions: And these profligate wretches themselves, the reproach and the plague of mankind, are the persons into whose mouth that senseless cry against the apostles was to be put, that they turned the world upside down. Competent judges indeed of the interests of society, and worthy guardians of its peace!

Such charges, we see, may be brought against the most innocent, the most benevolent, and the most useful of mankind. Thus was Paul accused by Tertullus, as a *pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition throughout the world, and a ringleader of one of the most pernicious sects that ever appeared in it; (Acts xxiv. 5.)* Nor did Jesus, our divine Master, escape; but was accused, condemned, and executed, as a traitor to Cæsar and to his country. But could these clamorous creatures have thought of proof, where would they have been able to find it? If to testify the truth which God had given them in charge; if to exhort to universal love; if to command men that they should study to be quiet, and do their own business, that if it were possible, as much as lay in them, they should live peaceably with all men, doing good to all as they had opportunity; if to enforce these exhortations by the strongest arguments, the warmest exhortations by the most amiable examples; if thus to teach, and thus to act, were turning the world upside down, the apostles were indeed the subverters of it: But O, who would not pray for the happy time, when the world should be thus subverted!

Let the claims of Jesus to universal monarchy be rightly understood, and Cæsar shall find nothing contrary to his just decrees, but every thing subservient to his truest interest. The Redeemer's kingdom is not of this world, (John xvii. 36;) nor can the just rights both of princes and subjects be ever so effectually established, as by a submission to him. May the kings of the earth be so wise as to know this, and all under their government so happy as seriously to consider it!

Security was taken of Paul's friends, and it was prudent in the magistrates to carry it no farther. The apostle himself was obliged immediately to quit them, under the shelter of the night, with a heart full of tender solicitude for these new converts; yet he did not reflect upon his journey to Thessalonia with regret, but amidst all the difficulties he met with, was (as he afterwards tells them) *incessantly thanking God on their account, because they received the gospel which they heard of him, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, and became followers of the churches of God elsewhere. (1 Thess. ii. 13, 14.)*

SECT. XXXIX. Providence brought him in safety and liberty to Berea, and here he met with a more candid reception: The Bereans shewed a true nobleness of spirit, for they received the word with readiness, and searched the scriptures daily, that they might judge for themselves, whether things were there as Paul represented them. While the ministers of Christ are faithful and skilful in the execution of their office, they will not desire that what they say should be received with an implicit subjection; but will be contented, will be solicitous, it should be tried by the standard of scripture. To this touchstone may our doctrines and exhortations be honestly brought, and let them always be received or rejected as they are found agreeable or disagreeable to it.

Verse  
11, 12

## SECT. XL.

*Paul continues a while at Athens, and, being deeply affected with the idolatry of that learned city, makes an excellent discourse to them, but with little success.* Acts XVII. 16, to the end.

## ACTS XVII. 16.

SECT.

XL.

Acts

XVII. 16

NOW while Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy, after the message he had sent them (as was before observed) to come to him at Athens, the notice that he took of their religious state affected him with such concern and indignation, that *his spirit within him was strongly moved,*<sup>a</sup> and had an unusual kind of edge set upon it, while he beheld the excessive superstition of that famous city, which was esteemed the seat of learning and politeness, and found it in so gross and scandalous a manner *enslaved to idolatry.*<sup>b</sup> He therefore discoursed publicly

ACTS XVII. 16.  
NOW while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore dis-

<sup>a</sup> His spirit within him was strongly moved.] The word *ταράχθη* 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 this torrent of popular superstition, by the most serious and affectionate, yet at the same time manly and rational remonstrances. O that Christian zeal had always produced such effects!

<sup>b</sup> He beheld the city enslaved to idolatry.] This, which is here expressed in the original by *συνδουλον*, appears to have been its proper character. Athens was there-

fore called by *Ælian* the altar of Greece; and *Xenophon* observes, "that it had twice as many sacred festivals as any other city." (*Xen. de Rep. Athen. p. 700.*) The grave *Pausanias* tells us, it "had more images, than all the rest of Greece;" (*Attic. cap. 17, 24.*) and one of the satirists humorously says, "It was easier to find a god than a man there." (*Petron. Satiric. cap. 17.*) Dr. *Hammond* has a fine note to illustrate this. See also Mr. *Bacon* at *Bayle's* *Leuchap. viii § 11, p. 317, 321.* and *The Knowledge of Divine Things from Revel. p. 238, 239.* The author last mentioned tells us, (I wish I could find on what particular authorities,) that a fool had been capitally condemned there for kill-

puted 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 Epicureans, and of

upon the great principles of natural and revealed religion in the synagogue, addressing himself to the Jews, and to the other pious persons [that worshipped with them] on their sabbath days; and took all opportunities of speaking about matters of religion every day, in the great forum or market-place, to those Athenians whom he met with in the public edifices which were erected there.

But some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers opposed themselves to him; the former of

SECT.  
XL  
Acts  
XVII. 17

ling one of Esculapius's sparrows, and that a little child accidentally taking up a piece of gold that fell from Diana's crown, was put to death for sacrilege. (Ibid. p. 246.) 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, of being taught by a divine revelation. May the admirers of the Grecian wisdom seriously consider it, and they will find almost every one of their classics an advocate for the gospel!

The Jews and pious persons that worshipped with them. It appears plainly from this text, and perhaps also from ver. 2. I think beyond any other, that the character of *evangelists* is at least sometimes given by Luke to persons who used to worship the true God, and yet were not circumcised, which if they had been, I think they would not have been distinguished from Jews. But that the title was appropriated to such, and especially that such could properly be called proselytes of the gate, in the technical sense in which Maimonides and almost all our modern writers from him explain the word, will by no means follow.

A *Scene of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.* The Epicurean nations came so near to those of our day world that it may seem less needful to explain them any further, than is done in the parables; and as for those of the stoics, different writers, according to their fondness for, or their prejudices against, the philosophy of the Pagans, and of this sect in particular, have represented their doctrines in a very different view; and indeed the notorious inconsistency between some of their own writers, and some of the ancient, in their account of them, has greatly perplexed the matter.

But I think Dr. Benson has expressed himself, on the whole, in a very impartial and judicious, as well as comprehensive manner, (Hist. Vol. II. p. 100.) when he tells us, "They held, that matter was eternal, God corporal," that is, a fiery substance, "and that either God was the soul of the world, or the world itself a God. They" generally "looked upon all things as subject to an irresistible fatality," though some of them at least seem to me to have exempted the human will from it. "The virtue was its own sufficient reward; and vice its own sufficient punishment: And they illustrated excessively, as to their belief of future rewards and punishments, though they had some expectations of a future state" of existence, "as well as of the conflagration and renovation of the world;" with relation to which, several of them seem to have expected a continual revolution of exactly similar events at equally distant periods of time.—The attentive reader will easily see, how opposite the genius of each of these sects was to the pure and humble spirit of Christianity; and how happily the apostle levels his incomparable discourse at some of the most distinguishing and important errors of each, while, without expressly attacking either, he seems only intent on giving a plain summary of his own religious principles, in which he appears a most charming model of the true way of teaching and reforming mankind. (See Dr. Bentley at Boyle's Lecture, Sermon II. at the beginning.) For a larger account of the Epicureans and Stoics, see Dr. Clarke's *Exiles*, B. I. Col. 3. ii. cap. 4, 5; Hudson in his excellent *Hist. of Phil.* cap. 19, 20, 21, & *Ibid.* 26—40; and above all for the latter, Lips. *Manufact. ad Phil.* St. Jean, prælection lib. 1. cap. 14, 15.

SECRET. which entirely defied a divine Providence, and held the world to be merely the effect of chance, asserting pleasure to be man's chief good, and limiting his existence to the present state; and the latter maintained the doctrine of an universal necessity, and proudly exalted their wise men, as if they were in some respects superior to the Deity himself: The notions of both these were so directly contrary to the doctrine which Paul taught, that it is no wonder they proved violent antagonists; and as several were present at these occasional debates, some scornfully said, *What will this retailer of scraps say?*<sup>19</sup> this trifling fellow, that has somewhere or another picked up some scattered notions, with which he is vain enough to think he may make a figure here? And others said, *He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign deities or demons: because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection;* the former of which they, through their negligence in attending, ridiculously took for a defied man, and the other for a goddess.<sup>1</sup>

XL. the Stoics, encountered him; and some said, *What will this babbling say?* other some, *He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.*

Acts  
XVII. 18

19 And as the crowd increased to a greater number than could conveniently hear him in the place where they then were, they took him, and conducted [him] to that celebrated hill near the citadel, which was called *the Areopagus*,<sup>2</sup> being

19 And they took him, and brought him into Areopa-

<sup>1</sup> *Retailer of scraps.* This was the best phrase I could think of, to express the original *επιμαρτυροῦντος*, which signifies "a contemptible creature, that picks up scattered scraps in the market, or elsewhere;" and therefore Mr. Fleming, (*Christol. Vol. II. p. 429.*) would render it *grain-gatherer*, or less literally, *holder-forth*. To have rendered it *this mountebank*, as the translation of 1727 does, seemed both ludicrous and inaccurate. The original admirably expresses the contempt they had of an unknown foreigner, that pretended to teach all the several professors of their learned and illustrious body of philosophers.—Warius, (*Metem. p. 81—83.*) has taken great pains to shew by many authorities, that it comprehends the three ideas of *uselessness, novelty, and novelty*, as if it had been said, *This contemptible, prattling, unskilful creature*; but, as this seems to strain the matter to an extreme, I chose the least malignant sense, especially as that was petulant enough, and gives one but an ill idea of their sense and politeness.

[*Jesus, and the resurrection.*] It seems with great reason that Dr. Hammond follows Chrysostom's interpretation, which is that given in the paraphrase. Stupid as the mistake seems, it is the less to be wondered at, since Resurrection might as well be counted a deity, as Shame, Famine, and Desire, among the Athenians, (*Pausan. Attic. cap. 17.*) or as the Fever, and some things too scandalous here to name, were among the Romans, as Dr. Hammond, Mr. Reeves, (*Apol. Vol. II. p. 53.*) and many others have long since remarked. Bapheluz's attempt to overthrow this interpretation, by proving that *επιμαρτυροῦντος* signifies the *person of a demon*, and also *any property or work belonging to him*, (*Annor. ex Xen. p. 167—172.*) is quite unsuccessful; for none of his authorities prove, it expresses both in the same place.

<sup>2</sup> *They took him, and conducted him to the Areopagus.* For an account of this celebrated place, and the court of judicature which sat there, to try all the most important causes civil or criminal, see



gus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

a part of their city dedicated to Mars the God of battle, whom they called Areios, and the seat of that illustrious senate who had the name of Areopagites, from their assembling there. And when he was come thither they applied to him,

SECT.  
XL.  
Acts  
XVII.

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

*saying, May we be allowed to know more fully and particularly what this new doctrine is which is spoken by thee? For thou bringest some strange things to our ears, exceedingly different from what we have ever received from any of those many professors of various learning which this celebrated city has produced: We would therefore willingly know, what these things mean; and choose to hear them from thine own mouth, rather than by the uncertain report of others, who may not perhaps clearly understand what thou intendest, or accurately relate what thou hast said.*

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or hear some new thing.)

Now this was entirely agreeable to the genius of the place; for all the Athenians, and the numerous strangers that sojourn among them, delight to spend their leisure time, of which many of them have a great deal, in nothing else but telling or hearing somewhat new,<sup>b</sup> which may amuse that speculative and curious temper they are exceedingly prone to indulge.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

*Paul therefore standing up in the middle of the Areopagus, where he might be most conveniently heard by a large number of people, addressed himself to them in a very suitable discourse, and said, Ye men of Athens, it seems as if I might address you with the greater prospect of success on the occasion which now calls me to speak among you, as I perceive you are exceedingly addicted to the worship of invisible powers.<sup>c</sup> For*

Archbishop Potter's Greek Antiq. Book I. chap. 19, and, for the etymology, Dr. Hammond and Le Clerc's Supplement. As the cognizance of religious matters also lay in these judges, Boza, Dr. Hammond, and some other critics have thought, that Paul was brought to a formal trial before them; but it evidently appears to be a mistake, not only from the title by which Paul addresses them in his discourse, (from which Limberch argues,) but from the whole tenor of the story, and particularly as the persons who brought him hither are represented, not as accusing him of any thing obnoxious, but only as desiring to be informed, what that strange thing his new doctrine was.

<sup>b</sup> The strangers that sojourn among them, delight to spend their leisure time (now translated in—amusement etc.) 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. Several of the critics have shewn, how remarkable the Athenians were for their love of novelty, and none, that I recollect, better than Baphestius, Annot. ex Xen. p. 172, 173.

<sup>c</sup> Exceedingly addicted to the worship of invisible powers. This English phrase, which is very applicable to the city of Athens, has, what I think a

ACTS  
XVII. 23

as I passed along the streets of this elegant and magnificent city, and beheld the objects and instruments of your worship,<sup>k</sup> I found an altar on which there was this remarkable inscription: "To the unknown God;"<sup>l</sup> so desirous do you seem to be, that no deity, whether known or unknown, may be passed by without some re-

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

version of Scripture should always if possible have, the ambiguity of the original, which Dr. Hammond, and especially Revins on Valla, prove to be capable of a good as well as a bad sense; (compare Acts xvi. 19.) whereas neither superstitious nor religious have that ambiguity. — Dr. Lardner, (Credib. Book I. chap. 8. sect. 7. Vol. I. p. 427—430, (as Mr. Fleming also had done, Christology, Vol. II, p. 431.) has well observed, that giving it the worst signification of which it is capable does not well suit the decorum, which so well-bred a man as Paul was, would no doubt maintain before this polite assembly; whereas, in our interpretation, it opens his discourse, not only to an audience, but in a very obliging manner, which I have endeavoured farther to express in the paraphrase. This accurate critic shews, that strangers at Athens, used to begin their public discourses with some compliment to the place and its inhabitants. The medium Paul chooses cannot be sufficiently admired.

<sup>k</sup> The objects and instruments of your worship. This is the proper signification of *εἰδωλῶν*, which has no English word exactly corresponding to it. Compare 2 Thess. II. 4.

<sup>l</sup> To the unknown God. The express testimony of Lucian (Philopat. ad fin.) sufficiently proves, that there was such an inscription at Athens, and shews how unnecessary, as well as unarrailable, it was for Jason to suppose, that the apostle, to serve his own purpose, gives this turn to an inscription, which bore on its front a plurality of deities. Whence this important phenomenon arose, or to what it particularly referred, it is more difficult to say. Vitruvius (Metet. p. 35.) with Heinsius (in loc.) understands it of Jehovah, whose name, not being pronounced by the Jews themselves, might give occasion to this appellation; and to this sense Mr. Biscoe inclines, Boyle's Lect. chap. viii. sect. 22. p. 272—275. Dr. Welwood (Prof. to the Banquet of Xenophon, p. 18, 19.) supposes that Socrates carried this altar, to express his devotion

to the one living and true God, of whom the Athenians had no notion, and whose incomprehensible being he insinuated, by this inscription, to be far beyond the reach of their understanding or his own; and in this I should joyfully acquiesce, could I find one ancient testimony in confirmation of the fact. As it is, to omit other conjectures, I must give the preference to that, which Beza and Dr. Hammond have mentioned, and which Mr. Hallet (Disc. on Serip. Vol. I. p. 307, 308.) has laboured at large to confirm and illustrate, though I think none of these learned writers have set it in its most natural and advantageous light. Diogenes Laertius, in his Life of Epimenides, (see lib. i. p. 29. C. with the Notes of J. Casaubon and Menagius.) assures us, that in the time of that Philosopher, [about 600 years before Christ,] there was a terrible pestilence at Athens, in order to avert which, when none of the deities to whom they sacrificed appeared able or willing to help them, Epimenides advised them to bring some sheep to the Areopagus, and letting them loose from thence, to follow them till they lay down, and then to sacrifice them (as I suppose the words *τοῦ ἀγνωσίου θεοῦ*, signify,) to the god near whose temple or altar they then were. Now it seems probable, that Athens not being then so full of these monuments of superstition as afterwards, these sheep lay down in places where none of them were near, and so occasioned the rearing what the historian calls anonymous altars, or altars which had the inscription *ἀγνωσίου θεοῦ*, to the unknown God, meaning thereby, the Deity who had sent the plague, whoever he were; one of which altars at least, however it might have been repaired, remained till Paul's time, and long after. Now, as the God, whom Paul preached, as Lord of all, was indeed the Deity who sent and removed this pestilence, the apostle might with great propriety tell the Athenians, he declared to them him, whom without knowing him they worshipped, as I think the concluding words of the 23d verse may most decently be rendered.

Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

gard: Now I should think myself inexpressibly happy, if on this incident I might graft those instructions which might bring you to the true knowledge of religion, and determine the devotions you seem so ready to pay to him who is the only worthy object of them: *Him therefore whom in this instance ye worship, without particularly knowing him, do I now publicly declare unto you.*

SECT. XI.  
ACTS XVII. 22

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:

This is the deity that I am come to preach among you, even the one glorious and eternal God, who made the world and all things that are therein; and it is evident, that such must be the excellency of his nature, that being the supreme and uncontrollable Lord of all the dominions of heaven and earth, he dwelleth not in temples made with hands:

25 Neither is worshipped with man's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

Neither is he served by human hands lifted up in prayer, or stretched out with the most costly offerings, as if he stood in need of any thing which we can give, or which we can do. For he himself is indeed the great universal benefactor, from whom all our enjoyments and all our powers of action are derived; as he is continually giving to all the human race life, and breath, and all things, which they can neither consecrate to him, or possess themselves.

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

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 mark-

Neither is he served by human hands, &c.] Dr. Bentley, (at Boyle's Lect. Sermon II. p. 45.) and many other critics, have well observed, this refers to a 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, till becoming the majesty and purity essential to the divine nature.

He hath made of one blood.] (see the 2<sup>d</sup> 46<sup>th</sup> verse) the whole notion of man.] By this expression the apostle shewed them, in the most unaffected manner, that, though he were a Jew, he was not enslaved to any narrow views, but looked on all mankind as his brethren. I see no reason to imagine, as Eisner does, that the apostle has any reference here to a notion of some of the philosophers, mentioned

by Julian, "that the whole human race sprung up from some drops of sacred blood, which fell down from Jupiter." (Eisner, Observ. Vol. I. p. 447, 448.) It would, I think, have been beneath him to have taken the advantage of such an ambiguity of expression. If it be objected, (as I know it has been,) that no principle of reason could prove, that all mankind were descended from one original pair, I answer, That it was not necessary for the apostle separately to prove every article of his doctrine, of which he here gives a summary account. Had they heard him out, he would no doubt have given them proper evidence, that he had a commission from God to teach it, and that therefore it was to be received on the authority of the revealer.

SECT. ed out in his eternal and unerring counsel, the  
 XL. times fore-allotted [to each] in their respective  
 order,<sup>o</sup> and appointed the several boundaries of  
 their different habitations: All things in the  
 Acts disposition of his Providence centering in this  
 XVII. 27. one great end, that they might be excited to  
 seek after the Lord their Maker, if possibly,  
 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 regard-  
 ed by the generality of mankind, yet is not far

28 from every one of us: For in him we  
 perpetually live, and are moved, and do exist;<sup>p</sup> the  
 continuance of all our active powers, and even  
 of our being, is ever owing to his steady and un-  
 interrupted agency upon us, according to those  
 stated laws of operation which he hath wisely  
 been pleased to lay down for himself; as some  
 of your own poets have in effect said, and parti-  
 cularly Aratus, in those remarkable words, "For  
 29 we his offspring are."<sup>q</sup> We therefore, with all  
 the noble powers and faculties of the rational

times before appoint-  
 ed, and the bounds  
 of their habitation:

27 That they should  
 seek the Lord, if hap-  
 pily they might feel  
 after him, and find  
 him, though he be  
 not far from every  
 one of us:

28 For in him we  
 live, and move, and  
 have our being; as  
 certain also of your  
 own poets have said.  
 For we are also his  
 offspring.

29 Forasmuch then  
 as we are the off-

<sup>o</sup> The times fore-allotted to each in their  
 respective order. The expression *κατα-  
 λογισμῶν καιρῶν*, signifies the wisdom, as  
 well as reason, of this divine disposition of  
 events, as fixed by God in his eternal  
 counsels under the conduct of his Pro-  
 vidence, which therefore I have endeav-  
 oured to express in the paraphrase.  
 (Compare note I on chap. xiii. 46, p. 199.)  
 This evidently struck at the root of the  
 whole Epicurean system.

<sup>p</sup> In him we live, and (vivimus) are  
 moved, and do exist. No words can better  
 express that continual and necessary de-  
 pendence of all derived beings, in their  
 existence, and all their operations, on  
 their first and almighty cause, which the  
 true philosophy, as well as theology,  
 teaches. The thought, in words just like  
 these, is found in an old Greek poet; but  
 Paul does not mention it as a quotation,  
 so that I rather think with Le Clerc, that  
 the poet borrowed it from hence, though  
 to be sure, many of the ancients had be-  
 fore expressed themselves much to the  
 same purpose. See Diataker ad Antonin.  
 lib. iv. sect. 21, & lib. v. sect. 27.

<sup>q</sup> For we his offspring are. These words,

*Τὸ γὰρ καὶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἔκτισται.* (which I chose to  
 put into a poetical order in the version,  
 as best imitating the original,) are well  
 known to be found in Aratus, a poet of  
 Cilicia, Paul's own country, who lived  
 almost 300 years before this time.—I  
 wonder so few writers should have added,  
 that they are, with the alteration of one  
 letter only, to be found in the Hylian  
 Cleanthes to Jupiter, of the Supreme God,  
 which I willingly mention, as beyond  
 comparison the purest and finest piece of  
 natural religion, of its length, which I  
 know in the whole world of Pagan anti-  
 quity; and which, so far as I can recol-  
 lect, contains nothing unworthy of a  
 Christian, or, I had almost said, of an in-  
 inspired pen. It is to be found in Hen-  
 Steph. Poes. Philosoph. p. 49, & seq. and  
 with Dupont's Latin Translation in Cud-  
 worth's Intellect. System, Book I. chap.  
 4, p. 422, 433; and I am sorry I know  
 not where to refer my reader to a good  
 English version of it. The apostle might  
 perhaps refer to Cleanthes, as well as to  
 his countryman Aratus, when he intro-  
 duces this quotation, as what some of  
 their own poets had said.

spring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art and man's device.

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

31 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.

\* God as it were overlooked the times of this ignorance. ] This *circumlocutio* expresses, which Mr. Hove paraphrases, "The beams of his eye did in a manner shoot over them;" (Hove's Works, Vol. II. p. 23.) 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, charging all men every where to repent. — The reader will easily perceive, there is a dignity in this latter expression, becoming one who was conscious to himself that he was indeed an ambassador from

nature, being only the offspring of God, and bearing but a feeble ray of those consummate and original glories which shine forth in him, ought not surely to imagine the Deity to be like any thing inferior even to ourselves, any thing so mean and vile as gold, or silver, or stone, (of which last material, base as it is, most of the idols are made) how curiously soever wrought by the art and contrivance of man. Such are

indeed the gross conceptions that have long been entertained by a great part of mankind, but you are now called to correct these irregular ideas, and to govern yourselves by more rational and exalted views of religion; for though God, as it were, overlooked the time of this ignorance, and did not bear any general testimony against these corruptions in worship, nor severely punish the nations who fell into them, so long as they maintained any thing of natural virtue, humanity, and probity; he now interposes in a public and solemn manner, and expressly charges all men, to whom the sound of his gospel comes, every where to repent and return to his worship and obedience, as they regard their eternal happiness and salvation. And this he requires with a merciful kind of severity and importunity, as what must immediately be done, because he hath appointed a great and awful day, in which he will judge the whole world in righteousness, and pass a final sentence of happiness or misery on each, according to his true character and behaviour; which he will do by that illustrious Man, whom he hath by miraculous interpositions marked out as ordained for that important purpose, of which he hath given sufficient assurance to all men, by raising him from the dead, according to his

the King of heaven, who could (to allude to that remarkable story, Liv. lib. xlv. cap. 12.) draw a circle about the greatest monarch, and demand a decisive answer before he stirred out of it. 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, bore down all the idle plea of fatality; for who could repent of doing what he apprehended he could not but have done?

SECT. XL.  
ACT XVII. 29

ACT. XL. known and public prediction, whereby he has demonstrated how able he is to raise others.

ACT. XVII. 32. *And when they heard him making mention, though but incidentally, of the resurrection of the dead, some rudely mocked, and without staying to hear the evidence, made a jest of it as a despicable and incredible tale, not worthy to be any longer heard: And others, whose curiosity was satisfied in hearing in a few words his scheme and design, would not allow themselves to attend to his proofs of so extraordinary an assertion; but coldly said, It is enough for the present, we will hear thee again upon this subject, when a more convenient opportunity offers.*

33. *And thus Paul, finding so little disposition in this learned auditory to receive the truth, or so much as to hearken to the evidence of it, went out of the midst of them, and left by far the greater part of the assembly, (notwithstanding all the conceit they had of their own learning, knowledge, and wisdom,) in that deplorable state of ignorance, folly and superstition, in which he found them.*

34. *Nevertheless, though what he said was so generally slighted, some men adhered to him, and inquired farther into the evidence of that extraordinary doctrine which he taught concerning Jesus and his resurrection; the consequence of which was, that they believed the gospel, and made a public and courageous profession of it: Among whom was the celebrated Dionysius the Areopagite, a magistrate of great honour and dignity among them, and a woman of considerable rank and character in the city, whose name was Damaris; and there were also some others with them, whom we shall not particularly mention.*

32. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

33. So Paul departed from among them.

34. Howbeit, certain men clave unto him, and believed among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

\* Without staying to hear the evidence. We are by no means to imagine, this was all the apostle intended to have said; but the indulgence of some of these philosophers, and the petulance of others of them, cut him short; and so they went down to righteous condemnation, under the guilt of having rejected a gospel, the proof of which they might have heard in one single day, but would not give themselves the trouble of examining; and this is the condemnation among us.

[Dionysius the Areopagite, &c.] The members of this court, of which Dionysius was one, are well known to have been persons of great dignity chosen from among the best families and characters in Athens, so that the title grew into a proverb of honour and integrity. See Cic. ad Attic. lib. I. Epist. 14; Aul. Gell. Noct. Att. lib. xii. cap. 7; Mits. Maderem. p. 86--88; and Mr. Biscoe in Boyle's Lect. chap. viii. §. 12, p. 325.

## IMPROVEMENT.

ADORED be the depths of divine counsel and grace, that when <sup>SECT.</sup> *in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it* <sup>XI-</sup> *pleased God, by what they impiously derided as the foolishness of* <sup>Verse</sup> *preaching, to save them that believe.* (1 Cor. i. 21.) Whose spi-<sup>32</sup>  
rit is not stirred in some measure, to behold the learned and po-<sup>16</sup>  
lite city of Athens, not only abandoned to trifling speculations,  
but enslaved to idolatry and superstition? And, on the other<sup>21</sup>  
hand, who can be so insensible of all the charms of reason and  
true eloquence, as not to be delighted with those prudent and  
generous attempts which Paul made to recover them from it?  
When derided and affronted as a vain babbler, as a retailer of<sup>18</sup>  
scraps, by those who indeed shewed themselves to deserve that  
infamous name, judging a matter before they heard it, and so  
convicting themselves of shame and folly, (Prov. xviii. 13.) he  
in the meekness of wisdom, addresses himself to them with that<sup>22</sup>  
soft tongue which breaketh the bones. (Prov. xxv. 15.) His  
doctrine dropped as the rain, and his speech distilled as the  
dew: (Deut. xxxii. 2.) Pity it was that it produced no more  
valuable fruits, but rather was abused by some that heard it, to  
nourish those poisonous weeds, which were, alas, the native  
growth of this luxuriant soil.

We see, that while Paul passed through the streets of Athens,<sup>23</sup>  
his mind was filled with such pious and benevolent affections as  
became the mind of a Christian and an apostle; and beholding  
this inscription *to the unknown God*, he applies himself immedi-  
ately to declare him to them. Adored be the divine goodness,  
that we are from our infancy happy in the use of such divine  
instructions as he gave the Athenians and others; and that though  
we worship a God whose infinite perfections can never be traced  
out, he is not entirely an unknown deity to us! May he be  
known, adored, and obeyed, wide as the works of his hand ex-  
tend! Even he, the supreme Lord of all, who made heaven and<sup>24</sup>  
earth, and all that is in them; in consequence of which he is in-  
finitely superior to all our most exalted services, as well as be-<sup>25</sup>  
yond any of those representations of him which the ignorance and  
folly of men have invented in gold, silver, and stone. His power<sup>29</sup>  
created all, and by his goodness all are supported. Let us con-  
sider ourselves as his offspring, honouring and loving him as the  
great Father of our spirits; and since we have so necessary and<sup>26, 27</sup>  
uninterrupted a dependence upon him, since in him we live,  
and move, and exist continually, let all the affections of our<sup>28</sup>  
hearts, and all the actions of our lives, be consecrated to his  
service: And this so much the rather, as it evidently appears,  
by the revelation of his gospel, that he does not overlook us,  
but in the most solemn manner calls upon us, and upon all men<sup>30</sup>  
every where to repent, and to return to him; setting before us

SECT. XL. in so clear a view the awful solemnity of that appointed day, in which he will judge the whole world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained to this glorious purpose, even by Jesus, to whom, as the Son of man, all judgment is wisely and righteously committed. *The Lord grant that we may all find mercy of the Lord in that day!* (2 Tim. i. 18.) In the mean time, may the declaration of it bring multitudes to repentance and faith; and especially may it work thus on those who, like 34 Dionysius and Damaris, are distinguished by their rank and circumstances in life, that their usefulness in the world may be as extensive as their influence, and their names precious in the church among those that are yet unborn.

## SECT. XLI.

*Paul settles for a year and a half at Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla, is encouraged by a vision of Christ there, and rescued by Gallio from the rage of the Jews. Acts XVIII. 1—17.*

## ACTS XVIII. 1.

SECT. XLI. *AFTER* these things, of which an account has been given in the preceding section, Paul departing from Athens, came to the polite and flourishing city of Corinth, so famous for its elegance and magnificence, and equally remarkable for the dissolute manners of its inhabitants.<sup>a</sup> 2 And finding there a certain Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, a province of the Lesser Asia, not far from Galatia and Cappadocia, who was lately come from Italy, with Priscilla his wife, because the emperor Claudius Cæsar had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome;<sup>b</sup>

## ACTS XVIII. 1.

*AFTER* these things, Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, (because that Claudius had commanded all

<sup>a</sup> Corinth, &c.] Antiquity abounds with passages relating to this city, which before it was destroyed by Mummius, was looked upon by the Romans as a rival almost as dangerous as Carthage; and having been restored by Julius Cæsar, with its almost unparalleled advantages of situation, was grown very considerable. The reader may see some entertaining remarks concerning it in Witsius Meletem, p. 90.

<sup>b</sup> Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome.] Though Josephus be silent as to this edict, probably as he thought it more prudent to omit the mention of it in a history, to which it is plain he studiously to recommend himself and his

people to the Romans, yet it is well known, that the fact is expressly mentioned by Suetonius, (Claud. cap. 25.) and that Dio (lib. lx. p. 669. A.) has something to the same purpose; for prohibiting their religious assemblies, was in fact banishing them, as Mr. Bentham observes, Christol. Vol. II. p. 97. — I pretend not certainly to determine, whether that Christus, whom Suetonius mentions as the occasion of those tumults among the Jews, for which they were expelled from Rome, were, as Abb. Usher Annal. p. 669, and Vindale, de Chac. p. 694, suppose, a seditious Jew, or whether, as it is generally thought, the name be a corruption of Christus: (See Tertul. Apol. cap. 5.)



Jews to depart from Rome,) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tent makers.)

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews, and the Greeks.

and Lactant lib. iv. cap. 7.) Yet I think the latter much more probable, and that the spread of Christianity, which was looked upon as a sect of Jews, and which we know prevailed at Rome about this time, gave that jealous and wretched emperor an unnecessary alarm, the occasion of which Suetonius, not thoroughly understanding it, has misrepresented. And if this were the case, it might be, as Dr. Lardner well observes, (Credib. Book I. chap. 11. § 3, Vol. I. p. 556.) an additional reason why Josephus, who is always cautious on this head, has passed it over without notice.

(Of the same trade.) It has with great propriety been observed and shewn by many learned men here, that it was a point of conscience with the Jews to teach their children some trade, even though they bred them up to the liberal sciences. Hence one of their rabbies is named the shoemaker, and another the baker, &c. (See Drusius and Grotius in the Wits. Meletem. p. 11, 12; and Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. vii. § 4, p. 272-274.) And it is a custom still prevailing among the Easterns. I think Mr. Paul Ricaut somewhere observes, that the Grand Signior, to whom he was ambassador, was taught to make wooden shoes. And this is intended, not only for an amusement, but to remind youth

Paul entered into such an intimacy with them, that he went to them to lodge at their house.

And as he formerly had learnt the business which they followed, and was capable of exercising the same trade, he continued with them there, and wrought [at it] for his subsistence: (Compare 1 Cor. iv. 12; and 2 Thess. iii. 8.)

For they were tent-makers by trade, whose business it was to make tents or pavilions of linen or skins, which were much used, not only by soldiers and travellers, but by others in those hot countries; and Paul (as we have said) had been instructed in that art, as it was usual for those of the Jews who had the most learned education, to be brought up to some mechanical employment for the amusement of their leisure hours, and for their maintenance in life, if any unforeseen revolution should strip them of every thing else, which they had to depend

upon. But while he took up his abode here, he disputed in the synagogue every sabbath-day, and earnestly persuaded both the Jews and the Greeks.

of the highest rank, how possible it is that they may fall into circumstances, in which it may be necessary for them to support life by such labours as those, which, to be sure, are vastly preferable to begging. It is therefore very ungenerous in Oratio to mention this, as any reproach to Paul, or as bringing his character into the least degree of suspicion.

—Paul might have peculiar reasons for this at Corinth, not only as being a stranger, and with some prejudices lying against him as a teacher of a new religion, but perhaps also, as Mr. Cradock observes, (Apost. Hist. p. 111, 112.) from some prophetic intimation of that false apostle, who should arise there, and make a great merit of preaching gratis, while at the same time he denounced over them in a most inconsistent as well as unchristian manner. (See 2 Cor. xi. 7-10.) Whether Paul and these his companions, made common tents or wove tapestry hangings, is a question of no importance, though I think the former probable, as the latter would require a more exact skill, than a person so generally employed in far different work would be like to acquire.

(Persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.) Some render *πειθω*, he tried to gain upon them; but the word [*persuade*] is often used to signify the attempt without de-

SECT. XLII.

ACTS XVIII. 3

SECT. to embrace Christianity, as a religion founded  
XLI. in reason and truth, and the great source and  
security of happiness both in time and eternity:  
And he had some success, particularly with re-  
g<sup>d</sup>ard to the families of Stephanas and Epenetus,  
who were some of the first converts to Christi-  
anity here. (Compare 1 Cor. xvi. 15; Rom. xvi.  
5; and 1 Cor. i. 14, 16.)

5 *And as soon as Silas and Timothy, whom he had expected at Athens, came from Macedonia to him at Corinth, Paul, farther animated by the presence of his brethren, and the accounts they brought him of the happy consequences of his labours at Thessalonica and elsewhere, was borne away by an unusual impulse in [his] spirit, and zealously persisting in his work, openly testified to the Jews, and by the strongest arguments endeavoured to convince them that Jesus was undoubtedly the true Messiah, whom they pretended impatiently to expect. But when, instead of receiving a testimony so warmly urged, and supported with the most demonstrative proofs, they obstinately and perversely set themselves in opposition to the doctrine he taught, and even blasphemed that glorious name on which he was pressing them to fix their dependence; he shook his garment, to signify, that*

5 And when Silas and Timotheus, were come from Macedonia, Paul was prested in spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment.

termining the success. It is generally taken for granted, that those Greeks were a kind of proselytes; but we have before hinted, how possible it was, that Gentiles might out of curiosity attend such extraordinary preachers in Jewish synagogues, though they did not commonly worship there, which would especially take place in this instance, considering the miracles which Paul wrought at Corinth, to which he so often refers in the two epistles which he afterwards wrote to that church. Compare 1 Cor. i. 6, 7; ii. 9, 5; xii. 4—11; xiv. 2 Cor. xii. 5; xii. 12, 13.

\* *As soon as Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia.* Silas and Timothy had been left at Berea, when Paul came from thence, and had directions sent them, as soon as he arrived at Athens, quickly to follow him; (chap. xvii. 14, 15.) which Timothy accordingly did, and was sent back again by Paul to Thessalonica, to confirm the faith of his dear converts there, of whom he had brought so good an account; (1 Thess. ii. 2, 5, 6.) And it seems to have been from this journey

that Timothy now returned with Silas, having probably joined him before he left Macedonia.—This account of the matter seems more probable, than that of Mr. Crook and some others, who suppose that both Silas and Timothy came from Berea to Paul at Athens, and that, after Timothy had been sent to Thessalonica, and brought the good tidings referred to, both he and Silas were sent from Athens to Macedonia, and were appointed to meet Paul at Corinth, which seems multiplying journeys without proof or necessity.

† *Was borne away by an unusual impulse in [his] spirit.* Heimsius and some others think, that the phrase *ἠνεμοῦντο* means, he was borne away by an extraordinary impulse of the Spirit of God, the agency of which in this matter I readily acknowledge, but apprehend the phrase here used rather refers to the effect that agency produced. Compare ver. 25; chap. xiv. 21; Rom. xii. 11; for the expression; and, for the effect, see xx. 8, 9; Amos iii. 8.

and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

from that time he was determined he would have no more to do with them, or any thing belonging to them; and also to intimate, that God would soon shake them off, as unworthy to be numbered among his people; and upon this he solemnly said to them, *Let the guilt of your blood be upon your own head, and there let it rest: I am pure from it, and declare unto you, that by this wilful impenitence and unbelief, you are your own murderers.* (Compare Ezek. xxxiii. 2—9.) And as God and man can witness that I have done all in my power to prevent so sad an event, I now desist from any farther attempts of this kind; and *from henceforth*, while I continue in this city, I will go, and preach to the *Gentiles*, who will readily receive that gospel which you so ungratefully reject.

SECT.  
XLI.  
Acts  
XVIII. 6

5 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.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house: and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

And going out from thence, he went into the house of one whose name was called Justus; who was a worshipper of the true God, though not a complete Jew by profession, and whose house was adjoining to the synagogue; and there he taught.

But though he did not succeed to his wish in what he delivered to the Jews, yet his labours among them were not entirely ineffectual; and it was particularly remarkable, that *Crispus the ruler of the synagogue believed in the Lord with all his house:* (Compare 1 Cor. i. 14.) And many also of the Corinthians, hearing not only the report of his conversion, but the discourse of the apostle, found the conviction which it produced so powerful, that they believed; and in token of their full resolution to adhere to the gospel, whatever extremities might arise, were baptized, and thereby entered into the Christian church, and settled in it.

9 Then spake the

At this time Paul, conscious of many imperfections attending his person and address, was discouraged in a view of the learning, po-

6 Into the house of one called Justus. It has been supposed, that Paul was denied the use and liberty of the synagogue by Sosthenes, who, when Crispus was expelled, was made governor of it. (Fleming's Christology, Vol. II. p. 28.) But Paul himself so solemnly broke off all further treaty with the Jews in a public way,

that we need seek no other reason for his choosing some other place for discoursing to the people, who might desire his instructions. Accordingly he taught here; but I see no proof at all of his quitting his lodgings with Aquila, and therefore no need of inquiring (as some have done,) what was his reason for doing it.

- SECT. XLI. liteness, and grandeur, of many Gentile inhabitants of the city to whom he was to speak, so that he was, as he himself expresses it, "among them in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling;" (1 Cor. ii. 3;) and these alarms were much increased by the violent assaults which had lately been made upon him in other places through which he had passed, and the contempt with which he had generally been treated. *But the Lord Jesus Christ interposed in a very gracious manner, and said to Paul by a vision in the night, Fear not to go on with thy work even here, but speak my gospel boldly and courageously, and do not keep silence under any present discouragement, or future apprehension: For I myself, by my powerful and gracious presence am continually with thee, and will engage for it, that no man shall fall upon thee to injure thee here; for I have much people in this city<sup>a</sup> and am determined by my grace to make thy ministry successful among many, by whom thou art ready to apprehend it will be despised.*
- 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.
- 11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.
- 12 And when Gal-

<sup>a</sup> I have much people in this city.] I cannot think with Lambrecht and Dr. Benson, Hist. Vol. II. p. 210. that virtuous and well-disposed heathens, as such, are here called the people of Christ, or have the character elsewhere of his sheep, John x. 16, 26. but rather, that the expression taken in all who should, according to the gracious purposes of Christ, be converted to Christianity, whatever their tempers then were, even not excepting those very vicious, ill-disposed, corrupt persons, whose character in their unregenerate state is described in such strong terms, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. where the apostle speaks of what they were, before they were converted.

<sup>b</sup> Sat down there a year and six months.] During this time he wrote his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess. iii. 1—6. compared with Acts xviii. 5. which seems to have been the earliest of those which occur in the New Testament, and quickly after it, his Second.—Lord Harrington also thinks, that from hence he wrote his Epistle to the Galatians, which seems probable, as he refers there to his having been but lately among them, Gal. i. 6; iii. 1, 3; iv. 15; and yet hints nothing of his having been there more than once; so that it seems to refer to the journey mentioned Acts xvi. 6. (Miscell. Sacre. Abstract, p. 51.) and to have been before that mentioned in the 25d. verse of this chapter.

lio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat.

Corinth, "the members of which were filled with all knowledge and utterance, and came behind in no spiritual gifts, for the variety of which they were signally remarkable." (Compare 1 Cor. i. 5, 7.) But so glorious a progress of the gospel here could not fail of exciting the opposition of its enemies; and accordingly, when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, during the residence that he made at Corinth, the Jews, being now resolved to bear no longer, made an assault upon Paul with one consent, and brought him before the tribunal of that magistrate. Saying, in the most clamorous and furious manner, This turbulent fellow is the author of unsufferable mischiefs here, and all over the country, for he persuades men to worship God in a manner directly contrary to that which the law requires and appoints; and so would introduce corruptions in religion, and to the utmost of his power would endeavour to subvert it.

SECT. XLII.  
Acts XVIII. 12

13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

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: And when Paul would have opened his mouth, and was about to have spoken in his own defence, Gallio would not give him the trouble of making an apology for what he did not look upon to come within his cognizance; but prevented him, and said to the Jews, If it were an act of injustice, or any mischievous licentiousness, O ye Jews, with which you charged the person you have now brought before me, it were but reasonable, as it is my office to guard the public peace, not only that I should bear with you in this prosecution, though managed indeed with some excess of eagerness, but also that on proper proof I should exert the power with which I am invested, to punish the offender in proportion to his crime. But if it be a question concerning the propriety of words and names,

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

\* When Gallio was provincial of Achaia.] See note 1 on chap. xlii. 3, p. 182.—Dr. Lardner justly observes, (Credib. Book i. chap. 1, sect. 12, Vol. I. p. 55—57.) that this is also another instance of the exact propriety, with which St. Luke expresses himself; for though the province of Achaia, which comprehended all the rest of Greece, had a more various fortune than that of Cyprus, and frequently changed its form of government, yet A. D. 34, (which is generally supposed

to have been about eight years before this event,) it was restored to the senate, and so became proconsular.—It is generally thought this Gallio was elder brother to the famous L. Annæus Seneca, the moral philosopher, who was preceptor to Nero, of which as Mr. Boscawen shews, there is great probability. Bayle's Lect. chap. iii. sect. 3, p. 27, 28.

† A question concerning words and names.] This wise and equitable magistrate, for such it appears by the ancient writers

SECT. as whether the person whom he so highly extolled should be called your Messiah or not, and whether God is to be worshipped in the way required by the law, which is received among

Acts XVIII. 15. you as divine; or what regard is due to any particular ceremony of it; see [to it] in your own way, and settle it how you will among yourselves; for I know the design of my office too well to interfere on such an occasion, and will be no judge of these matters which are so foreign to it. And with this wise and determinate answer, to which he adhered notwithstanding all their clamorous importunity, he drove them away from the tribunal, and proceeded to other business.

17 And all the crowd of Greeks who were present, perceiving how little favour the Jews found from the court in this tumultuous and vexatious suit, in which they plainly saw that Paul was insulted for the regard he had expressed for them, laid hold on Sosthenes the ruler of the Jewish synagogue, whom they looked upon as the chief occasion of the prosecution, and beat him violently; and this was so near the place where the proconsul was sitting, that it might be said to be before the very tribunal, and under the judge's eye.<sup>16</sup> But though this were certainly an irregular proceeding, Gallio did not concern himself to interpose at all in the affair, for perceiving no great mischief was like to follow, he was willing by his connivance, to leave so troublesome a plaintiff as Sosthenes, to feel

and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

16 And he drave them from the judgment-seat.

17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment-seat; and Gallio cared for none of those things.

that he was, (see Gratius in loc. and Dr. Benson, Vol. II. p. 125.) seems to have heard the accusation which the Jews brought, and to have perceived by it, that the dispute was whether Christ was to be called the Messiah, and whether the Mosaic law were to be imposed on all who worshipped the true God; and therefore (as the author I mentioned last well observes,) he had more honour and generosity, than to make Paul answer under the notion of a criminal, when by the Roman law the matter did not come within his cognizance, and there was nothing criminal in the charge.

<sup>16</sup> It might be said to be before the very tribunal. One cannot imagine that Gallio so little understood the dignity of his office, as to suffer a person uncondemned

to be scourged, or beaten with rods in his immediate presence. I apprehend therefore, that, as neither the word *μαρτυρῶν* nor *καθίστημι* is used, but *πρωτο*, whose signification is more general, the real case was, that just as Sosthenes came out of the court, which perhaps might be held in some open place, (see John xviii. 29. 29. Vol. II. p. 511. and John xix. 13. with note \* on that place. *Ibid.* sect. 16.) the mob laid hold of him in a riotous manner, and beat him, probably with their fists; and, though the noise of the tumult, and some flying report of the assault on Sosthenes, might reach Gallio's ear, while he sat on the dispatch of some other business, he did not seem to take any notice of it for the reason suggested in the paraphrase.

some of the consequences of that confusion which his own bigotry and ill-nature had occasioned. SECT. XLI.

IMPROVEMENT.

MUCH of the divine wisdom and goodness is seen 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 may assist them in the service of religion, while they continue on earth. Much were the fatigues of 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. Verse 1, 2

We find them, while endeavouring to propagate the gospel, maintaining themselves (for reasons peculiar to that 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 views; 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?

In the mean time, he was 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: But their inveterate prejudices prevailed over all the cogency of his demonstration, and all the warmth of his address; so that he was forced at length to give them up as incorrigible. Yet let us observe how he gave them up; with what grief, mixed with just indignation at their folly and ingratitude; shaking his garment, 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 of their own souls: Grievous it is that it should rest upon them; but absolutely necessary that we, who are the messengers of God to them, should take heed, that if they must after all bleed by the sword of divine justice, we ourselves may at last be found pure; for terrible beyond expression would it be, if by our treachery or neglect their blood should be required at our hand.

The apostle's success among the Gentiles raised new opposition, and his infirmities frequently occasioned returning fears:

SECT. XLII. 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 he had to encounter in the discharge of it! (2 Cor. xii. 9.) May that grace be imparted to us; and may it appear that thou hast much people, wherever thou fixest the bounds of our habitation, and the sphere of our ministry!

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 is truly amiable: That wise Roman well knew the extent of his office as a magistrate, and was aware that it gave him no title, no 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 the magistrates of the earth such a spirit! and the gospel, under the influences of divine grace, will soon 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 confounded by fair argument.

## SECT. XLII.

*Paul departs from Corinth, and, calling at Ephesus by the way, goes to Jerusalem; He afterwards sets out from Antioch on another progress, and visits the churches in Galatia and Phrygia. Apollos preaches at Ephesus, and being farther instructed in the Christian doctrine goes to Achaia. Acts XVIII. 18, to the end.*

## ACTS XVIII. 18.

SECT. XLIII. **THUS** the tumultuous opposition that was raised at Corinth by the Jews, against the progress of the gospel, was appeased; and Paul still continued there for some considerable time after it; and [then] taking leave of the brethren, with whom he had made so long and comfortable an abode, he sailed from thence in his return for Syria, and took along with him his two intimate friends Priscilla and Aquila; having shaved his head at the port of Cenchrea in the neighbourhood of Corinth, before he began his voyage, for he had made a vow of doing it, on ac-

ACTS XVIII. 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; for he had a vow.



count of some extraordinary deliverance received; <sup>a</sup> and there he performed it.

SECT.

XLII.

Acts

xviii. 19

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

And setting sail from Cenchrea he arrived at Ephesus, and there he parted with Aquila and Priscilla, and left them behind him, <sup>b</sup> having made but a very short stay in that place; but during that time he himself entered into the synagogue on the sabbath which he spent there, and reasoned with the Jews upon the great subject of Jesus being the Messiah. And though they were desirous of hearing more upon this head, and therefore intreated him to have stayed longer with them, yet he did not consent to do it: But took his leave of them, saying, It is necessary for me by all means to celebrate the

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not:

21 But bade them farewell, saying, I

<sup>a</sup> Having shaved his head at Cenchrea, for he had a vow. Grotius, Heinsius, Dr. Hammond and Witsius, (Meletem. p. 99—101.) think this clause refers to Aquila who was mentioned immediately before; and some of them suppose that he and his wife Priscilla were left, not at Ephesus, but at Cenchrea; and Chrysostom interpreted the clause thus. But with due deference to such great names, I must say, that, though it be not certainly determined by the original, it seems much more probable from the construction, that *negare* and *relinquit* must refer to the same person, that is, Paul; nor is there any weight in what some have suggested, that Aquila is mentioned here after his wife Priscilla, to show that it was he that shaved his head, since they are mentioned thrice by the apostle Paul in his epistles, Rom. xvi. 3; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; 2 Tim. iv. 19; and where there could be no such reason to induce him to it, he has twice named Priscilla first; and, as it appears from ver. 26, that Aquila and Priscilla were at Ephesus when Aquilas was there, and from ver. 18, that they set out with Paul from Corinth to make the intended voyage in his company, it is most likely they went now to Ephesus, and were not left at Cenchrea. — As for this vow it is justly observed by Salmasius, that it could not be a vow of Nazariteship, for then the hair must have been burnt in the temple under the cauldron in which the peace-offerings were boiled, Num. vi. 18. Petit thinks, the mention of his vow relates only to Paul's return to Judea, and not at all to his shaving his head, which surely he would include in a parenthesis, warning the Jews at Corinth, were their hair long, directly contrary to 1 Cor. xi. 11. I rather think, his vow was an ex-

pression of gratitude for the divine goodness, in preserving him from such imminent dangers during his long abode here; but whether he now cut off his hair, vowing from this time to let it grow till he came to Jerusalem, or whether some accidental pollution befel him here, which obliged him to do it, that he might begin the day of his purification again, or whether his vow terminated here, I cannot certainly say. Yet the last seems to me most probable; for the expression, he had a vow, seems not to agree with the supposition of his beginning it here, nor could he on any accidental pollution have renewed his purification as a Nazirite any where but at the temple, Num. vi. 9, 10. I imagine therefore, that (unless as Grotius and Dr. Lardner suppose, the Jews allowed themselves great liberties in this matter, when in foreign countries,) Mephibosheth's vow during David's exile, 2 Sam. xix. 24, might more nearly resemble that of Paul. Spence has shewn in his excellent dissertation on the Nazirite's vow, (Dr. Leg. Heb. lib. iii. cap. 6, § 1.) that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, had such a custom. Dr. Lardner thinks, that Paul's reason for hastening to Jerusalem was, that he might accomplish his vow; but I see not how that could be any reason why he should keep the feast there, since the vow might have been accomplished either before or after it. See Dr. Lardner's Credib. Book I. chap. 9, § 7, Vol. I. p. 465—474.

<sup>b</sup> And there he left them. It is observable, that the Syriac Version inserts this clause afterwards in ver. 21, which seems its most natural place: "And he left Aquila and Priscilla there, and sailed from Ephesus."

SECRET. approaching feast of the passover at Jerusalem;<sup>c</sup>  
 XIII. but when I have dispatched my business there,  
 I will turn my course to you again, God wil-  
 Acts XVIII. ling, and make as long an abode amongst you  
 21 as Providence shall permit. And so he set sail  
 from Ephesus.

22 And after a safe and prosperous voyage land-  
 ing at the port of *Cæsarea*, he went up immedi-  
 ately to Jerusalem, and there attended at the  
 feast: And having with great tenderness salut-  
 ed the church there, and expressed his kindness  
 and affection to it, and delivered the alms which  
 he had brought from the churches of the Gen-  
 tiles, he afterwards went down from thence to  
*Antioch* in Syria, where he had formerly made  
 so long a stay, and where there was so flourish-  
 ing a Christian church.

23 And having spent some time [there] he again  
 set out upon another progress, and departed  
 from Antioch, going through the country of *Gal-  
 atia and Phrygia* in an orderly and regular  
 manner,<sup>d</sup> so as to take in all the places that  
 lay in his way, where he had formerly preached  
 the gospel; confirming all the disciples that he  
 met with there in their adherence to the gos-  
 pel, whatever opposition and difficulty might  
 arise: And his presence was most welcome to  
 all their churches, who could not but greatly  
 rejoice to see him amongst them, who as  
 father had begotten them in Jesus Christ through  
 the gospel. (Compare 1 Cor. iv. 15.)

24 Now while he was thus employed in those  
 parts, a certain Jew whose name was *Apollos*,  
 a native of *Alexandria* in Egypt, an eloquent  
 man, [and] powerful in the scriptures of the Old

must by all means  
 keep this feast that  
 cometh, in Jerusa-  
 lem: but I will re-  
 turn again unto you,  
 if God will. And he  
 sailed from Ephesus.

22 And when he  
 had landed at *Cæs-  
 area*, and gone up, and  
 saluted the church,  
 he went down to  
*Antioch*.

23 And after he  
 had spent some time  
 there, he departed,  
 and went over all the  
 country of *Galatia*  
 and *Phrygia* in order,  
 strengthening all the  
 disciples.

<sup>c</sup> It is necessary for me by all means, &c.] This was not from any apprehension, that he was obliged in conscience to celebrate the Jewish feasts, (compare Rom. xiv. 5; Gal. iv. 10, 11; Col. ii. 16;) but 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 further instruct, or might remove the prejudices that were groundlessly imbibed against him.

<sup>d</sup> Going through the country of Galatia, and Phrygia, &c.] Probably he passed

through part of Cilicia, Cappadocia, and Lycaonia, which all lay in his way from Antioch. As this would take him up a great deal of time, most commentators I think very reasonably, allow four years for this journey, including his stay at Ephesus; 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, and I shall afterwards mention the reasons which convince me, that he wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians in this period, that is, probably during his stay at Ephesus. See note 2, on Acts xix. 21. § 44.

scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 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, knowing only the baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. Whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much.

Testament, which he had diligently studied and had an excellent faculty of expounding, *came to Ephesus. This person was in some measure already instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, and earnestly desirous to promote the progress of the truth, and the conversion of souls, he spake and taught the things of the Lord with great accuracy and exactness, to the best of his knowledge; though as yet he had but an imperfect notion of the gospel, being only acquainted with the baptism of John;*<sup>c</sup> so that he insisted upon the doctrine of repentance, and faith in a Messiah who was quickly to be revealed, for the reception of whom he shewed that it was necessary they should have their hearts prepared. And to this purpose he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, pleading the cause of God and real vital religion, with an earnestness becoming the importance of the subject, as well as freely reproving the Jews for those evils which were so commonly to be found among them, and battering down those vain hopes which, as the seed of Abraham and disciples of Moses, they were so ready to entertain. And Aquila and Priscilla, being then at Ephesus, and hearing him express so upright and so good a spirit, were desirous to promote his further improvement in knowledge and usefulness; and accordingly they took him with them to their house, and there explained to him the way of God in a more complete and perfect manner.

And shortly after, when he intended to go over to Achaia, that he might preach the word at Corinth and other places in that province, the brethren of Ephesus wrote to the disciples there, exhorting them to receive him with all affection and respect, as a person whose character well deserved it: And being arrived there, he greatly

<sup>c</sup> Being only acquainted with the baptism of John.] It is generally supposed, he had been in Judea when John was baptizing, and having been baptized by him into the faith of a Messiah shortly to appear, on hearing something more of the gospel, he believed in Christ under that character, but had not yet been baptized in the name of Christ, nor received the gifts of the Spirit, which were often miraculously communicated in that ordi-

nance. See Cradock's Apost. Hist. p. 127. If this was indeed the case, as John the Baptist was beheaded more than twenty years before the time, Apollos could not now be, as is generally supposed, though I think no where asserted, a young man; and, consequently, his conduct in submitting to the instructions of these private Christians is the more remarkable, and the more amiable.

SECT. XLII.

Acts XVIII.

25

26

27

ACTS XLII. *helped those who had believed through grace,*<sup>f</sup> and which had believed through grace.  
ACTS XLII. was eminently serviceable in establishing and  
ACTS XLII. confirming those who had embraced the gospel.  
ACTS XLII. *For he strenuously debated with the Jews,* and 28 For he mightily  
ACTS XLII. *and that in the most public manner, and upon all pro- convinced the Jews,*  
ACTS XLII. *per occasions; making it evident, and clearly shewing by the scriptures, not only that a glo- and that publicly,*  
ACTS XLII. *rious spiritual deliverer was there foretold, but shewing by the Scrip- tures, that Jesus was*  
ACTS XLII. *that Jesus of Nazareth, though so ungratefully Christ.*  
ACTS XLII. *treated by their rulers at Jerusalem, and is indeed the only true Messiah, so that the salva- tion of men depends upon receiving and sub- mitting to him.*

## IMPROVEMENT.

Verse 18-23 How happy was the church in these unwearied labours of Paul! And how happy was Paul in those repeated opportunities, and in that health and spirit which God gave him, to undertake and to go through with such labours! Happy in preaching Christ to so many, to whom he was before unknown! Happy in beholding the blessed fruits of his labour, and visiting the churches he had formerly planted in one province and another, and which in this intermediate space was grown up to some maturity! Prudent likewise, in such a concern to water those plants by renewed instruction: So let gospel-ministers cherish the divine life in those souls where they have been instrumental to produce it; ever remembering that it is matter of so great importance as well deserves our repeated care and our renewed labours.

Well was it also for the churches, that such a promising and hopeful fellow-labourer as Apollos was raised up to him, and to

*He greatly helped those who had believed through grace.* Mr. L'Efant and Limborch render it, "He was, through the grace of God, a great help to those that had received the faith." But this, though I think it don't greatly affect the sense, seems an unnecessary transposition. The best comment on these 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: But the transposition fixes them, which I think should not be done; and fixes them, if I mistake not, to the less probable sense. It appears from many passages in Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, that se-

veral 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 which plainly appears to have come to Ephesus when Paul returned thither, and to have declined going to Corinth again, even when Paul would have persuaded him to it; probably to avoid any the remotest appearance of desiring to countenance any party, that might have been formed in his own favour. 1 Cor. xvi. 12.

them. To be fervent and courageous in spirit, to be eloquent and mighty in the scriptures, are happy talents for such as are to be devoted to the ministry. May all that enter on this work among us, come forth with a zeal and courage like his; and I must add, may they also come forth with an humility like that which, in Apollos, adorned all those bright talents with which he was endowed! What he knew, he zealously taught: what he did not know, he was willing and 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 God had given that wise and pious woman to know the way of the Lord, by longer experience and to greater perfection than he, Apollos, amidst all his popularity and applause, was willing to become her disciple; and to learn from her in private discourses, those evangelical lessons which decency did not permit her to give, or him to receive, in public assemblies.

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 this recommendation, and make himself known amongst them by 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; and happy would it have been for the church and the synagogue there, had they known no distinguishing name but his: *Nevertheless, one said, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos.* (1 Cor. iii. 4.) We may reasonably hope, that this zealous evangelist expressed the same displeasure which the holy apostle himself did on such an occasion; and 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 it be impressed deeper on the hearts both of ministers and people, that all the glory may be rendered to him from whom all our gifts, and graces, and successes proceed!

SECT. XLIII.

*Paul in his circuit coming to Ephesus, instructs some of John's disciples whom he found there, performs extraordinary miracles, and preaches the word with great success. Acts XIX. 1—20.*

ACTS XIX. 1.

AND it came to pass, that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having

NOW it came to pass, that while Apollos, of whom we have just been speaking, was at Corinth, and was entertaining them there with the charms of his oratory as well as the strength of his reasoning, Paul having pass-

SECT.  
XLIII.  
Verse

24  
25  
26

SECT.

XLIII

ACTS

XIX. 1

ed (as was observed before, chap. xviii 23.) through Galatia and Phrygia, and visited the upper parts of the Lesser Asia, came to the celebrated city of Ephesus, according to his promise, (chap. xviii. 19—21.) with a purpose of making some stay in it; and finding [there] some disciples, in whom he did not observe any of those extraordinary gifts which he had discovered in, or communicated to, so many others,<sup>a</sup>

- 2 He said unto them, Have ye as yet on your believing received the Holy Spirit? and have the gifts that are bestowed by the effusion of the Spirit been imparted to you? And they strangely replied to him, Nay, we have not so much as heard of any such peculiar privilege under the present dispensation, and are so far from having been partakers of it, that we know not whether any have been favoured with this extraordinary effusion, or whether there be any Holy Spirit given now or no. And Paul was so surprised at this, that he said to them, Into what then were you baptized, if you have never heard of what is so well known with relation to the Holy Spirit? for Christians are appointed at their first admission into the church to be baptized in his name, as well as in that of the Father, and of the Son, and the great promise of the gospel gives them an assurance of the effusion of the Spirit. But they said, We were only baptized into John's baptism, having been in Judea about the time of his ministry; and so we were taught to look for a Messiah quickly to be revealed, and hearing what was testified of Jesus with

passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, 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, Unto John's baptism.

<sup>a</sup> Finding there some disciples, &c ] Beza has a singular opinion concerning these persons. He thinks, they were almost the whole body of Christians at Ephesus, and that, as Paul found they had none among them who appeared to have received the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, (of which gifts indeed they had never so much as heard,) he imparted them to twelve of the number, perhaps intending them for stations of some peculiar eminence in the church. But this account of the matter must, I think, appear very improbable, when it is considered, that Apollis and Priscilla, who came from the Corinthian church, so eminent for its spiritual gifts, had made some abode at Ephesus, and that Apollis, after he had

profited by their instructions, would probably preach in the synagogue there, before he left the place; chap. xviii. 19, 25, 26, which if he did, it can never be imagined he would be silent on this head. I conclude therefore, these twelve men 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 out of some remote country, had not enjoyed an opportunity before, of being instructed in any thing relating to the Holy Spirit, more than might be learned from the Old Testament.

3 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on

proper credentials, we embraced him and his religion. And upon this Paul said, John indeed administered the baptism of repentance, and came to prepare the way of the Lord; telling the people, that they should believe in him that was to come after him, that is, in Jesus Christ, whose servant he professed himself to be, and so much inferior to him, as not to be worthy to loose or to bear his shoes! It is highly congruous, therefore, to the intention and design of John's ministry, now to profess your faith with all solemnity in that Jesus to whom he afterwards bore such express and repeated testimonies. And hearing [this,] their hearts were so impressed with what he said, that they joyfully submitted to the direction and advice of the apostle, and were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.<sup>6</sup> And immediately after the administration of this solemn ordinance, Paul, laying [his] hands on them, the Holy Spirit

SECT. XLIII.  
Acts XIX. 4

<sup>b</sup> And hearing this, they were baptized, &c.] Mr. L'Enfant has followed the opinion of many great critics, in rendering this verse, as a continuance of Paul's discourse, and not as the words of Luke, as if it had been said, "John indeed baptized with the baptism of repentance, &c. but they who heard him, and paid a proper regard to his ministry, were, in effect, baptized into the name of Jesus, since he was the Messiah, whom John spake of as shortly to appear;" and the correspondence, which is every where else said to be found between the particles *καί* and *καί*, is urged as a demonstration, that the 4th and 5th verses must make one continued sentence. The learned Beza expresses himself with an unusual confidence on this head, and concludes, as I think all who follow this interpretation do, that Paul did not baptize these converts anew, but only declared his acquiescence in the sufficiency of the baptism they had already received, by imparting to them the gifts of the Spirit. But 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 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, (Mat. iii. 5, 6.) who probably afterwards received Christian baptism. Compare Acts

ii. 98—41; iv. 4; vi. 7. And therefore, if I were assured the construction of these two verses were that which these gentlemen insist upon, I should interpret the 5th verse in a sense quite contrary to theirs, as if it was said, "But they who paid a due regard to John, whom they came more explicitly to understand who the promised Messiah was, were baptized in the name of Jesus, as you therefore must be in order to a regular admittance into his church!" And then I should suppose, Luke, having given this intimation of the baptism of these converts which must of course follow such a declaration of Paul, left us to collect that for ourselves, and only mentioned the communication of miraculous gifts to them on their being thus baptized. But on the whole,—As the expression is not *ἐν ὀνόματι*, but *ἐν ὀνόματι*, &c.—as *ὄνομα*, ver. 6, seems so plainly to refer to the persons just before said to be baptized, and as it is so natural to suppose, that Luke should not omit to mention the baptism of these men, I rather conclude, that there is an ellipse in the 4th verse, (though I own it not a very common one,) so that *ἐν ὀνόματι* is put for *ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου*, (as if the expression were, *that they should believe in Jesus;*) and the particle *καί* might more probably be omitted by Luke, as it is used three times besides, in these three verses.

SECT. XLIII. *came upon them; and they spake with new tongues, which they had never learnt or understood before, and prophesied in such a manner to the edification of the church, as plainly shewed they were enriched at once in all utterance and in all knowledge. And they were in all about twelve men, who had the happiness of being thus miraculously furnished with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

8 *And Paul, as he was used to do in other places, went into the synagogue of the Jews at Ephesus, and discoursed with great boldness and freedom, disputing for the space of three months with all that opposed him, and strongly evincing the things which related to the kingdom of God, erected in the world under Jesus the Messiah.*

9 *But as some of the Jews were hardened, and would not believe, but still continued in their infidelity and rebellion, speaking reproachfully of the way of salvation which the apostle taught, before the multitude and doing their utmost to inspire them with a contempt for it, he departed from them, and separated the disciples he had made, disputing daily for the time to come with all those who debated his doctrine in the*

10 *school of one Tyrannus.<sup>d</sup> And this was done by Paul, and was his daily practice for the space of two years; <sup>e</sup> so that all the inhabitants*

them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

10 And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they which dwell

<sup>c</sup> For the space of three months.] The late Lord Harrington supposes, (Misc. Sacr. Abstract p. 33.) that, after Paul had been 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 with the Epistles of our Lord, might now be laid: Compare ver. 10.

<sup>d</sup> In the school of one Tyrannus.] I cannot think there is any reason to conclude, as Sir Norton Knatchbull does out of regard to the article τῆς σχολῆς, that the word σχολῆς expresses the rank rather than the name of the person, and therefore to render it, "A certain nobleman, or ruler of the city," since it is so evident, that in Luke's writings σχολῆς is often added to a proper name. Compare Acts xxi. 16; xxii. 12; xxiv. 1; xxv. 19.—It seems a groundless conceit, that this was the Tyrannus, mentioned by Suidas, who wrote

on popular seditions, or that it refers (as others think,) to one of the descendants of Androolus, mentioned by Strabo, who had an hereditary title in his family. (Strab. Geogr. lib. xiv. init.) The name might be frequent among them, as King is amongst us; and this Tyrannus might very probably be a converted Jew, and the school referred to, a kind of beth-midrash, or divinity-hall, designed for reading theological lectures, as Dr. Lightfoot supposes, Chron. in loc.

<sup>e</sup> This was done for the space of two years.] The very learned and ingenious Mr. Boyle argues from chap. xx. 31, that Paul spent three years at Ephesus and in the neighbouring towns of Asia, and therefore concludes, that this clause expresses the time between the end of the three months, (ver. 8.) and his sending Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia, (ver. 22.) but that, as he stayed nine months longer in these parts, towards the end of which he returned to Ephesus, they might per-



in Asia, heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

of the neighbouring province of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord Jesus, though for some peculiar reason he had been forbidden to preach it there in his former journey. (Chap. xvi. 6.)

SECT.

XLIII.

Acts

XIX. 10

11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

And to add the greater efficacy and success to this important doctrine, God wrought many extraordinary and uncommon miracles by the hands of Paul: So that, besides his curing those that were brought to him, handkerchiefs or aprons<sup>c</sup> were carried from his body to those that were sick at a distance, and presently upon their touching them, the diseases they were troubled with, however threatening or inveterate they were, removed from them, and the evil spirits themselves came out of them that were possessed; which soon raised the reputation of the apostle to a very high degree, and added the authority of a divine attestation to what he taught the Ephesians.

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, say-

And while he abode there, some of the vagabond Jews [who were] professed exorcists, and pretended to a power of expelling demons, undertook to name the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, and were possessed by them, saying, We adjure you by Jesus,

haps, both return thither before he quitted it, and consequently, that he might have left Timothy at Ephesus, when he was driven from thence, chap. xx. 1, and so have written his First Epistle to him before the meeting at Miletus, chap. xx.

17. See Mr. Boyse of Episcopacy, p. 323.—I must add here, that to render *ἐξουσία*, (i. e. Greeks,) at the end of this verse, *proutyter*, is an unexampled boldness in a late translator, and quite misrepresents the sense of the passage.

<sup>c</sup> *Handkerchiefs, or aprons, ἄνωμα ἢ ἀποκαρδία.* These two Latin words for such they originally are, have been differently rendered; but the etymology of the first plainly determines it to signify a piece of flax, with which the sweat was wiped from the face, and though the latter may possibly signify drawers, which is the interpretation preferred by Calmet, Dicer, Vol. II. p. 252, yet as I do not find the ancients wore such a habit, and as it may most literally be rendered things girt half round the waist, I choose, with Grotius, and our translators, to use the word *aprons*; for though aprons made no part of the ordinary dress of the Greeks,

yet they might very probably have been used, both by men and women, to preserve their clothes, while engaged in any kind of work that might endanger the soiling them.—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 conduce greatly to the success of the gospel among those whose faces Paul had not himself seen.

<sup>d</sup> *Vagabond Jews, who were exorcists.* Dr. Whitby, Mr. Boscov, (at Boyse's Lect. chap. vii. § 6, p. 241, & seq.) and several other critics, have produced many passages from Irenæus, Origen, Epiphanius, and Josephus, to prove that several of the Jews about this age pretended to a power of casting out demons, particularly by some arts and charms derived from S. Simon. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. viii. cap. 2, § 3.—I do not here use the word conjurers, as some have done, because, whatever affinity it has with the etymology of exorcists, it expresses, among us, those who act in combination with infernal spirits, rather than such as adjure them by a divine name.

- SECT. *whom Paul preaches, to come out of those whom*  
 XLIII. *you now possess. And so it was, that there*  
 Acts *were seven sons of [one] Sceva, a Jewish chief*  
 XIX 14. *priest, who did this, desirous of the honour or*  
*profit which they thought would redound from*  
*such cures, and imagining there was some secret*  
*charm in the name of Jesus, to which these in-*  
 15 *fernal agents would submit. But the evil spirit*  
*answering their adjuration with contempt,*  
*boldly said,<sup>h</sup> Jesus I know to my cost, and Paul*  
*I know as his appointed servant, whose power*  
*I cannot resist; but who are ye, that pretend*  
 16 *thus without any authority to command me in*  
*that tremendous name? And the man in whom*  
*the evil spirit was, sprung upon them, and quick-*  
*ly getting master of them all, prevailed against*  
*them to such a degree as to tear off their clothes*  
*from their backs, and beat them with great*  
*violence, so that they fled out of that house in*  
*which they had attempted the cure, naked and*  
*wounded, and became public spectacles of scorn*  
*and derision, in a city where these things were*  
 17 *peculiarly regarded.*  
 17 *And this was done in such a public manner,*  
*that it soon became known to all the Jews and*  
*Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and they were*  
*so affected with the thought of so remarkable*  
*and awful an occurrence, that great fear fell up-*  
 18 *on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was*  
*magnified. And those who had formerly been*  
*professors of unwarrantable arts, which they*  
*had diligently studied, as the means of helping*  
*them to do extraordinary things by the power*  
*of magic, and the assistance of invisible agents,*  
*were now so sensible of their wickedness and*  
*folly, that many of them who believed, struck*  
*with this triumph of the evil spirit over the sons*  
*of Sceva, came of their own accord, and public-*  
 19 *ly confessed and made a declaration of their un-*  
*lawful deeds of this kind. And a considerable*  
*number of these who had practised magical and*

ing, 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, leapt 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 showed their deeds.

19 Many also of them which used curious arts, brought

<sup>h</sup> The evil spirit answering, &c.] Not to insist on the demonstration arising from this story, 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 by it to bring Paul into suspicion, as acting in confederacy with himself; and, if the latter of these were the case, God, as in other instances, over-ruled this artifice of Satan to the destruction of his own cause and kingdom.

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.

curious arts,<sup>1</sup> to express their detestation of them, bringing their books together, burnt them before all who were present: And as it was observed that there were a great many of them which bore a high price in that place, they computed the value of them, and found that it amounted to fifty thousand drachmas, which were the [pieces] of silver most current in those parts.<sup>2</sup>

So powerfully did the word of the Lord grow and prevail, and so remarkable was the triumph of the gospel over all considerations of honour or interest, that could be opposed to it on this or on any other occasion.

SECT. XLIII.  
Acts XIX. 19

IMPROVEMENT.

THUS may the word of God still grow and prevail wherever it comes, and separate between the sinner and his sins, be they ever so customary, ever so reputable, ever so gainful: And thus may the flame of love and zeal consume every snare which hath detained the soul in a base captivity to it.

In order to the production of so noble an effect, may those who are so indifferent to his sacred operations, as if they had never yet heard that there was an Holy Spirit, be filled with it, and be made obedient to it: And may they to whom the mysteries of the gospel are committed, declare them boldly, whoever may be hardened, whoever may oppose, and how evil soever some who boast of their knowledge of God may speak of this way.

We cannot expect that the miracles of Paul's days should be renewed in ours, but we may humbly hope that the noblest effects of his preaching will be renewed; that dead souls will be quickened, the languishing revived, and evil spirits cast out from men's minds; where their possession is more fatal and dangerous than in their bodies.

And God grant that none may ever undertake to invoke the name of Jesus upon such occasions, or to appear under the cha-

<sup>1</sup> Who had practised curious arts.] Philostratus, Chrysostom, and a variety of more ancient authors, quoted by many, and especially by Mr. Blicoe, (at Boyle's Lect. chap. viii. sect. 1. p. 220--223.) have mentioned the Ephesian letters, meaning by them the charms, and other arts of a magical kind, which the inhabitants of that city professed; and, as these practices were in so much reputation there, it is no wonder, that the books that taught them, how contemptible soever they might be in themselves, should bear a considerable price.

<sup>2</sup> Fifty thousand pieces of silver.] If these be taken for Jewish shekels, and valued at three shillings each, (which are the principles of Dr. Benson's computation, Hist. Vol. II. p. 149.) the sum will amount to £7,500 Sterling, or, setting it at half a crown, to £6,250. But, as the Attic drachm seems to have been more frequently used among the Greeks, than any coin equal to the Jewish shekel, I think it more natural to compute by that, which, if with Dr. Prideaux we reckon it at 9d. reduces the sum to £1,575.

SECT. XLIII. racter of his servants, who have not cordially believed in him themselves, and received their commission from him! We need not wonder if in such a case, like these sons of Sceva, they meddled to their own wounding, and prove the means of irritating rather than curing those disorders which the influence of Satan has introduced, and which the Spirit of Christ alone can effectually remove.

Verso  
15, 16

## SECT. XLIV.

*Paul is driven from Ephesus, on occasion of a tumult which Demetrius raises, and the Chancellor prudently appeases. Acts XIX. 21, to the end.*

## ACTS XIX. 21.

SECT. XLIV. NOW after the extraordinary cures and conversions at Ephesus, which have been mentioned in the preceding section, *when these things were fulfilled,*<sup>a</sup> Paul who was much concerned about the spiritual welfare of his former converts, and very solicitous to promote the progress of the gospel, had thoughts of leaving Ephesus, and *purposed in spirit,*<sup>b</sup> that first pas-

Acts  
XIX. 21

ACTS XIX. 21. AFTER these things were ended, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he

<sup>a</sup> *When these things were fulfilled.*] Many events referred to in the Epistles, happened during the period.—It is probable, that Philemon, a convert of Paul, (Philem. ver. 10.) and Epaphras, afterwards a minister of the church at Colossæ, were converted about this time. Col. i. 4, 7, 8; ii. 1; iv. 12, 13. The apostle was also visited by several Christians from neighbouring parts, during his abode here, particularly by Sosthenes and Apollos from Corinth, and by some of the family of Chloe, a woman as it seems of some figure there, (1 Cor. i. 1, 11.) as also by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, all from the same place; (1 Cor. xvi. 17.) and Onesiphorus, who afterwards visited him so affectionately at Rome, was as Timothy had frequent opportunities of observing, very serviceable to the apostle here. 2 Tim. i. 16—18. And there is great reason to believe, he wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians from hence, 1 Cor. xvi. 8. and about this time; for it is plain, that Aquila and Priscilla were then with him in Asia, 1 Cor. xvi. 19. as they now were, Acts xviii. 18, 19, 26. that it was after Apollos had visited Corinth, had watered Paul's

plantation there, and was returned to Ephesus again, 1 Cor. iii. 6; xvi. 8, 17. and that it was when Paul himself, having lately given a charge to the Galatian churches on that head, (compare 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2, with Acts xviii. 23.) intended a journey from Asia to the Macedonian and Corinthian churches, and was sending Timothy to prepare his way, 1 Cor. iv. 17, 19; xvi. 5, 10; compared with the verse now before us, and that which follows. Hence it appears, that no dependence can be had on the spiritual editions at the end of the Epistles, which do not only tell us, that he wrote to the Galatians from Rome, contrary to the probability there is that he wrote it from Corinth, (as was hinted before, note) on Acts xviii. 11.) but also affirm, in spite of his own declaration to the contrary, that he wrote the First to the Corinthians from Philippi.

<sup>b</sup> *Paul purposed in Spirit.*] It is not certain from the original, *θεωροῦν τὸ πνεῦμα*, whether this relate to a determination he was moved to by the Holy Spirit, by whom he was directed in his journey, or (as Beza and Grotius suppose,) to a purpose he formed in his own mind. But

had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus: but he himself staid in Asia for a season.

23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silver-smith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small

trouble, *sing through Macedonia and Achaia*, where he had planted so many flourishing churches some time ago, at Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, and other places, *he would then go to Jerusalem; saying, After I have been there, it is necessary for me also to see Rome*, that I may bear my testimony to the gospel in that metropolis of the world; And accordingly Providence brought him thither, though in a manner something different from what he first intended. And 22 in this view, *sending two of those that ministered to him, namely, Timothy and Erastus, into Macedonia*, to prepare his way, and to get their collection ready for the poor Christians in Judea, *he himself stayed some time longer in that part of Asia*, waiting for a convenient opportunity of following them.

And there happened about that time no small 23 tumult, concerning that way of worshipping God, and securing a happy immortality, which Paul taught. For there was in the city a man 24 whose name was Demetrius, by profession a working silver-smith, and a man of considerable influence; for making small silver shrines, which were models of the celebrated temple of Diana there,<sup>d</sup> he employed a considerable number of

SECT.  
XLIV.  
Acts  
XIX. 21

as we find that he delayed the execution of it, and was by several circumstances led 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; nor is it unusual to insert the article, where it only relates to the human spirit. See Acts xvii. 16; Rom. i. 9; viii. 16; 1 Cor. ii. 11; v. 5; vi. 20; Gal. vi. 18; Eph. iv. 23; Gr. Accordingly Beza renders it, *Statuit apud se*, and Stephens *habuit in animo*.

<sup>e</sup> *Sending*.—*Timothy and Erastus*.] Timothy was a man very proper to be employed on this occasion, not only on account of his excellent character, but also as he had formerly been in Macedonia with Paul, and had assisted in planting the churches there. Acts chap. xvi. and xvii. Erastus, who was joined with him, was chamberlain of Corinth; Rom. xvi. 23. and they were charged with a commission to promote the collection, which Paul was making, both in the European and Asiatic churches, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 3; Gal. ii. 10. for the poor Christians in Judea, which is afterwards so largely

urged in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. viii. and ix.

<sup>d</sup> *A working silver-smith, making silver shrines of Diana*.] Dr. Hammond long since gave it as his opinion, that these shrines were little models of this famous temple, probably something like those of the church of the Holy Sepulchre brought from Jerusalem; and Mr. Biscue has added many learned quotations to illustrate and confirm that opinion. Boyle's Lect. chap. viii. § 3, p. 300—302. See also Raphael, ex Herod. p. 380; and ex Xen. p. 175—177. Yet after all, the mention of these models is not so express, as absolutely to exclude Beza's conjecture, that the business of Demetrius might possibly be, making a sort of coins, or medals, on the reverse of which the temple might be represented. He has given us a cut of one of these, in which the image itself, with its various rows of breasts, is exhibited through the open doors of a temple. It is possible, this company of workmen might take in those that wrought in all these sacred commodities, and likewise those, that made a kind of pageants, intended for

SECT.

XLIV.

Acts.

NIX. 25

men under him, and procured no small gain to the several artificers by this means: Whom therefore he one day, upon a general summons, gathered together in a great number, with all the inferior workmen who were employed about this business; and when they were met, he said, My friends, and all you honest men that now hear me, you very well know that our maintenance (which, thanks be to the gods, is a very liberal one) arises from this manufacture of making silver shrines. And therefore I thought it proper to call you together, that we may unite our counsels for its security, against the danger that threatens the whole company, of which I am satisfied you cannot but be sensible: For you all see and hear, that this Paul of Tarsus, who has unhapplly resided so long amongst us, has persuaded great numbers of people, not only of Ephesus, but almost of all the provinces of Asia, as they have occasionally visited us, and has turned them aside from the established religion, saying, that they are not true deities, nor worthy of being at all worshipped or regarded, which are made with hands: So that if this be suffered any longer, there is danger not only that this occupation of ours should be depreciated and ruined, which must be the necessary consequence of his success, but also that the celebrated temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her grandeur destroyed, whom now all Asia and the whole world worships; so that they resort hither from all parts to pay their homage

public processions in which Diana was represented in a kind of moveable chapel, resembling her great temple, in a larger proportion than these supposed models, to which some passages of antiquity undoubtedly refer, and which the Romans called *Laena*.

\* Great numbers of people, not only of Ephesus, but almost of all Asia. [Dr. Whitby observes, this is the exact rendering of the words *Επισημοί τε καὶ Ἀπὸ τῶν ἑσπερίων*; so that, as the paraphrase explains it, it may refer to what Paul had done among them at Ephesus, which was the whole that could have fallen under the observation of Demetrius and the company.

† Saying, that they are not deities, which are made with hands. [This plainly shows that the contrary opinion generally pre-

gain unto the craftsmen:

25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

26 Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded, and turned away much people, saying, That 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 the world worshippeth.

vailed, namely, that there was a kind of divinity in the images of their supposed deities, which, Elnor well shows, the heathens did think, though some of them, and particularly Maximus Tyrius, and Julian, had learnt to speak of them just as the papists now do, who indeed may seem to have borrowed some of their apologies from the heathens. See Elnor Observ. Vol. I. p. 455—459.

\* *From all Asia, and the world worships.* Diana, as many critics have observed, was known under a great variety of titles and characters, as the goddess of hunting, of travelling, of child birth, of incantments, &c. under one or another of which views she had undoubtedly a great number of votaries.

to her, to the vast advantage of our whole city, and carry home with them great numbers of our shrines, to exercise their devotion at home, till they have an opportunity of coming again to worship in her temple.

SECT.  
XLIV.  
Acts  
XIX. 27

28 And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

And such was the effect of what Demetrius said, that upon hearing [this] they were all filled with rage: and mad to think that both their trade and their religion were in danger, they ran about the city, and cried out with great violence, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.<sup>b</sup>

29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

And this outcry of theirs gave a general alarm, so that the whole city was filled with confusion; and with a wild ungovernable zeal they rushed with one accord into the theatre, where their famous games were celebrated to the honour of that deity, dragging thither Gaius and Aristarchus, two men of Macedonia, [who were] Paul's fellow-travellers.

30 And when Paul would have entered into the people, the disciples suffered him not.

And when Paul heard of the distress and danger of his friends, and could have gone in to the theatre to address himself to the people, that he might either bring them to a better temper, or at least get his friends discharged by surrendering himself, the disciples that were with him would not permit him so to expose his valuable person. And some too of the

31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him

archs (as they were called,) that is, of the principal officers chosen by the community of Asia to preside over the public games and feasts which they were used to celebrate at certain intervals in honour of their gods, as they knew Paul, and had a friendship for him, sent out some messengers to him,<sup>c</sup> and earnestly desired

<sup>b</sup> Great is Diana, &c.] Elmer has shown here, how frequently this epithet of great was given by the heathens to Jupiter, Diana, and other of their deities, to which he adds, that the ascription of it to the true God, is a scripture called magnifying him. See Elmer, Observ. Vol. I. p. 361.

<sup>c</sup> Aristarchus.] This friend and companion of Paul was afterwards his fellow-prisoner at Rome in the cause of the gospel; Col. iv. 10.

<sup>d</sup> Some of the principal officers of Asia sent to him.] It has from this and the following passage been objected by many, that the people at Ephesus were then

celebrating the public games, in honour of Diana, over which these officers presided, (as Grotius, Salmassius, and Dr. Hammond have largely shewn;) and, as it is not probable that, in such a tumultuous hour, several of them should have sent to him at once with such a message, unless they had been in the theatre together, I cannot but declare myself of the same opinion, though I know that the theatres were places in which the Greeks often met for the dispatch of public business, when there were no shows exhibited. (See Kappel, ex Xen. p. 177.) Some would render the word *ἀρχαῖς* *primates of Asia*, and I think very properly; (see

Sect. XLIV. *that he would not venture himself into the theatre, since the rage of the people was such, that if he came it would be with the utmost hazard of his life.*

Acts

XIX.

32 *Some therefore, as they stood there in the theatre, were crying one thing, and some another, according as their passions led them, or as the zeal of others prompted them; for the assembly was exceedingly confused, and the greater part did not know for what they were come together, having only joined the crowd upon the alarm that had been given by the cry of the greatness of their goddess, without learning what had excited it.*

33 *And in the midst of this confusion they thrust forward Alexander from amongst the multitude, that he might speak unto the people, the Jews also urging him on, fearing lest they, who were known to be disaffected to all kinds of idolatry, should suffer in the tumult, without being distinguished from the followers of Paul: And Alexander was willing to comply with the design, and therefore beckoning with his hand for silence, would have made a defence to the people.*

34 *But when they knew that he was a Jew, and consequently an enemy to their image worship, they would not suffer him to speak; but one voice arose from them all, and the whole multitude united as one man, crying out in a tumultuous way for about the space of two hours together, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*

35 *But the chancellor,<sup>m</sup> who was a person not*

Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. viii. § 4, p. 302—305.) 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 with which Paul had behaved, which made them thus kindly solicitous for his safety. Dr. Benson thinks, they recollected the danger to which Paul had been exposed in a combat with wild beasts in this very theatre, to which some have opposed the apostle refers, 1 Cor. xv. 32, a text which we may consider hereafter.

<sup>l</sup> *They thrust forward Alexander, &c.* Grotius thinks, this was Alexander the copper-smith, once a professed Christian, but afterwards an apostate, and an enemy to Paul; (1 Tim. i. 20; 2 Tim. iv. 14.) and he supposes it an artifice of the Jews, who knew themselves obnoxious on ac-

count of their aversion to idolatry, to employ one of their body in declaring against Paul on this public occasion. But I question, whether the word ἀποκρίσιος would have been used, had he chiefly intended an accusation against Paul; nor is it evident to me, that he had yet renounced Christianity or incurred the sentence referred to above, if this were indeed the same person, and not some other Alexander.

<sup>m</sup> *The chancellor.* Our translators have rendered the word Γραμματικὸς, the town clerk, it literally signifies the scribe or secretary; but, as he seems to have been a person of some authority, as well as learning, I thought the word chancellor, which Mr. Harrington also uses, (Works p. 338.) was preferable; nor would recorder have been much amiss. Mr. Biscoe (at

that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

32 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 Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

35 And when the



town-clerk had appeared 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

only of considerable dignity with regard to his office, but likewise of great discretion, *having pacified the people* so far as to make them tolerably silent, said, *Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there in the world, that has any intelligence of things at all, that does not know that the whole city of the Ephesians is with the most humble and careful regard devoted to the temple of the great goddess Diana, and to the worship of the miraculous [image] that fell down from Jupiter; as undisputed tradition assures us the sacred image in our temple did? Since then these things are plainly incontestable, and this celestial image is no way concerned in any censure of those made with hands, it is necessary for you to be quiet and gentle in your proceedings, and to do nothing in a precipitant manner, by which you might run yourselves into vast inconveniences and dangers before you are aware. And it is particularly important to attend to it now, because indeed you have taken a very unreasonable and unwarrantable step; for you have violently seized and brought these men into the theatre, who are neither sacrilegious*

SECT.  
XLIV.

Acts  
XIX.

35

36

37

Boyle's Lect, chap. viii. § 4, p. 303, endeavours to prove, on the testimony of Dominicus and Apuleius, 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 interposition. He appears by this speech a person of considerable prudence, and great abilities; for he urges in a few words,—that there was no need of such 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 laws, or public offences, 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.

<sup>a</sup> *The city of the Ephesians is devoted, &c.* Though this was the best way of rendering the word *εισωτη*, which on the whole occurred to me, yet I am sensible, how far it is (even with all I have added in the paraphrase, &c.) from expressing the same art and spirit of the original. It pro-

perly signifies a priest or priestess, devoted to some particular deity, whose business it is to look after the temple, and see that it be not only kept in good repair, but also neat and clean, and beautified in a proper manner: so that by the way, the word church warden among us expresses but a part of the idea.—It appears by some ancient inscriptions on coins, and other authentic testimonies, (see Mr. Biscoe, p. 306, 307; and Raphael, ex Xen. p. 177, 178,) that there were some particular persons at Ephesus who had this office; but the chancellor, with great strength and beauty of language, to express the unanimity and zeal of the whole city in the service of Diana, speaks of it as one such attendant devotee in her temple: and as *εισωτη* is compounded of a word which signifies to stoop, it imports the humility with which they were ready to stoop to the lowest office of service there.—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 Mr. Biscoe has shown by many learned quotations, p. 307, 308.) as there is likewise concerning some pictures of the virgin Mary in Popish churches.

SACT. *robbers of temples, nor blasphemers of your goddess,* which one would imagine by these exclamations of yours that they were? but who, so far as I can learn, behave themselves in a grave and orderly manner, and occasion no disturbance to the state by their private notions whatever they be. *If therefore Demetrius, and the artificers that are with him have suffered in their property, and have a charge of any private injury to offer against any one, the civil courts are held, in which they may have justice done them; or if they have any crime relating to the state to allege against any, the law directs them how they should proceed, and there are the Roman praesults to whom they may apply, who are the proper judges of such cases: Let them then bring their action and implead one another, and traverse their suit in a legal man-*

churches nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies; let them implead one another.

[Neither robbers of temples, nor blasphemers of your goddess.] It is very ungenerous in Oratio (apud Limborch, Collat. cum Jud. p. 134.) to insinuate from hence, that the fear of suffering kept Paul from declaring against the established idolatry here; and it is much more so in Lardobolusbury (Charact. Vol. III. p. 86.) 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; nor to insist on Brennius's 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 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 modest and peaceable, testimony against idolatry, the whole series of their history and writings shew. Oratio forgets, that the Jews were here silent; and both he, and the able (but often inconsistent) writer of the Characteristics, forget, how irregular a step it would have been for any Jew or

Christian to have detained an assembly, then so prudently dismissed, and how very ill timed the best religious discourse would then have been, which indeed might have left the maker of it in a great measure chargeable with all the mischief which should have followed.

[There are the Roman praesults.] I cannot but agree with the learned Mr. Basnage (Annal. Vol. I. p. 674.) that the province of Asia was at this time administered by Celer and Aelius, who were procurators after the death of Silanus, (Tacit. Annal. lib. xiii. cap. 1.) and having, as such offices sometimes had, the ensigns and ornaments of consular dignity, (Sueton. Claud. cap. 24.) might naturally be called praesults. This seems a more natural interpretation than it would be to say, that the praesults of neighbouring provinces were present at these games, and so might be referred to here; for, not now to inquire how far their power might extend out of their proper precincts, it is obvious to remark, that this could be no argument to Demetrius, who could not prosecute his action during the games, nor command the stay of these noble visitants after them. — I must not forget to own my obligation to Mr. Bacon for the clear view he has given me of the sense of this and the following verse, which I first found in him, (Boyle's Lect. chap. viii. § 6, 7, p. 308—312.) and then, with a most remarkable similarity of interpretation, in Mr. Harrington's Works, p. 322.

39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

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.

## IMPROVEMENT.

MAY 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, or 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 interest. Would to God that all artifices of this kind were to be found amongst heathens! But the spirit of these votaries to Diana has too often invaded the Christian church, and perhaps raised not a few tumults against them who have been its best

<sup>a</sup> And indeed,] Raphaelius has remarked, (Anot. ex Xen. in Act. iv. 27. & xl. 57.) that *ye* often signifies indeed, which seems to me an observation of moment.

<sup>b</sup> In danger of being called in question for the insurrection, &c.] There was a Roman law, which made it capital to raise a riot: "*Qui eorum & concursum fecerit, capite punitur*;" and it has been observed, that the original words *επινοια*

and *επινοια*, remarkably answer to those of that law.

<sup>c</sup> No cause by which we can account for this concourse.] 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, nor any other adequate one, to be assigned.

SECT. XLIV. friends.—We see how mad and furious is the rage of an incensed populace: Let us bless God that we are not exposed to it, and be thankful for that kind providence which preserved the precious life of the apostles when *after the manner of men he fought with beasts at Ephesus.* (1 Cor. xv. 32.)

Verse 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 35 & seq. The prudence of this chancellor is worthy of esteem, who found out a way to quiet this uproar: Happy had it been for him, if the good sense he shewed upon this occasion had led him to see the vanity of that idle tradition, which taught them that an image fell down from their imaginary Jupiter, or that those could be gods who were made with hands. But the god of this world hath in all ages blinded the minds of multitudes, (2 Cor. iv. 4;) and they acted like idiots in religion, when in other instances their sagacity hath commanded a deserved and universal admiration. The prevalence of idolatry through so many polished and learned, as well as savage and ignorant nations, both ancient and modern, is a sad demonstration of this. Let us pray, that they may *consider and shew themselves men.* (Isa. xlv. 8,) and *deliver their own souls* under a sensibility that they have *a lie in their right hand.* (Isa. xlv. 20.) For this the labours of Paul were employed; and the progress of that gospel he preached appears matter of great joy, when the effects of it are considered in this view. May it, like the morning light, spread from one end of the heavens to the other; while the admired vanities of the heathen are degraded, and cast (as the sacred oracles assure us they shall be) *to the moles and the bats.* (Isa. ii. 20.)

## SECT. XLV.

*Paul, having made a tour through the country of Macedonia, goes to Achaia: and returning back again through Macedonia, takes ship at Philippi, and so comes to Troas; where he held an assembly, in which the night was spent, and Eutychus, killed by a fall, was raised to life; after which Paul proceeds on his voyage.* Acts XX. 1—16.

## ACTS XX. 1.

SECT. XLV.  
ACTS XX. 1

WE have given an account of the insurrection at Ephesus, how it was excited by Demetrius and his workmen, and prudently quieted by the interposition of the chancellor. *Now after the tumult was ceased, Paul calling the disciples to him, and embracing them with great affection, departed from Ephesus after the long abode he had made there: And having passed through Troas in his way, he crossed the sea*

ACTS XX. 1.  
AND after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and

departed for to go into Macedonia. from thence to go into Macedonia,<sup>a</sup> to visit the Philippians, Thessalonians, and Bereans, to whom (as was observed before) he had sent Timothy and Frastus, while he stayed in Asia, (chap. xix. 22.) and from whence Timothy was now returned, and left behind him at Ephesus.

SECT.  
XIV.  
ACTS  
XX. 1

2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece. And after Paul was come to Macedonia, as he was going through those parts,<sup>b</sup> he zealously pursued the work in which he was engaged; and having exhorted the faithful he found there, and comforted them with much discourse, he came from thence into Greece, that he might visit the churches at Corinth, and in the neighbouring cities of Achaia. And when he had<sup>3</sup> three months; and continued [there] three months,<sup>c</sup> he was now

<sup>a</sup> Departed from Ephesus—to go into Macedonia.] It is very natural to conclude, (as Dr. Benson and many others do) that Paul now left Timothy at Ephesus, and that he refers to it, 1 Tim. i. 3, he being by this time returned from that embassy mentioned Acts xix. 22.—As the apostle went through Troas, which lay in his way to Macedonia, he met with a fair opportunity of preaching the gospel there; (2 Cor. ii. 12;) but, not receiving those tidings of his friends at Corinth which he expected by Titus, he passed on to Macedonia without further delay (ibid. ver. 13.) intending to proceed to Corinth from thence, since he could not visit that church first, as he had once intended; 2 Cor. i. 15, 16. Compare 1 Cor. xvi. 5, 6.

<sup>b</sup> Going through those parts.] In Macedonia, after great anxiety in his mind, he at length met with Titus, who brought him a comfortable account of the state of affairs at Corinth; 2 Cor. vii. 5—7; and in particular, what he said of their liberal disposition gave the apostle reason to glory in them, and to excite the Macedonians to imitate their generosity, in assisting the contribution he was now raising for the poor Christians in Judaea, which was one great part of his business in this journey, 2 Cor. ix. 2; viii. 1—14. The Second Epistle to the Corinthians was therefore written from Macedonia at this time, (see the places last quoted,) and was sent by Titus, who on his occasion returned to get the collection in still greater forwardness.—This tour through Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, and Berea, would of course take up several months; and

no doubt, many circumstances would occur at most of these places, which made Paul's presence with them for a while highly expedient.—It seems probable that Paul wrote his First Epistle to Timothy from hence, expecting to return to Ephesus again, and then designing that Timothy should continue there till he came, (1 Tim. iii. 14, 15; iv. 15,) though Providence ordered the matter otherwise. I shall hereafter, if God permit, mention the reasons which induce me at present to believe, that Paul wrote his First Epistle to Timothy now, rather than after he was set at liberty from his first imprisonment at Rome, to which time Bp. Pearson (Annal. Paul. ad. an. 64. p. 22.) and Mr. Le Clerc, (Ecol. Hist. cent. i. an. 65. sect. 2,) refer it. The principal of them are well stated by Dr. Benson, Hist. Vol. II. p. 167—199, than which I remember nothing more satisfactory on the subject. See also Mr. Hoyle's Works, Vol. II. p. 293, 294.

<sup>c</sup> Continued there three months.] It seems that Paul met with business here, and in other places, which detained him longer than he expected. From hence he probably wrote his celebrated Epistle to the Romans; for it plainly appears, that epistle was writ before his imprisonment at Rome, and in it he speaks of a collection made by the Churches of Macedonia and Achaia, with which he was hastening to Jerusalem, Romans xv. 23—25; a circumstance, which fixes it to this time. It also appears from Romans xvi. 21, that Timothy and Sosipater, (or Sopater, one of the noble Bereans,) were with him when that epistle was wrote, which agrees with the fourth verse of this chapter, by

SECT.  
XLV.Acts  
XX. 3.

ready to set out from thence with what had been collected for the poor brethren in Judea; but as he understood that an ambush was laid for him by the Jews, when he was about to embark for Syria, he upon this account thought it advisable to return by way of Macedonia, so that the churches there had an happy opportunity of receiving a third visit from him.

- 4 And Sopater the Berean not only attended him in his Macedonian journey till he took shipping, but crossed the sea with him, and accompanied him as far as what is called the proper Asia; and there went also with him some of the Thessalonians, namely, Aristarchus and Secundus; and also Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, who was now come to him from Ephesus: And of the Asiatics, or natives of the proconsular Asia, there were also in the number of those who joined their company, Tychicus and Trophimus.<sup>a</sup> These

when the Jews 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, Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tychicus, and Trophimus.

which we find, they both attended him into Asia; and consequently, if the date of the first Epistle to Timothy be as it is fixed above, Paul found some unexpected reason to send for that evangelist to come to him from Ephesus, to which place (as we find from what follows,) the apostle did not according to his own intention, return.

<sup>a</sup> And of the Asiatics, Tychicus and Trophimus. The several persons mentioned in this verse are thought by some to have been joined with 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. (Miscell. Saur. Abstract. p. 36, 37.) We know but few particulars of most of them, from what is said concerning them in other places. — Sopater, who in some ancient manuscripts is called the Son of Pyrrus, is generally thought to be the same with Sopater, whom Paul has mentioned as his kinsman, Rom. xvi. 21. Aristarchus of Thessalonica is mentioned before as a Macedonian, Acts xix. 29; he attended Paul in his voyage to Rome, Acts xxvii. 2, and was his fellow-labourer, Phil. in. ver. 24, and a fellow-prisoner with him. Col. iv. 10, 11. Secundus is not mentioned any where but here. — Gaius of Derbe, if he be not a different person of the same name, is elsewhere mentioned as a man of Macedonia, Acts xix. 26, of which, as some suppose, he was a native, but descended of a family that came from

Derbe: He was baptized by Paul at Corinth, 1 Cor. i. 14, and entertained him as his host while he abode there; Rom. xvi. 25. and afterwards St. John directs his Third Epistle to him. — Timothy was a native of Lystra, Acts xvi. 1, whom Paul particularly honoured with his friendship, 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: 2 Cor. Philip. Col. 1 and 2 Thes. Philem. He frequently attended the apostle in his travels, and laboured with him in the service of the gospel, in which he was so diligent and zealous, that it is no wonder he was imprisoned for it, Heb. xiii. 23. Tychicus of Asia was often sent on messages by Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 12; Tit. iii. 12, and more than once is recommended by him to the churches as a beloved brother, and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the 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. Eph. iv. 21, 22; Col. iv. 7, 8. Trophimus, who was of Ephesus, appears to have been a Gentile convert, whom we find afterwards with Paul at Jerusalem, Acts 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 Derbe and Lystra, which lay in Asia Minor, it is plain they

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 them to Troas in five days, where we abode seven days.

7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul

two last mentioned having information of the time and place where they might expect us, going before to Asia, stayed for us a while at Troas, where we were to land.

And some days after they had left us, we set sail from Philippi, after the days of unleavened bread were ended, and crossing part of the Egean sea, came to them at Troas in five days,\* where we continued seven days, conversing with the Christians there.†

And on the first day of the week, when the disciples, as it was usual with them on that day, met together to break bread, that is, to celebrate the eucharist in remembrance of the death of our blessed Redeemer,‡ Paul being now to take

serm. XLV.

Acts XX. 5

are so called, as being natives of the Proconsular Asia.—I shall add only, that it seems from the construction of the original, that only Tychicus and Trophimus went before to Troas, to whom I have accordingly restrained it in the paraphrase.

\* *Came to them at Troas in five days.* Paul in his former progress came from Troas to Philippi in two days; Acts xvi. 11, 12; but crossing the sea is very uncertain, and it was easy for the voyage to be lengthened by contrary winds, so that we need not to explain it of the time that passed, before they joined the company that tarried for them. Paul did not set out from Philippi, till after the passover week; and, if his voyage was deferred, (as some have thought,) that no offence might be given by his travelling at a season which the Jews accounted so peculiarly holy, the same reason would induce those that went before him not to begin their voyage at that time: so that Paul seems to have tarried some days after them, before he set sail: nor is there any reason to suppose with Dr. Lightfoot, Chron. in loc. that those five days were not spent in sailing down the river Strymon from Philippi, and crossing part of the Egean sea, but that Paul took a longer circuit, and went first to Corinth, before he came to them at Troas.

† *Here we continued seven days.* This Paul might choose to do so much the rather, as he had declined such great views of service, as were opened 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 in

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 Luke speaks here, and all along afterwards, that he attended him 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; Acts xvi. 12, & seq. Compare note † on Acts xvi. 10, p. 255.

‡ *When the disciples met together to break bread,* that is, to celebrate the eucharist. It is strange, that Mr. Barclay, in his Apology, p. 475. should argue from ver. 11, that this was only a common meal, and not the Lord's supper. It is well known, 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, it is no wonder that it should be mentioned as the end of their assembling; whereas, had nothing more than a common meal been intended, Luke would have hardly thought that worth mentioning, especially when Paul being with them on a Lord's day, they would so naturally have something far nobler and more important in view, in which accordingly we find them employed; and it is quite unreasonable to suppose they spent their time in feasting, which neither the occasion nor the hour would well admit.—The argument which some overzealous 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, (Paul's Hist. lib. iii. p. 434.) that it is astonishing, any who profess to believe the divine autho-

SECT.  
XLV  
Acts  
XX. 8

his leave of them, and about to depart on the morrow, preached to them with great fervency, and was so carried out in his work, that he continued his discourse until midnight. And by the way, there were many lamps in the upper room in which they were assembled; for whatever the malice of their enemies might insinuate, the Christians held not their assemblies in darkness, but took all prudent precautions to avoid every

9 suspicion. But this occasioned them to keep the windows open to prevent the immoderate heat of the room; and a certain young man, whose name was Eutychus, who was there sitting in an open window,<sup>b</sup> fell into a profound sleep; and as Paul continued his discourse a long time, he was so overpowered with sleep, that he fell down from the third story to the ground, and was

10 taken up dead. This threw the whole assembly into disorder; and Paul upon this breaking off his discourse, went down and fell upon him, and taking him in his arms, said, Do not make any disturbance, for I assure you that his life is in him,<sup>c</sup> and God will quickly restore him to per-

11 fect health. And having thus composed and quieted their minds, Paul returned to his work, and going up again into the chamber where the assembly met, and having broken bread and eaten with the rest of the disciples, in commemoration of the death of Christ, when this solemnity was over, he conversed with them a considerable time longer, even till break of day;<sup>d</sup> and so went out

preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow, and 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.

city of that council, should ever have presumed to plead it again.

<sup>b</sup> *Sitting in an open window.* [<sup>a</sup> The word *Sine* plainly signifies an open window, which had a sort of wooden curtain, or little door, which was not open, that the room might not be overheated with so much company and so many lamps.—It is well known, the ancients had not yet glass in their windows, though the manner of making that elegant and useful commodity was invented long before.

<sup>c</sup> *His life is in him.*] Some have imagined, that, as God immediately intended to raise this young man from the dead, the soul still remained in the body, though not united to it. (Cradock, Apost. Hist. Vol. II. p. 129, not.) But, if we

conceive of the soul as purely an immaterial substance, I must own myself at a loss to guess what such kind of expressions mean. It is well known that *live* often signifies *life*; and the words *only import*, that, though he was *dead before*, the apostle now perceived some symptoms of *his revival*.—I only add, that *he fell upon him*, may signify that Paul threw himself on the body, as Elisha and Elisha did on those they intended to raise, 1 Kings xvii. 21; 2 Kings iv. 24; and that *embracing him* may either signify *his embracing him* at the same time, or *his lifting him up in his arms* with the assistance of some that stood near.

<sup>d</sup> *Conversed till break of day.*] A remarkable instance of zeal in Paul, when



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, intending 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.

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he feared, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

from that house, and departed from Troas, to meet the ship which was to take him aboard at Assos. And before the assembly broke up, they brought the youth into the room alive and well, and were not a little comforted at so happy an event; and the rather, as they might apprehend that some reproaches would have been occasioned by his death, if he had not been so recovered, because it happened in a Christian assembly, which had been protracted so long beyond the usual bounds of time on this extraordinary occasion.

But we that were to go with Paul went before into the ship, and sailed round the neighbouring promontory to Assos, where we were to take up Paul; for so he had appointed, choosing himself to go afoot from Troas thither, that he might thus enjoy a little more of the company of his Christian brethren, of whom he was then to take a long leave. And as soon as he joined us at Assos, according to his own appointment, we took him up into the ship, and came to the celebrated port of Mitylene in the island of Lesbos.

And sailing from thence, we came the next day over against Chios, the island so famous for producing some of the finest Grecian wines; and the day following we touched at the island of Samos: and steering from thence towards the Asian shore, having stayed a while at Trogyllium, we put into the mouth of the river Mæander, and came the day after to Miletus. For Paul, under whose direction the vessel was, had determined to sail by Ephesus, which lay on the other side of the bay, without calling there; and much less would he go up the river to Colosse, or Laodicea, that he might not be obliged to spend any considerable time in Asia; for he earnestly endeavoured, if it were possible for him to do it, to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Nevertheless, he sent for the ministers of

SECT.  
XIV.

Acts  
XX. 12

in a journey, and when he had been so long employed in public exercises; perhaps under an apprehension, like that which he expressed soon after to the elders of Ephesus, (ver. 25,) that he should never have an opportunity of seeing these his friends together any more.

[I endeavoured to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.] It is observed by Chrysostom, (as was hinted on a former occa-

sion of this kind, note on Acts xviii. 21, p. 276,) 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 time.—In consequence of this, some journeys might perhaps be saved, and many prejudices against his person and ministry obviated; and, which was particularly considerable, the readi-

sect. Ephesus, and made a very remarkable discourse to them, of which we shall give a particular account in the next section.

Acts  
XX. 16.

## IMPROVEMENT.

Verse 1, 2 WITH what pleasure would Paul, and the Christians of Macedonia and Achaia, enjoy these happy interviews with each other! A blessed earnest no doubt it was, of that superior pleasure which they shall meet *in the day of the Lord*, when (as he had testified to some of them) they shall appear as *his joy and his crown*. (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.)

We may assure ourselves, that his converse with his friends at Troas was peculiarly delightful; and may reasonably hope, that though one of the auditory was overcome by the infirmity of nature, and cast into a deep sleep during so long a discourse as Paul made, yet that many others were all wakeful, and gave a joyful attention. Nor can the apostle be censured for imprudence, in protracting the divine exercise in such an extraordinary circumstance, beyond the limits which would commonly be convenient.

9-12 Eutychus was unhappily overtaken, and he had like to have paid dear for it: His death would, no doubt, have been peculiarly grievous to his pious friends, not only as sudden and accidental, but as the sad effect of having slept under the word of God, under the preaching of an apostle. Yet even in that view of it, how much more inexcusable had he been, had it been in the broad light of the day, in a congregation where the service would hardly have filled up two hours? Where yet we sometimes see Christian worshippers (if they may be called worshippers) slumbering and sleeping; a sight, I believe, never to be seen in a Mahometan mosque, and seldom in a pagan temple. Had those near Eutychus, that had observed his slumber, out of a foolish complaisance forbore to awake him, they would have brought perhaps greater guilt upon their own souls than he upon his; and when his eyes and ears had been sealed in death, might perhaps have reflected upon themselves with a painful severity, as having been accessory to his ruin. But the mercy of the Lord joined with and added efficacy to the compassion of Paul, his servant; in consequence of which, the life of this youth was restored, and he was delivered well to his friends; Whereas, many that have allowed themselves to trifle under sermons, and set themselves to sleep, or who, as it were, have been dreaming awake, have perished for ever with the neglected sound of

est and best opportunity taken of distributing to those Jewish Christians, that lived perhaps at some distance from Jerusalem, 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 Acts xxi. 27, & seq.

the gospel in their ears, have slept the sleep of eternal death, and are fallen to rise no more. SECT. XLV.

We see Paul solicitous to be present at Jerusalem at Pentecost, declining a visit to his Ephesian friends, amongst whom he had lately made so long an abode; thereby, no doubt, denying himself a most pleasing entertainment, out of regard to the views of superior usefulness: Thus must we learn to act; and if we would be of any importance in life, and pass our final account honourably and comfortably, must project schemes of usefulness, and resolutely adhere to them, though it obliges us to abstract or restrain ourselves from the converse of many in whose company we might find some of the most agreeable entertainments we are to expect on our way to heaven. Happy shall we be, if, at length meeting them at the end of our journey, we enjoy an everlasting pleasure in that converse, which fidelity to our common Master has now obliged us to interrupt. Ver. 16

## SECT. XLVI.

*Paul's pathetic and important discourse to the elders of the Ephesian church, when he took his leave of them at Miletus. Acts XX. 17, to the end.*

ACTS XX. 17.  
AND from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

ACTS XX. 17.  
IT was observed in the preceding section, that Paul's concern to be at Jerusalem by Pentecost, prevented his going to Ephesus to visit his Christian friends there; but as he was not far from thence, and was desirous to see them, he took this opportunity of sending a message to Ephesus from the neighbouring city of Miletus, while the ship in which he was embarked lay at anchor there, and called thither the elders of the Ephesian church.\*

18 And when they were come to him, he made a very affectionate discourse, and said to them, You well know, my dear brethren, how I have been

\* Called thither the elders of the church.] It is so plain, that these elders are in the 20th verse called bishops, that the most candid writers of our own establishment allow the distinction between bishops and presbyters not to have been of so early a date. Compare Phil. i. 1; Tit. i. 5, 7; 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, which are equally strong to the same purpose. Dr. Hammond would indeed evade the argument by saying, that he called together all the diocesan bishops of all the neighbouring parts of Asia. But it is certain, the con-

gregations of Asia, Galatia, Macedonia, &c. are spoken of in Paul's writings as distinct churches; and it is difficult to conceive, how such a number of diocesans could have been called together on so short a warning, without supposing them less circumscriptions in point of residence, than one would have suspected such primitive ministers should have been; nor can we imagine, that Paul would have connived at so gross an irregularity, and so dangerous a precedent, had he found it out among them.

SECT. XLVI.  
Acts XX. 17.

- SECT. *conversant among you, and in what manner I*  
 XLVI. *have behaved, all the time which has elapsed*  
 Acts *from the first day in which I entered into Asia;*<sup>b</sup>  
 XX. 18 *Not only instructing others in the principles of*  
 19 *divine truth, but in the whole tenor of my con-*  
*duct serving the Lord Jesus Christ myself, with*  
*all humility and lowliness of mind, and with*  
*many tears of tender affection, and in the midst*  
*of many trials which befel me, especially by*  
*means of the ambushes which the malice of the*  
*Jews was continually laying for me; by which*  
*they endeavoured as much as possible to destroy*  
*both my person and my reputation, and to frus-*  
 20 *trate all the success of my labours. Neverthe-*  
*less you know that nothing discouraged me from*  
*endeavouring to discharge my duty, [and] can*  
*witness for me how I have suppressed nothing that*  
*was advantageous, or which could be of any ser-*  
*vice to your edification; not [neglecting] to*  
*preach to you, and to teach you publicly in wor-*  
*shipping assemblies, and as God gave me op-*  
*portunity, from house to house; inculcating in*  
*visits, and in private meetings, the same great*  
*doctrines which I declared in the synagogues,*  
*and other places of concourse and resort:*  
 21 *Testifying and urging with the greatest earnest-*  
*ness and affection, both to the Jews and Greeks,*  
*the great importance and absolute necessity of*  
*repentance towards God, and of a cordial and*  
*living faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, in order*  
*to their eternal salvation.*  
 22 *And now, behold I am going bound, as it were,*  
*in the Spirit, under the strong impulse of the*  
*Spirit of God upon my mind, which intimates*  
*my duty to me in such a manner, that I can*  
*neither omit nor delay it; and am firmly re-*  
*solved to proceed to Jerusalem; not particular-*  
*ly knowing what I shall suffer in that city or*

first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations which befel me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 And 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 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing

<sup>b</sup> *How I have been conversant among you all the time, &c.]* This can only mean, that, during the whole time of his stay among them, he had behaved himself in the manner afterwards described; and consequently, there can be no room to infer from hence, as Dr. Hammond does, that all the Asian bishops were present. As by far the greatest part of the time had been spent at Ephesus, and the ministers there could not but know how he had acted and conversed in the near

neighbourhood, it is evident he might use this expression to them alone with great propriety.

<sup>c</sup> *Testifying and urging, &c.]* The word *ἀποκρίσις* sometimes signifies *to prove a thing by testimony*, Acts 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. 15. It is plain, that we are to take it in the latter sense in this place; but both are included, ver. 21.

the things that shall befall me there:

23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city; saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

27 For I have not

what the things may be that shall befall me in it, when I come thither: *Excepting that the Holy Spirit testifies, in almost every city through which I pass, saying, by the mouth of the divinely inspired prophets, whom I find among the Christians there, that bonds and afflictions await me. But I make no account of any of these things, nor do I esteem my very life precious to myself on such an occasion; so that I may but faithfully and joyfully finish my course as a Christian and an apostle, and fulfil the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, [even] to testify the truth, and urge the importance, of the glorious gospel of the free and abundant grace of God, to which I am myself so highly obliged, beyond all expression, and beyond all the returns that I can ever make, by any labour or suffering I may undergo for its service.*

*And now, behold, I know that ye all, my dear brethren, among whom I have so long conversed, preaching the kingdom of God, shall not see my face any more; for if I should ever return to these parts of the world again, it is particularly intimated to me, that I shall no more come to Ephesus. Wherefore I sent for you, that I may take my solemn leave of you, and I testify to you all this day, that if any of you, or of the people under your care, perish, I at least am clear from the blood of all men. For God is my witness, that I have sincerely laboured for*

SECT. XLVI.  
Acts XX. 23

*4* Nor do I esteem my life precious to myself. 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 an happy immortality.

*5* I know, that ye all among whom I have conversed, &c. The late learned, moderate, and pious Dr. Edmund Calamy observes, that, if the apostles had been used as some assert, to ordain diocesan bishops in their last visitation; this had been a proper time to do it; or that, if Timothy had been already ordained bishop of Ephesus, Paul, instead of calling them all bishops, would surely have given some hint to enforce Timothy's authority

among them, especially considering what is added, ver. 29, 30. See Dr. Calamy's Defence, Vol. I. p. 78, & seq. Ignatius would have talked in a very different style and manner on this head.

*6* Shall not see my face any more. I cannot think, either that the force of the expression *οχι οτι ουδεις ομιλει* is sufficiently expressed by saying *Ye shall not all see my face any more*, or that such an intimation, which might possibly concern only one or two, should have occasioned such a general lamentation as is expressed, ver. 38, and therefore I conclude, that the apostle had received some particular revelation, that, if he should ever return to these parts of Asia again, (as from Philem. ver. 22. I think it probable he might,) yet that he should not have an opportunity of calling at Ephesus, or of seeing the ministers whom he now addressed.

the salvation of all that heard me, and have *not declined to declare to you with the utmost freedom and integrity all the counsel of God;*<sup>g</sup> 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 with him, in the most plain and faithful manner, whatever censure, contempt, or opposition, I might incur by such a declaration.

28 Therefore, my brethren, as you desire to live and die with comfort, and to give up your final account well in that day which I have so often mentioned to you, I solemnly charge you, that you *take heed to yourselves, and to the whole flock<sup>h</sup> over which the Holy Spirit has constituted and appointed you inspectors or bishops:*<sup>i</sup> See then that you act worthy of that important charge, and be careful diligently *to feed the church of God, which he hath redeemed with his own precious blood,*<sup>k</sup> graciously becoming incarnate for its salvation, and submitting to the severest sufferings and death, in that human nature which for this purpose he united to the divine.

29 Wonder not that I give you this charge in so

shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you over-seers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know

<sup>g</sup> *Not declined to declare to you with the utmost freedom and integrity.*] My learned and ingenious friend, the reverend Mr. Brookell (in his Christian Warfare, p. 33, not.) has proved by some very apposite quotations from Demosthenes and Lucian, that the proper import of the word *declinaw*, 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.

<sup>h</sup> *Take heed—to the whole flock.*] A proper concern for the safety and prosperity of the flock would no doubt lead them to guard against the admission of such persons into the ministry, as were like to hurt the church, and to do what they could towards forming others to to that important office, and admitting them in. It with due solemnity. But, as the Ephesian church was for the present supplied with ministers, it was not so immediate a care as their preaching, and therefore did not require such express mention.

<sup>i</sup> *Over which the Holy Spirit has constituted you bishops.*] As it was by the operation of the Holy Spirit that they were qualified for the high office of the Christian ministry, so there was reason to be-

lieve, that the apostles and elders who might concur in setting them apart to it, and the several members of the Ephesian church, who chose to them such a relation to that society, were under the guidance and direction of that sacred agent: and the expression shews, as good Mr. Baxter well observes, (Works, Vol. II. p. 284.) how absurd it is for any to reject the ministry in general, under a pretence that they have the Holy Ghost to teach them.

<sup>k</sup> *The church of God, which he hath redeemed with his own blood.*] How very little the reason there is to follow the few copies, which read *Kozor* instead of *God*, the reverend Messrs. Enty and Lavigne have so fully shewn, in their dispute with Mr. Joseph Hallett on this text, that I think 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 also God with us, God manifest in the flesh; and I cannot but apprehend, that it was by the special direction of the Holy Spirit, that so remarkable an expression was used.—Raphelcus has preserved from destruction, (Not. ex Horod. p. 383.)

this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

strict a manner; for, besides the weighty reasons for it which I hinted above, *I know this, that after my departure* from the churches in these parts, notwithstanding all I have already done to preserve discipline and truth among you, (1 Tim. i. 20.) seducing teachers, like so many grievous and mischievous wolves, will enter in among you, who, with unwarrantable and pernicious views, having no mercy on the flock, will fall upon it with voracious eagerness and overbearing violence, and make a terrible havoc, out of a mean and wicked regard to their own private and secular interest: *Yea*, which

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

is yet more lamentable, even from among your own selves proud and factious men shall arise, speaking perverse things, contrary to sound doctrine, in order to draw away disciples from the purity and simplicity of the Christian faith, as I delivered it to you, that they may follow after them, till they are destroyed with them. Watch therefore with all diligence and care, remember

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every

therefore with all diligence and care, remember. 31  
ing that for the space of three years, during which I abode at Ephesus, or in the neighbouring parts, I ceased not to warn every one to

[*Grievous wolves*] Some, thinking that the word *Aspic* properly signifies *the strength*, would render it *oppressive*; but I see no reason for departing from our English Version. Their eager and overbearing temper made them and not grievous to the Christian church, though destitute of secular power. The apostle evidently makes a distinction between the wolves who were to break in upon them from without, and the perverse teachers that were to arise from among themselves. I interpret both of seducers who called themselves Christians, (as false prophets are called by Christ wolves in sheep's clothing, Mat. vii. 15.) for 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 and condemned doctrines of Hymeneus and Alexander; compare 2 Tim. i. 15, ii. 17, 18. with 1 Tim. i. 20. as also those that afterwards introduced the Nicolaitan principles and practices, of which Christ complains as prevailing here, Rev. ii. 6. as well as in the neighbouring city of Pergamus. (*Ibid.* ver. 14, 15.) So that the argument which some have urged from hence, to prove that the First Epistle to Timothy was writ after this meeting, is quite inconclusive.

[*For the space of three years*] Mr. L'Enfant and some other critics conclude, that those years are to be reckoned from his first arrival at Ephesus, chap. xviii. 19. But it is so plain, that he made no stay then, and that it was a considerable time before he returned thither, (compare chap. xix. 1.) that it seems to me much more probable, that though, after his preaching three months in the synagogue he taught only two years in the school of Tyrannus, chap. xix. 8—10, he spent three years in or about this city. Compare note <sup>c</sup> on Acts xix. 8, p. 282, and note <sup>d</sup> on Acts xix. 10, *ibid.*

SECT. whom I had access, *by night and by day,*<sup>n</sup> with one night and day  
 30. 1. *tears* in mine eyes, which manifested the ten- with tears.  
 31. 1. derness and sincerity of my concern for their  
 32. 1. happiness. Let it then be your care, that a  
 XX. church planted by me with so much labour and  
 solicitude of soul, may not be ravaged and over-  
 thrown by the enemy, but that it may long con-  
 tinue to flourish.

32 *And now, brethren,* as the providence of God is calling me away, and appointing me other scenes of labour or suffering, *I most heartily and affectionately recommend you to God and to the word of his grace,* to his gospel and blessing, to his presence and spirit; [*even*] *to him that is able to edify* and build you up in your holy faith,<sup>o</sup> and to give you at length *an inheritance* of eternal life and glory, *among all that are sanctified* by divine grace, and so prepared for it.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

33 As for me, it is a great pleasure to reflect upon it, that I have a testimony in my own conscience, and in yours, that I have not directed my ministry to any mercenary views of pleasing any, how distinguished soever their circumstances might be, nor sought by any methods to enrich myself among you: *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or costly raiment,* but have contented myself with a plain and laborious life:

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 *Yea, you yourselves know,* that far from having any secular or worldly designs in preaching the gospel, *these hands,* which I am now stretching out among you, *have ministered* by their labour to my own necessities, and even have assisted to support those that were with me.

34 Yea, you yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

(Compare 1 Cor. iv. 12; 1 Thess. ii. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8, 9.) In which, as well as in other re-

35 I have shewed

<sup>n</sup> *By night and by day.*] This may probably intimate, that sometimes they had their night-meetings, either about the time of the tumult, to avoid offence; or because many of the Christians, being poor, were obliged, as Paul himself was, to spend a considerable part of the day in secular labours. Compare ver. 34.

<sup>o</sup> *Even to him that is able, &c.*] Though the gospel may be said to be able to edify men, as the scriptures are undoubtedly said to be able to make them wise unto salvation, (2 Tim. iii. 15.) yet it seems something harsh to say, that doctrines or writings can give us an inheritance.

Some have explained τῷ λόγῳ, *the word*, as signifying *Christ*, to whom it is evident the operations may be ascribed; compare Mat. xvi. 18; Col. iii. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 8. but, as I do not remember that Christ is ever called the word of God's grace, I rather suppose, that τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ refers to *Christ*, since God was evidently the last person mentioned before; and, as it is certain that, whatever the word does, God does by it, this must be acknowledged to be the sense, whether the construction be, or be not, admitted. Compare Rom. xvi. 25—27; and Jude, ver. 24, 25.



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.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him.

38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

[To visit the infirm.] The word *ἀσθενῶν* has exactly this signification, and as Eusebius shows at *Large, Not. ex. Hierol. p. 284, & seq.* may express either sickness or poverty, as the Hebrew word *עָנִי* also does. (See my Sermon on compassion to the sick, p. 6, 7.) It must here signify, to be sore, such poor people, as are disabled some way or another from maintaining themselves by their own labour. Compare 1 *ph. iv. 24.*

[Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, &c.] This is a true and precious monument of Apostolical tradition, which, by being written in these authentic memoirs, is happily preserved. Dr. Tillotson, Vol. III. p. 347, Monsieur Ablancourt, *Apoph. Anc. p. 3*, Grotius, and some other writ-

spects, I have set you an example, and by the conduct I have observed among you, as well as by the doctrine that I taught you, have shewed you all things that relate to your duty, how that thus labouring as I have done, you ought to assist the needy and infirm, who are not able to maintain themselves; and should be careful to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself, while he conversed with his disciples, said "It is much happier to give than to receive." See to it therefore, in that ministerial character which you bear, that you above all others, be an example to the flock, of a generous and compassionate temper; and instead of making yourselves burthensome, be as helpful to them as you possibly can, both in their temporal and spiritual interests.

And having said these things, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all in the most fervent and affectionate manner, and with the tenderest expressions of the most cordial friendship took his leave of them. And there was great lamentation on this occasion among all those that were present; and falling upon Paul's neck, they embraced and kissed him with great affection, and with many tears; Especially grieving for that melancholy word which he spake, and which immediately had struck their very hearts, when he told them, that they should see his face no more in those parts, where they had so long enjoyed the benefit of his ministry, inspection, and converse. And thus they conducted him to the ship, commending his person to the protection, and his labours to the blessing of his great Master.

ters, have quoted passages from Plutarch, Seneca, and others of the ancients, bearing some resemblance to it.

[That they should see his face no more.] As this, which is St. Luke's own explanation, leaves no room for the ambiguity, which might be imagined in the expression used in ver. 25, it seems to me most evidently to prove, that the First Epistle to Timothy could not, as Bishop Pearson so earnestly contends, *Op. Post. Dias. l. cap. ix. § 5*, be written after this, and so late as the year 63; and consequently it appears to overthrow all that he or others have built on that supposition, and greatly to confirm the argument suggested above in note 6.

SECT.

XLVI.

Acts

XX. 35

## IMPROVEMENT.

13. *act.* THOUGH these elders of Ephesus were to see the face of the  
 14. *slvr.* apostle no more, which was indeed just matter of lamentation,  
 15. *Verac* yet we would hope this excellent discourse of his continued in  
 16, 18 their minds, and was as a nail fastened in a sure place. May all  
 17, 18 Christians, and especially all ministers, that read it, retain a  
 lively remembrance of it.

19 May we learn of this great apostle, to serve the Lord with hu-  
 mility and affection! May those who are called to preside in as-  
 20 people nothing that is profitable for them; and, not contenting  
 themselves with public instructions, may they also teach from  
 house to house, shewing the same temper in private converse  
 which they express while ministering in the assemblies: and tes-  
 21 tifying, as matter of universal and perpetual importance, repen-  
 tance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: And, O  
 that the divine blessing may attend these remonstrances, that  
 many may every where repent and believe!

22 May all ministers learn the exalted sentiments and language of  
 23, 24 this truly Christian hero; and each of them be able to say, under  
 the greatest difficulties and discouragements, in the view of bonds  
*and afflictions*, and even of *martyrdom* itself, *None of these things*  
*move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I may finish*  
*my course with joy, and may fulfil the ministry which I have re-*  
*ceived of the Lord Jesus: to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

25 Such resolutions may they form when they enter on their  
 office, and may they act upon them in discharging every part  
 of it: taking heed to themselves, and to the respective flocks over  
 which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers: Accordingly  
 26 may they take the oversight thereof not by constraint but willing-  
 27 ly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; (1 Pet. v. 2;) co-  
 vetting no man's silver, or gold, or raiment; nor affecting to en-  
 rich or aggrandize themselves or their families, but always ready  
 28 to relieve the necessitous according to their ability, remember-  
 29 ing this precious word of the Lord Jesus, so happily preserved,  
 especially in this connection, that it is more blessed to give than  
 30 to receive. Thus while they are not shunning to declare in the  
 course of their public ministry the whole counsel of God, may  
 they also be examples to the flock of an uniform, steady, and  
 31 resolute piety: And to quicken them to it, may they often  
 reflect, that the church of God committed to their trust was re-  
 deemed by his own blood! May it be impressed deeply on all our  
 hearts, that we are entrusted with the care of those precious  
 souls for whom our divine Redeemer bled and died! May we  
 therefore see to it, that we are watchful to preserve them from  
 every danger; that we warn them day and night with tears; and,  
 in a word, that we order our whole behaviour so, that when

we must take our final leave of them, we may be able to testify as in the sight of God, that we are clear from the blood of all men.

Such ministers may God raise up to his church in every future age; such may his grace make all that are already employed in the work; and for this purpose let every one who wishes well to the common cause of Christ and of souls join in recommending us to God, and to the word of his grace, whence we are to draw our instructions and our supports: This will be a means, under the divine blessing, to keep us from falling, in the midst of all dangers and temptations; till at length he give us an inheritance with all the saints among whom we have laboured, that they who sow, and reap, may rejoice together. Amen.

SECT.  
XLVI.  
Verse

26  
32

SECT. XLVII.

*The apostle proceeds in his voyage from Miletus to Casarea, and resolutely pursues his journey to Jerusalem, notwithstanding repeated warnings from inspired persons of the danger he must encounter there. Acts XXI. 1—16.*

ACTS XXI. 1.

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 Phœnicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

ACTS XXI. 1.

IT was with difficulty Paul and his company had parted from the elders of the church of Ephesus; but after the instructions he had given them, he was determined to pursue his voyage; *And as soon as we had withdrawn ourselves from them, and had set sail from Miletus, we came with a direct course to the island of Coos; and the next day to that of Rhodes, and from thence to the port of Patara, a city which lay on the continent, in the territory of Lycia.*

*And finding there a ship that was passing over to Phœnicia, quitting the vessel which had brought us hither, we went aboard this other, and set sail. And coming within sight of Cyprus, we pursued our voyage without touching there; and leaving it on the left hand, we sailed by the southern coast of that island to Syria, and landed at the celebrated city of Tyre, the principal port of Phœnicia, for there the ship was to unload its freight. And we continued there at*

*Tyre seven days, finding a number of persons in that city who were disciples of our common Lord; among whom there were some who told Paul by the inspiration of the Spirit, if he tendered his own liberty and safety, not to go up*

SECT.  
XLVII.  
Acts  
XXI. 1

SECT. XLVII. *to Jerusalem,*<sup>a</sup> since it would certainly expose him to great hazard, and very threatening dangers would await him there.

Acts XXI. 5

*But when we had finished these seven days, we departed from thence, and went our way with a full resolution of embarking again to proceed to Jerusalem, notwithstanding all these admonitions; as Paul deliberately judged, that all the sufferings he might meet with in the course of his ministry would tend to the furtherance of the gospel, and that it was his duty to fulfil his engagements to the churches, in delivering their aims to the brethren there, whatever might happen: And though he did not yield to the persuasion of his friends at Tyre, yet they omitted no imaginable token of respect, but all attended us out of the city, with [their] wives and children; and kneeling down on the sea shore where we were to part, we once more prayed together, and so took our leave. And having affectionately embraced each other, we that were going to Jerusalem with Paul went on board the ship to proceed on our voyage, and they that dwelt at Tyre, returned back to their own houses.*

7 *And finishing our course by sea, we came from Tyre to the port of Ptolemais,*<sup>b</sup> which lay to the south of the former city, on the same coast of the Mediterranean sea; and embracing the brethren there, we continued with them no more than one day.

8 *And on the morrow, Paul and his company departed from Ptolemais, and travelling by land came to the city of Caesarea;*<sup>c</sup> which had been

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed, and went our way, and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished our course on Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and embraced the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came on

<sup>a</sup> If he tendered his own liberty and safety, not to go up, &c.] 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.

<sup>b</sup> [Ptolemais.] This was a celebrated city on the sea coast, which fell by lot to the tribe of Asher, who did not drive out the inhabitants. Its ancient name was Acco. (Jud. i. 31.) It was enlarged and beautified by the first of the Egyptian Ptolemies, from whence it took its new appellation. It was the scene of many celebrated actions in that series of mad expeditions, which was called the holy war. The Turks, who are now masters of all this region, call it Acca, or Aca; and notwithstanding all the advantages of its situation, on

one of the finest bays on that coast, and in the neighbourhood of mount Carmel, it is now, like many other noble ancient cities, only a heap of ruins. See Mr. Maundrell's Journey to Jerusalem, p. 53.

<sup>c</sup> [Caesarea.] To what I have said in the paraphrase concerning this city I shall only add, that it lay in the tract of land which fell to the tribe of Manasseh; that it had once been called Straton's Tower, but took its name of Caesarea from a noble temple, which Herod the Great dedicated to Augustus Caesar, when he rebuilt it almost entirely of marble, so that Josephus, who was well acquainted with it, tells us it was the finest city of Judea. See Joseph. Antiqu. lib. xv. cap. 9, [al. 13,] § 6, & Bell. Jud. lib. iii. cap. 9, [al. 14,] § 1.

to Caesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, (which was one of the seven,) and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy 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, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul an-

rendered remarkable in the church by the residence of Cornelius the devout centurion, and was celebrated over the whole country, not only for the elegance and splendour of its buildings, but likewise as the place where the Roman governor generally resided and kept his court. And entering there into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was [one] of the seven deacons mentioned in the former part of this history, (chap. vi. 5.) and who had settled at Caesarea, after he had baptized the eunuch, (chap. viii. 40,) we lodged with him during our stay in this city. Now he had four virgin daughters, who

were all prophetesses, as the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were sometimes communicated to women as well as to men. (Compare Acts ii. 17, 18.) And as we continued [there] many days,

a certain prophet whose name was Agabus, who had been acquainted with us some years before at Antioch, where he foretold the famine which had since happened in the days of Claudius Caesar, (chap. xi. 28.) came down from Judea to Caesarea. And coming to us, when we had several of our friends together, he uttered a prediction which greatly affected us all, attending it, as usual, with a significant and prophetic sign; for he took up Paul's girdle, and binding his own hands and feet, he said, Thus saith the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration I now speak and act, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man whose girdle this is, and shall deliver him a prisoner into the hands of the Gentiles.

And when we who were present heard these things, solicitous for the life and safety of so dear a friend, and so eminent a servant of Christ in the gospel, both we his companions who came to Caesarea with him, and also, the inhabitants of that place, entreated him with tears in the most pressing and endearing terms, that he would not go up to Jerusalem, since it appeared that he would be exposed to such imminent dangers in consequence of that journey.

But Paul, sensibly touched with the concern which we expressed on his account, and yet resolutely bent upon following what he apprehended to be the evident call of duty, whatever sufferings it might expose him to, answered at once with the greatest tenderness and firmness

SECT.  
XLV. II.  
Act.  
XXI. 15.

of spirit, *What mean ye, my dear friends, by weeping thus, and even breaking my heart by these fond solicitations? Cease your tears and your importunity, in an affair where conscience pleads on the opposite side: for I can assure you, as I told my brethren of Ephesus in my last interview with them, (chap. xx. 24.) that I am ready with the greatest cheerfulness, not only to be bound and cast into prison, but also to die at Jerusalem, or wherever else I may be called to it, for the honourable and beloved name of the Lord Jesus, and shall esteem it a most glorious and happy period of life, to pour out my blood in defence of that blessed gospel which he hath committed to my charge.*

14 *And when we plainly perceived, that he would not be persuaded by any importunity we could use, we ceased to press him any farther, saying, Let the will of the Lord be done! May he protect his faithful servant, whithersoever he leads him, and over-rule his confinement and affliction to the advantage of that glorious cause, on which it seems on the first appearance to wear so threatening an aspect!*

15 *And after these days had been spent at Caesarea, Paul would not lose the opportunity of being present at the approaching festival, and therefore making up our baggage we went up to Jerusalem as expeditiously as we could. And [some] of the disciples also from Caesarea went along with us, and brought [us] to the house of one Mnason a Cyprian, an old disciple,<sup>a</sup> with whom we should lodge; which we were the more willing to do, as he was a person of established character and reputation in the church.*

swered, *What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? 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, The will of the Lord be done.*

15 *And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.*

16 *There went also with us certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple with whom we should lodge.*

#### IMPROVEMENT.

Verse 11, 12 *LET us observe and emulate that excellent and heroic temper which appeared in the blessed apostle St. Paul, in this journey to Jerusalem: When still the Holy Spirit testified in every city, that bonds and afflictions awaited him; when his friends in so*

<sup>a</sup> *Brought us to one Mnason a Cyprian, an old disciple.* 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 there.—I have

followed Sir Norton Knatchbull's version of the words, as that which appeared to me best to suit the original: for it seems very unnatural to render *οὐδὲν, Μνάσον, bringing Mnason with them.*

found a manner hung around him, and endeavoured to divert him from his purpose; he was not insensible to their tender regards: Far from that, his heart melted, and was even ready to break, under the impression; yet still he continued inflexible: There was a sacred passion warmer in his soul than the love of friends, or liberty, or life; *the love of Christ constrained him*, (2 Cor. v. 14,) and made him willing, joyfully willing, not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem, for his name, who had indeed died for him there. O that such as this might be the temper, such as these the sentiments, of every minister, of every Christian! For surely imprisonment in such a case is better than liberty; and death infinitely preferable to the most prosperous life secured by deserting his service, or flying from any post which the great Captain of our salvation hath assigned us.

On the other hand, let us learn of these wise and pious friends of Paul, to acquiesce in the will of God, when the determination of it is apparent, how contrary soever it may be to our natural desires, or even to those views which we had formed for the advancement of his cause and interest in the world; where perfect resignation may be difficult, in proportion to the degree of our piety and zeal. *Can any teach him knowledge*, (Job xxi. 22,) or pursue the purposes of his glory by wiser and surer methods than those which he has chosen? In this instance the bonds of 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; (Phil. i. 12;) 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. (Acts xxiii. 33; xxiv. 23, 27.) And even to this day we see the efficacy of his sufferings, in the spirit 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 other servants, whithersoever he pleases, and we will bless his most mysterious conduct, in sure expectation of that day, when what is now most astonishing in it shall appear beautiful, and ordered for the best.

It is pleasant to observe the honour paid to Mnason, as an old disciple: An honourable title indeed it is; and wherever it is found, *may days speak, and the multitude of years teach wisdom!* (Job xxxii. 7.) And may there be a readiness, as in this good old man, to employ all the remaining vigour of nature, be it more or less, in the service of Christ, and in the offices of cordial love and generous friendship to those who are engaged in the work of the Lord.

SECT.  
XLVII.

VERSE  
14

## SECT. XLVIII.

*Paul being arrived at Jerusalem, after an interview with James and the elders of the church there, is assailed by the Jews while worshipping in the temple, and rescued by Lysius the Roman officer from the extremest danger of being torn in pieces by their fury. Acts XXI. 17—36.*

## ACTS XXI. 17.

SECT. XLVIII. **I**N the preceding section we gave an account of our setting out on our journey from Cæsarea, and now we are to add, that when we were arrived at Jerusalem, the brethren there received us with great pleasure and affection.\*

Acts XXI. 17.

18 *And the next day Paul took us with him, who had attended him in his journey, and entered in with us to the house of James the apostle, commonly called James the Less, or the Lord's brother; and all the elders of the flourishing church in that city were present there, to receive so important a visitant, of whose arrival and errand they had heard. And Paul, having embraced them with great affection, presented us that were of his company to them; and after this he gave them a particular account of all those things which God had done among the Gentiles by his ministry since he last left Jerusalem, informing them of the success that he had met with in Philippi, Thessalonica, Beræa, Athens, Corinth, and Ephesus; of the churches he had planted in all those places, and of the opportunity he had enjoyed of visiting most of them a second time; as well as of taking a review of those in Cilicia, Pamphylia, Lystra, and other parts of Asia, with the plantation of which they had formerly been made acquainted. (Acts xv. 4.) And he concluded with an account of those alms which he had brought from the Gentile converts, for the relief of their brethren of the circumcision at Jerusalem.*

ACTS XXI. 17. **A**ND when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

\* The brethren received us with great pleasure and affection. The alms he brought with him would be one, though far from being the only or the chief circumstance of endearment; so that the

prayers of his Christian friends were answered, that his ministry with respect to Jerusalem (ὡς αὐτὸ ἱερουσόλα) might be acceptable to the saints, Rom. xv. 31.



20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seeest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe, and they are all zealous of the law.

And when they heard [it,] they glorified the Lord Jesus Christ, for this wonderful demonstration of his presence and grace with his servant; and then they said to him, Dear and honoured brother, we rejoice from our hearts in the triumphs of the gospel among the Gentiles; and as we doubt not but the whole body of the Christian church is dear to thee, as well as to us, we assure ourselves thou wilt candidly join in all prudent endeavours for removing any prejudices which may have been weakly imbibed, to the injury of that mutual affection which we so earnestly desire to cultivate: In a word, thou seeest with thine own eyes, how many myriads of believing Jews there are,<sup>b</sup> who are gathered together from all parts to Jerusalem, on occasion of this feast; and they are in the general persons, who are all zealous for the observation of the Mosaic law, as supposing it of perpetual obligation on all our nation, without excepting those that have embraced Christianity. Now so it is, that through the prejudice<sup>21</sup> and falsehood of thine enemies, they have been, (we doubt not, very falsely) informed of thee, that wherever thou comest thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentile nations to apostatize from the law of Moses; saying, that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

21 And they are informed of thee, 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.

<sup>b</sup> How many myriads of believing Jews there are.] I do not apprehend, that it can be certainly argued from hence, that there were more than thirty, or even twenty thousand Jewish believers now present at Jerusalem; for the word *myriads* may only in general denote a great number; but it is certain, that the greater part of them were not stated inhabitants of Jerusalem, but only visited it on occasion of this great festival; (compare ver. 27.) so that no certain argument can be deduced from hence, as to the plurality of congregations supposed to have been now under the care of the bishop of Jerusalem, if there were indeed any Christian officer who had that title so early, which it does not appear from scripture that there was. It is surprising therefore, that the ingenious Mr. Slater should lay so much stress upon this text in his Original Draught of the primitive churches.

<sup>c</sup> Thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentile nations to apostatize from Moses.] It is a leading observation of that vain and unhappy man Mr. Toland, in his Nazarenes, which he grounds principally on this text and history, that the gospel never designed to set the Jews at liberty from the law of Moses, except with regard to sacrifices, though he allows, that the Gentiles were not intended to be subject to it. (See Nazaren. p. 35, 36.) But it is evident, that he fell into that erroneous opinion, (so directly contrary to many other scriptures, such as, for instance, Rom. xiv. 14; Eph. ii. 14, 15; Col. ii. 14—17; 1 Tim. iv. 4; 2 Cor. xiii. 9—11; Heb. viii. 13.) by not attending to a most obvious medium between enforcing it on their consciences as necessary, and condemning it as unlawful. I have strongly expressed this medium in the paraphrase on ver. 23 and 25.

SECT. XLVIII.

Acts XXI. 20

SECT. of divine institution *What is it then which may*  
 XLVIII. not be apprehended on such an occasion? *The*  
 multitude, no doubt, who have been thus in-  
 formed of thee, *must by all means come toge-*  
 Acts ther, to observe thy conduct narrowly; *for they*  
 XXI. 22 *will soon have notice of thy being here, and*  
*must needs hear that thou art come; and they*  
*immediately will form their judgment of the*  
*truth or falsehood of the information they have*  
*received, by what they discover in thy present*  
*behaviour of regard or disregard to the Mosaic*

23 ceremonies: *And therefore, to shew them that*  
 how far soever thou art from imposing them as  
 necessary to salvation or teaching men to seek  
 justification by them, yet thou dost not think  
 there is any intrinsic evil in them, nor teach it  
 as a matter of duty, that believers in Christ  
 should disuse and reject them; *do this that we*  
*say to thee,*<sup>d</sup> and let us counsel thee to take  
 this method, as the best expedient we can think  
 of, for immediately taking off any ill impres-  
 sions which might otherwise be apprehended.  
*There are with us four men, who are converts*  
 to the gospel, and *have at present a vow of*

24 Nazariteship upon them: Now we would ad-  
 vise thee to *take them as thy companions and*  
 partners, *and purify thyself with them,* accord-  
 ing to the Jewish ritual; *and be at all the ne-*  
 cessary charges with them, that they may shave  
 their heads, and offer the sacrifices which the  
 law has appointed in that case:<sup>e</sup> *And then all*  
 that come up to the temple, and see thee in  
 these circumstances, *will know by their own*

22 What is it  
 therefore? the mul-  
 titude must needs  
 come together: for  
 they will hear that  
 thou art come.

23 Do therefore  
 this that we say to  
 thee: 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

<sup>d</sup> *Do this that we say to thee.* To interpret this advice given to the great apostle of the Gentiles by the body of these elders, as an authoritative episcopal command, would be apparently absurd; and yet it is the only passage in the whole context that glances at all that way.

<sup>e</sup> *Be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads.* 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, (Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 15, § 1.) but also says, that when Agrippa came to Jerusalem, he offered sacrifices of thanksgiving, and ordered a good number of Nazarites to

be shaved; (Antiq. lib. xix. cap. 6, [al. 5,] § 1.) a phrase exactly answering to this; from whence Dr. Lardner, (Credib. Book I. chap. 9, § 7, Vol. I. p. 479, 474.) very naturally argues, that to be at charges with Nazarites, was both a common and very popular thing among the Jews. The learned Witsius also has long since produced a most apposite passage from Maimonides, in which he expressly asserts, that a person, who was not himself a Nazarite, might bind himself by a vow to take part with one in his sacrifice. (Wits. Meletem. cap. x. § 3, p. 149.) The charges of these four Nazarites would be the price of eight laubs and four rams, besides oil, flour, &c. Numb. vi. 14, 15.

those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing, but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe 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.

26 Then Paul took the men, 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.

[That thou thyself walkest regularly,] It is indeed very evident from hence, as Mr. Locke well observes, (on the Epistles, p. 4.) that, whatever might have passed between Paul and James on this head in private, (compare Gal. ii. 2.) 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 at 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 Providence intended to render the practice of it impossible, and to break the whole

observation, that there is nothing of truth and reality in those things which they have heard of thee; but that instead of forbidding these observances to others, thou thyself walkest regularly, keeping the law, and avoiding all occasion of offence. And as for the believing Gentiles, thou knowest we have written some time ago to them, determining that they should think themselves obliged to observe none of these things; except it be to keep themselves from what is offered to idols, and from blood, and from that which is strangled, and from fornication. (Chap. xv. 28, 29.) And as we all concurred in this decree, they cannot imagine what thou mayest now do, according to the advice we gave thee, at all inconsistent with asserting their liberty, in the manner thou so constantly dost: Nor will this be any proof at all that thou thinkest the observation of these ceremonies necessary to the salvation even of believing Jews, though duty, prudence, and charity, may in some particular instances dictate a conformity to them.

Now then, as this was the unanimous advice of James and the brethren, Paul on mature deliberation determined to comply with the proposal; and accordingly he took the men who had engaged in the vow, and the very next day being purified with them, according to the rites of the law, he entered with them into the temple, declaring to the priests who were in waiting there, the purpose he had formed for the accomplishment of the days of purification, till an offering should be offered for every one of them, as the Mosaic ritual required (Numb. vi. 13,

power of the Jews by the destruction of the temple, and city, and nation, it was certainly the most orderly and prudent conduct to conform to it, though it were looked upon by those that understood the matter fully, (which it was not necessary that all should,) as antiquated and ready to vanish away. Heb. xiii. 13.

& Paul took the men, and the next day being purified with them, &c.] If any thing more than has already been said seem necessary to vindicate the brethren in giving, and Paul in taking this advice, which I cannot think there does, the reader may consult Calvin's note here, and Wits. Meletem. cap. x. 24—6, p. 159—152.

SECT. XLVIII. Acts XXI.

25

26

ACT. & seq.); that so all proper preparations might be made for that purpose.

But as the seven days which were to complete this affair were about to be accomplished,<sup>b</sup> the Jews that were come from Asia to celebrate the feast of Pentecost,<sup>1</sup> seeing him in the temple, threw all the populace into confusion, and laid violent hands upon him in a most tumultuous and outrageous manner; *Crying out to all that were present, Ye men of Israel, help; and exert that pious zeal which so provoking and heinous a circumstance must surely excite; for this is the wretched and detestable man, that every where teaches all men a set of principles most directly contrary to the people of the Jews, and the divine law we have received by Moses; and to this sacred and venerable place,<sup>k</sup> which hath been erected for the service of God at so vast an expence, and so solemnly devoted to him: *And on these malignant principles he hath even brought Greeks into the temple, within that inclosure which no foreigner may enter,<sup>l</sup> and thereby hath polluted this holy place: and so has**

<sup>b</sup> *As the seven days were about to be accomplished.* Beza supposes, that by these seven days are meant the seven weeks that introduced the feast of Pentecost, which was usually called the feast of weeks, or that at least we are to understand them of the last week before it; but it is much more natural to refer them to the days of purification, which were to be completed, before the sacrifices should be offered that were to close the vow. It is however inconsistent with what follows to render the words *σήμερον δευτέρα*, that they were almost ended, as if the tumult in the temple happened towards the conclusion of these seven days, when Paul declares to Felix, in the defence he made before him eight days after he was seized, that it was then but twelve days since he went up to Jerusalem; chap. xxiv. 11; and it is evident, it was not till the third day after his coming thither, that Paul began his purification. The phrase implies no more, than that the seven days were about to be accomplished; and, by comparing chap. xxi. 18, 26; xxii. 30; xxiii. 12, 22; xxiv. 1, 11, it appears that the time of his seizure must needs have been towards the beginning of them.

<sup>1</sup> *The Jews that were from Asia.* Paul had lately spent three years in preaching there, and, notwithstanding the success

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and farther, brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

his labours were attended with, had met with great opposition from these people; compare Acts xix. 9; xx. 3—31; 1 Cor. xvi. 9; so that it is no wonder, these should be the leaders in such an assault upon him.

<sup>k</sup> *Teaches*——*contrary to 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 Paul might have declared, that the destruction of the temple was approaching; which declaration, we know, was charged on Stephen as a great crime; Acts vi. 14.

<sup>l</sup> *Brought Greeks into the temple, within that inclosure, &c.* It is very evident, and 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 Paul had brought some uncircumcised Greeks into the inner part of the court, which was appropriated to the people of Israel, as was notified by the Greek and Latin inscriptions on several of the pillars which stood in the wall that separated it; Μη δευ αλλογενων παραστα, No foreigner must enter here. (Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. v. cap. 5, [al. vi. 6.] § 2; & lib. vi. cap. 2, [al. vii. 4.] sect. 4.) But it is to be observed by the way,

29 (For they had seen before with him, in the city, Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30 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 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:

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, to which there may be allusion, Eph. ii. 19.

<sup>m</sup> They went about to kill him.] Philo says, that any uncircumcised person, who came within the separating wall mentioned above, might be stoned to death without any farther process, (Legat. ad Cal. p. 1022.) which is confirmed by the last passage quoted from Josephus; but, had Paul indeed brought such a one thither, that rule (allowing its authority) could not have affected him, since he himself was a Jew. Yet what the Jews called the judgment of zeal would no doubt have been pleaded to justify the murder, had it been perpetrated according to their wicked intent.

justly forfeited his life to its injured honours. For they had before seen Trophimus the Ephesian, who had attended him in his late journey, (chap. XX. 4.) in the city with him, whom they rashly imagined that Paul had brought with him into that part of the temple which was appropriated to native Jews, or to such as were proselyted by circumcision to the entire observation of their law.

And the whole city was moved on this occasion, 30 and there was presently a tumultuous concourse of the people; and laying hold on Paul in a furious manner, they dragged him out of the temple; that it might not be defiled with his blood: And immediately the gates were shut by order of the proper officer, to prevent any farther riot or violation of those sacred inclosures, as well as to exclude Paul from seeking any sanctuary at the horns of the altar.

And when the multitude, who had now got 31 him in their cruel hands, were so outrageous that they went about to kill him,<sup>m</sup> word was brought to Lysias, the chief officer of the Roman garrison, who was the tribune of the cohort, and was called by the Greek title of Chiliarch, from his having (as that word signifies) a thousand men with their proper centurions under his command; and as a detachment of his men kept guard in the outer portico of the temple during this public festival, to prevent any tumult,<sup>n</sup> he was soon informed by those upon

<sup>n</sup> Kept guard in the outer portico of the temple, &c.] Josephus assures us, (Bell. Jud. lib. v. cap. 5. [al. xi. 6.] § 8.) that a detachment of armed soldiers, belonging to the Roman legion which lodged in the adjacent castle of Antonia, kept guard in the porticoes of the temple, which surrounded the court of the Gentiles on feast-days to prevent disorders; and he has another passage to the same purpose, Antiq. libi. xx. cap. 5. [al. 4.] § 3.—It is evident, that Lysias was not present, when this tumult began. I think it probable, as Dr. Lardner conjectures, (Credib. Book I. chap. 2. § 14, Vol. I. p. 221, 222.) that he was the oldest Roman tribune at Jerusalem, and was the commanding officer at the castle above-mentioned, and of the legion quartered there.

SECT.  
XLVIII.  
Acts  
XXI. 29

SECT. XLVIII. duty that all the city of Jerusalem was in confusion. This presently alarmed the tribune, who knowing how much it was his concern to check such turbulent proceedings, immediately took soldiers and some of the centurions belonging to the cohort with him, and ran in among them to suppress the riot: The Jews were therefore stopped before they could accomplish their design, and when they saw the tribune and the soldiers, come among them, they ceased from beating Paul;<sup>o</sup> which they had begun to do in such a manner, that had he not been thus seasonably rescued in this critical moment, his life must soon have fallen a sacrifice to their rage.

Acts  
XXI. 32

33 And then the tribune drew near, and took him into his custody; and supposing him to be some very criminal and obnoxious person, in order to prevent his escape, he commanded him to be bound with two chains: And as he found the people so enraged against him, he inquired of those that were the forwardest amongst them, who he was, that such a general outcry had been raised against him, and what he had done to deserve it?

34 And such was the confusion of this riotous assembly, that, some among the multitude cried out one thing, and some another: And as the tribune saw it was in vain to think the matter should be cleared at present, and that he could not know the certainty of any thing by reason of the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle of Antonia, where the Roman garrison was kept. But when he was upon the stairs

35 which led up from the nearest gate of the temple to it,<sup>p</sup> it came to pass that he was borne up from the ground by the soldiers who had him in charge, because of the violence of the

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.

<sup>o</sup> They ceased from beating Paul.] It is said just before, they went about to kill him, which they intended to have done, as Dr. Lightfoot has observed, by what the Jews were used to call the beating of the rebels, in which they did not stay for any legal process, but, having found that any had profaned the temple, the people rushed immediately upon them, and, having dragged them out, beat them with staves and stones in such a cruel manner, that they often died under their hands. (See Dr. Lightfoot, Chron. in loc.

and Service of the Temple, chap. i. § 3.) And thus they would have treated Paul upon a mere pretence, had they not been prevented by the coming of the tribune.

<sup>p</sup> When he was upon the stairs.] These stairs are particularly mentioned in the passage from Josephus, which is referred to in the beginning of note<sup>a</sup>; and it appears by the account he gives, that the castle was situated at an angle of the temple, and had a number of stairs descending both to the western and northern portico.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. *crowd.* For the multitude of the people pressed after and followed him as far as they could; and when he was out of their reach, pursued him still with clamorous invectives, eagerly crying out, *Away with him, away with him; for he deserves the worst of punishments, and should immediately be put to death.*

SECT.

XLVIII.

Acts

XXI. 36

IMPROVEMENT.

It is delightful to observe, how the same principles of humble and benevolent piety wrought in the mind of Paul on the one hand, and on the other in those of James and the brethren of the circumcision; while the one recounted, and the other rejoiced in what God had done by his ministry among the Gentiles. May ministers always remember, that whatever good is done by their ministry, it is the work of God, and that the praise is to be rendered to him: And, O! that whenever they assemble and meet with each other for religious and friendly conference, they may have cause for mutual thankfulness, while they hear and tell what efficacy God is putting into the word, as spoken by them; which is never like 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 which James and the Jewish Christians gave to their beloved brother Paul on this occasion, to conform to the customs of the Mosaic worship, in an affair in which he very innocently might do it; thereby to shew, that as he was not a slave to ceremonial institutions, so neither was he a bigotted zealot against them; nor one that made it a point of humour to oppose them in matters of indifference, and to father that opposition on conscience. When will the leaders of our churches agree to teach their followers by such wise and mild examples, to study the honour, and comfort, and usefulness, of each other, *pursuing the things that make for peace, and tend to promote mutual edification?* (Rom. xiv. 19.)

Yet what prudence, or what 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 the charge which those furious Jews brought against Paul, in every article of it? Yet it is believed, on the credit of a noisy rabble; and it was owing to the gracious interposition of a very remarkable Providence, that this light of Israel was not immediately quenched; and that this holy apostle was not torn in pieces by an outrageous mob,

SECT. XLVIII. fierce and irrational as so many wild beasts, before he could have any liberty to speak for himself.

Verse 31, 36 Let not religion be condemned unheard, and then surely it cannot be condemned at all: Let us with pleasure reflect, that God can raise up guardians to it from the most unexpected quarter, and animate men, like this Roman officer, from considerations merely secular, to appear most seasonably and effectually in the defence of his faithful servants. Let us adore the wise conduct of Providence in instances like these; and let us always pursue our duty with courage, since God can never be at a loss for expedients to secure us in our adherence to it.

## SECT. XLIX.

*Paul makes a speech to the people at Jerusalem, in which he gives them a particular account of the means by which he was engaged to embrace and preach the gospel. Acts XXI. 37, to the end. XXII. 1—16.*

## ACTS XXI. 37.

SECT. XLIX. IT has been shewn how Paul was rescued from the tumult of the Jews, who would have killed him; and with what violence they followed him with their cries, when he was taken from them: *But as Paul was going to be brought into the castle, to which the Roman soldiers were conducting him, he said to the tribune who commanded them, May I be allowed to speak a few words to thee? And when the tribune heard him speak in the Greek language, he said in some surprise, What, canst thou speak Greek? Art not thou that Egyptian who didst some time before these days stir up a sedition, and lead out into the wilderness four thousand murderers,*<sup>a</sup>

Acts XXI. 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?

<sup>38</sup> Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into

<sup>a</sup> Art not thou that Egyptian, &c.] Josephus (as almost all the learned commentators on this verse have observed,) expressly mentions this Egyptian impostor, as coming into Judea while Felix was governor there, which he had been some years before this tumult. Compare Acts xxiv. 10. By his account of him it appears, that calling himself a prophet, he took many of the common people with him from Jerusalem, and having brought them through the wilderness, and increased the number of his followers to thirty thousand, he led them to Mount Olivet, promising them, that at his com-

mand the walls of Jerusalem should fall down, that they might enter the city; but the Jews, instead of joining with him, stood on their defence; and Felix marching out against him with the Roman soldiers, he was deserted by his followers, and fled with a few of his chief adherents, most of which were either taken or slain, but the Egyptian himself made his escape. See Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 15. [al. 12.] § 5; & Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 8, [al. 6.] § 6. There is indeed a considerable difference between the sacred historian and Josephus, as to the numbers mentioned by each; for the



the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

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, 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,

Acts XXII. 1. Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence, which I make now unto you.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue

reconciling of which I refer my reader to the learned Mr. Ward's solution of this difficulty, as reported by Dr. Lardner; (Credib. Book II. chap. 8. Vol. II. p. 497, & seq.) and conclude this note with the just remark of Dr. Lardner, as to the great accuracy with which Luke has represented Lysias speaking of this matter. The men were led into the wilderness, the impostor's name was unknown, he being only called an Egyptian; he had escaped alive; and most of his followers had deserted him; so that a tumult of the Jews about him would have been no unnatural circumstance, (as some have ob-

who committed horrible depredations there on all who were so unhappy as to come within their reach? The public is so exasperated against thee, that it naturally occurred to my mind, thou mightest be that most desperate of criminals. But Paul said to him, Thou art entirely mistaken both as to my person and character, as I hope fully to convince thee; for I am no Egyptian, but am indeed a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, and therefore a citizen of no inconsiderable city;<sup>b</sup> and I intreat thee thou wouldst favour me so far, as to permit me to speak to the people, who by this unreasonable attack upon me, shew how little they know of me; and for their sakes as well as my own, I could wish them to be better informed. And on his giving him permission to say what he pleased, Paul, standing on the stairs that led up to the castle, beckoned with his hand to the people; and when he found there was a great silence, and they were ready to attend to what he said, he addressed them in the Syriac tongue, which was then the common language of the Jews, and therefore called the Hebrew dialect; and made a discourse to them to the following purpose, saying,

Men, brethren, and fathers, of whatsoever age, rank, or circumstance of life, I beseech you, that you would compose yourselves patiently and candidly to hear my apology, [which I make] now to you for myself and my conduct; and I cannot but hope it will fully convince you, how much you have been misinformed concerning me. (And when they heard that he addressed them in their vulgar tongue, and spake what was then called the Hebrew dialect, they

jected,) since he had long ceased to be their idol.

<sup>b</sup> A citizen of no inconsiderable city. The inhabitants of Tarsus, which seems to have taken its name from Tarshish the son of Javan, (Gen. x. 4.) boasted extremely of their antiquity, as His Chrysostom observes, Orat. 59. and Pansenes, and Strabo tells us, Geograph. lib. xiv. p. 463, that they were so considerable an account of learning, as well as commerce, wealth, and grandeur, that they might dispute the prize with Athens and Alexandria.—Paul, by saying he was a Jew of Tarsus, proved that he had a right to be in the temple.

ACTS XLIX. Acts XXI. 39

Acts XXII. 1

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 Acts  
 XXII.

were the rather disposed to hearken to him, and, numerous as the assembly was, kept a strict silence; and he went on with his discourse, and said,) It is well known to multitudes, that I am indeed by birth and religion a Jew, who was born at Tarsus,<sup>c</sup> the chief city in the neighbouring province of Cilicia; but my parents were so warmly attached to their religion, and so desirous that I might be well instructed in it, that they sent me, at a great expence, to be educated here in this city at the feet of that celebrated teacher Gamaliel,<sup>d</sup> by whom I was trained up, [and] accurately instructed in the law of our fathers; being from my very youth exceedingly zealous for the honour of God and his sacred institutions, as you all are this day: Nor was there any in those days more violent in his opposition to the religion of Jesus than I was, who persecuted the followers of this Christian way and manner of worship, even to the very death;<sup>e</sup> binding both men and women who professed it, without any regard to sex, age, or quality, and delivering them all into prisons,<sup>f</sup> where they were closely and severely confined:  
 5 And also the high priest is my witness, and all the

to them, they kept the more silence; and he saith,)

3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day.

4 And I persecuted this way into the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the

<sup>c</sup> *Born at Tarsus.*] This, as the learned Witsius well observes, (Meletem. cap. 4. sect. 2.) shows how little credit is to be given to the tradition mentioned by Josephus. (de Script. Eccles. cap. v.) that Paul was born at Gischalis in Judea, and driven from thence to Tarsus, when that city was sacked by the Romans, since it is directly contrary to this testimony of his own; and I mention it chiefly to show, how soon tradition erred in facts of any considerable standing; nor do I remember any proof of such a devastation at Gischalis about the time of Paul's birth, which was somewhat later than that of our Lord. Compare Acts vii. 28. Honour the testimony of the fathers exceedingly, when they speak on their personal knowledge; but, when they report facts said to have happened long before they were born, I dare not lay much stress upon them.

<sup>d</sup> *At the feet of Gamaliel.*] Strabo tells us, in the passage referred to above, that it was customary among the inhabitants of Tarsus for the young people, when they had gone through a course of education at home, to travel abroad for farther improvement. Of this celebrated

Gamaliel, to whom the care of Paul in his younger years was committed, see note (on Acts x. 24. p. 66.—The phrase of being brought up at his feet, plainly alludes to the posture in which the scholars were usually placed, who sat on the ground, or on low seats, while their teacher was raised on a kind of throne. Compare Luke x. 30.

<sup>e</sup> *Persecuted this way to the death.*] We know he was concerned in the death of Stephen, (chap. 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. But there is no reason to think, that this sacred history contains a full account of all the outrages committed against Christians, during the period to which it extends.

<sup>f</sup> *Into prisons.*] Witsius observes here, that there were two sorts of prisons among the Jews; one only for confinement, the other where they were placed in most uneasy postures, and put to a kind of torture; for the illustration of which, he introduces some curious passages from the rabbies. See Wits. Meletem. cap. 4. sect. 18.

high-priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went unto Damascus, to bring them which were there, bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 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 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 And they that were with me, saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

[The high-priest is my 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 Paul persecuted the Christians; he might then perhaps be only an inferior member of the Sanhedrim, on

court of the elders; for he and all the other members of the sanhedrim well know, how eager I was to give them all the assistance in my power towards rooting out the gospel, if possible, from the face of the whole earth: From whom also having several years since received letters to the brethren, empowering me to act against those for whom I have now so great an affection, I went to Damascus with a most resolute purpose, according to the tenor of my commission, to bring those that were there, where I imagined many might have sought a retreat, bound to Jerusalem; that they might take their trial here, and be punished according to the utmost rigour of the law. (Compare Acts ix. 1, 2.)

And if you desire, as you probably may, to know how I came so entirely to change my sentiments and measures, as to engage in the defence and service of a cause which I so earnestly had laboured to destroy, I will give you a plain and faithful account of the wonderful event which occasioned it. Be pleased therefore to observe, that it came to pass on that most memorable day of my whole life, that as I was on my journey, and was now come nigh to Damascus, where I had as it were my prey in view, about noon, on a sudden, a great light shone about me from heaven: And I fell to the ground in unutterable astonishment, and at that instant heard a voice from heaven, saying to me, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me? But I answered trembling, Who art thou, Lord? and how is it that I have persecuted thee? And he said unto me, I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom thou persecutest by the furious rage with which thou art pursuing my disciples, and art endeavouring to destroy my gospel. And they that were with me saw the light indeed, and were terrified: but they heard only a confused sound, and did not distinctly hear the voice of him that spake to me.<sup>b</sup> And I, finding no farther disposition to

which supposition this appeal would be proper, and consequently no light can be gained from hence to fix the date of Paul's conversion.

<sup>b</sup> Did not distinctly hear the voice, &c.] To what I have said on chap. ix. 7, § 19, note 3, p. 125, I shall only add a remark

SMO.  
XIX.  
Act.  
XXII. 5

SECT.  
XLIX.  
Acts  
XXII. 10

oppose that glorious person, who had condescended to appear in so gracious a manner to stop my wretched career, and to expostulate thus mildly with me, when it was evident he could have destroyed me in a moment, immediately surrendered as it were at discretion, and said, *Lord, what shall I do? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go to Damascus, and there it shall be told thee, and a particular account shall be given thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do; and thou shalt be informed what extraordinary services are allotted to thee, after all thou hast done against my cause and interest.*

11 *And as, when I was risen from the ground, I could not see by reason of the glory of that light which had broke in upon me, with so bright a lustre as quite to dazzle and blind my eyes, being led by the hand of those that were with me, I came to Damascus.*

12 *And one Ananias, a pious man according to the law, whose acceptance of the gospel had by no means destroyed his regard to the Mosaic institutions, and who on that account had an honourable character among all the Jews who dwelt [at Damascus,] was sent to visit me; And coming to me by a divine appointment, and standing by me as I lay blind upon my bed, he said to me Brother Saul, look up, and fix thine eyes upon me. And in that very hour and moment I found my sight restored; so that I looked up upon him, and saw him distinctly.*

13 *And he then addressed me in words which I shall never forget, and which have since been remarkably illustrated; for he said, My dear brother, the God of our fathers hath fore-ordained thee to know his will, as now manifested in his gospel, and to see that righteous person whom our*

10 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 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 Damascus.

12 And one Ananias, a devout man, according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that just One, and

of Mr. Fleming, *Christol.* Vol. I. p. 109, that as in the Castle of Cloves, (and he might have added in the cathedral of St. Paul, and elsewhere,) there is a gallery so contrived, that two persons, standing with their backs to each other in opposite parts of it, may distinctly hear each other, while a person standing between them in the middle can hear neither; it is easily conceivable, that the air might, by the ministry of angels, or the immediate power of Christ, be so disposed, as to produce such a phenomenon. But I do not apprehend, that, had this

been the case, Paul's companions would have heard a confused sound, as I think it is strongly intimated they did. — Elsemer has shewn in a curious note here, that the heathens thought divine voices as well as visions might affect one person in a company, without being perceived by the rest. (*Observ.* Vol. I. p. 466—468.) I give the story here without any large paraphrase, referring to *v.* 15. p. 123, & *seq.* where it first occurs, for any further explication or illustration it may need.

shouldst hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

nation so ungratefully rejected and crucified; and hath even granted thee the singular favour to hear a voice from his own mouth,<sup>1</sup> though he be now ascended to the regions of celestial glory: And this because he intends to qualify thee for the most honourable and important service in his church; for *thou shalt be his authentic witness to all men to whom thou mayest come, of those wonderful things which thou hast seen and heard* on this extraordinary occasion. And now, considering this, *why dost thou delay* in the most solemn manner to declare thy joyful acceptance of these benefits? *Arise immediately, and be baptized, and thereby take the method which Christ has appointed to wash away thy sins;*<sup>2</sup> declaring thy desire of renouncing them, and *invoking the name of the Lord Jesus*, who has so mercifully interposed to deliver thee from them, and made that ordinance a token of remission.

SECT. XLIX.

ACTS. XXIII. 15

16

#### IMPROVEMENT.

By whatever methods God hath been pleased to bring us home to himself and to introduce into our minds the saving light of his gospel, we shall have long, and indeed everlasting reason, to recollect it with pleasure; especially when he hath gone in any remarkable manner out of his common way for this gracious purpose: They who have in this respect obtained mercy of the Lord, should undoubtedly make it their care often to recollect the particular circumstances, and should 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.)

The learned education which Paul had received at the feet of Gamaliel, was once (no doubt) the matter of his boasting and

<sup>1</sup> To see that righteous person, and to hear a voice from his mouth. I see no reason at all to refer this (as Lord Barrington and Dr. Benson do.) to a future vision of Christ, and a future commission to be received from him. It plainly appears from Paul's own narration, that he had already seen him, and heard him speak. It is therefore most evidently natural to refer it to the past rather than to a future event, though I own it may include both.

<sup>2</sup> Be baptized, and wash away thy sins. Baptism in the adult, excepting in the very peculiar instance of our Lord, was a token of confession and humiliation for sin, (on which account it is called the

baptism of repentance, Mat. iii. 11; Mark i. 4; Luke iii. 3; Acts xiii. 24; xix. 4;) and of a desire to be cleansed from it, as the body was by water cleansed from its pollution; and being administered to such professed penitents by divine appointment, as a token of favourable regard to them, it was a seal of pardon: Nor did God ordinarily give any particular person any public and visible token of pardon, till he submitted to baptism; and this may explain, in what sense baptism might be said to wash away sins, and elsewhere to save. Compare 1 Pet. iii. 21. See Acts ii. 38, and the note there, p. 27.

Verse 16  
& 102.

SECT. confidence. Unsanctified learning made his bonds strong, and furnished him with many a specious argument to oppose the gospel. Yet when divine grace changed his heart, and turned these accomplishments into another channel, they made the conquest so much the more glorious, and rendered him the fitter instrument to subserve God's wise and merciful purposes, for the defence and propagation of Christianity by his means. Wherever learning is possessed, may it be so directed and improved; and wherever it is perverted and abused, may Christ manifest his victorious power, to cast down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth itself in rebellion against him, till every thought be brought into a willing and thankful submission to his authority. (2 Cor. x. 5.)

Verse Adored be the condescension of that blessed Redeemer, which  
 7,8 spared this prostrate enemy, and reduced him by the tender ex-  
 10 postulations of mercy, rather than the terrors of wrath; exerting that secret transforming power upon his heart, without which, this miracle, astonishing as it was, would have had no thorough and abiding effect. *Speak, O Lord, from heaven, to them that ignorantly persecute thee; and make them humbly willing to receive the law from thy mouth.* (Job xxii. 22.)

9,11 If they who saw this tremendous scene, and the astonishing consequences of it, were not themselves subdued to the gospel, (as it doth not appear that they were,) it must certainly be a sad illustration of the hardness of the human heart, almost beyond parallel; especially when we consider how eager Paul would undoubtedly be, to make those who had been the associates of his crime the partners of his faith, service, and hope, as a Christian. But however these efforts might miscarry with respect to them, there were those who glorified God in him. 15 (Gal. i. 24.) Let us take this renewed opportunity of doing it, and as he is still by his writings a glorious witness to Christ among us, *on whom the ends of the world are come*, let us, by receiving his testimony with a most cheerful assent, set to our seal that God is true. (John iii. 33.)

### SECT. I.

*Paul, proceeding in his defence to the Jews at Jerusalem, is interrupted in his remarkable story by their violence; and when about to be scourged by order of the Tribune, is exempted from it on pleading his privilege as a Roman citizen. Acts XXII. 17—29.*

#### ACTS XXII. 17.

PAUL went on to give the Jews, to whom he was addressing himself from the stairs of the castle of Antonia in Jerusalem, an account of some farther circumstances relating to the reason he had to engage in the cause of Christi-

ACTS XXII. 17.  
 AND it came to pass, that when

I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I am imprisoned, and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee;

anity: And he proceeded, saying, *It came to pass, that after I had preached Christ boldly in Damascus and Arabia, when I was returned to Jerusalem,\* and was praying here in the court of the temple now before your eyes, I was in a kind of trance or extasy:<sup>b</sup> And I saw him, even the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and heard him saying to me, Make haste from this dangerous place with all the diligence that may be, and depart quickly from Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me, but, on the contrary, will rather attempt thy destruction.*

And I was so desirous of continuing my labours with my dear countrymen, and so unwilling to give them up as desperate, that I presumed to expostulate with Christ himself on this occasion, and said, *Lord, I cannot but hope that my addresses to them will be attended with success; for as Jerusalem has been witness to the zeal with which I once opposed thy gospel, they to whom I would speak cannot but know, that with the utmost eagerness and cruelty I was but a little while ago imprisoning and scourging in the synagogues<sup>c</sup> all them that be-*

\* *When I was returned to Jerusalem.* Lord Barrington, (Miscell. Sacra, Abstract, p. 19; and Essay iii. p. 11 & seq.) and Dr. Benson, (Vol. II. p. 6, & seq.) suppose this memorable circumstance, (which they make Paul's mission to the idolatrous Gentiles,) to have happened in the second journey he made to Jerusalem, A. D. 44, (which is mentioned by Luke, Acts xi. 30; xii. 25.) and maintain, it was the same extasy with that referred to 2 Cor. xii. 2, as having happened fourteen years before the date of that epistle. I rather think the expression intimates, 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, (chap. ix. 29,) engaged the brethren also to hasten his departure; and our Lord's orders to him at this critical season might 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 memory, it does not seem natural to suppose he would have pleaded the probability of their regarding it after an interval of six years more, which according to the chronology of these ingenious writers, must have been the case.

<sup>b</sup> *I was in a kind of trance or extasy.* See notes on chap. x. 10, p. 143. Perhaps he might continue standing all the while with an insensibility of countenance, which, if it were observed by any near him, might be imputed to the fixedness of his devotion, or, if he fell down, it might be looked upon as an epileptic fit. All that he saw and heard was (to be sure) only a miraculous impression on his own nerves, not to be perceived by any other persons.

<sup>c</sup> *Scourging in the synagogues.* It is strange, that Beza, (on Mat. x. 17.) should think this so incredible, as to suspect the reading is corrupted, when the same phrase occurs again, Mat. xxiii.

SECT.  
L.  
Acts  
XXII.20

*lived in thee, whenever I could get them into mine hands: And that when the blood of Stephen, thy faithful and courageous martyr, was unjustly and barbarously shed, almost on this very spot of ground, I also was standing by, and consenting to his slaughter, and was so officious on the occasion, that I even kept the garments of those that slew him: (Chap. vii. 58.)* I may expect therefore, that a testimony from me will be heard with some peculiar regard, when they see that the evidences of thy gospel were strong enough to conquer such inveterate prejudices, and such furious rage against it.

- 21 But the Lord over-ruled my plea by a renewal of his charge, *and he said to me, Reason no farther on this subject, but go thy way immediately, according to my directions; for, behold I will send thee far off to the Gentiles, and thou shalt preach the gospel, and publish the glad tidings of salvation with much greater encouragement and success among them.*

- 22 *And they heard him with quietness and attention to this word, and [then] were so enraged, as soon as he began to speak of a mission to the Gentiles, and this too in such a light, as if the Jews were in a manner given up and rejected, that they were no longer able to bear it; but lifted up their voice in a most outrageous cry, saying, Away with this blasphemous fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live any longer upon it; since he hath proved himself such a traitor to God and his chosen people, that he would presume, even by his own confession, to prefer the Gentiles to us, as if they were more interested than we in the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom. And while they said this, they affected to break out into all the forms of lamentation, as well as expressions of rage, as if such a degree of impiety had never been heard of before.*

24, as well as in the passage before us; nor is there any need we should suppose, that synagogues must signify not places of religious, but civil assemblies, when, beside what Vitringa has alledged in confirmation of the use of such a practice from the Jewish writers, (Synag. Vet. lib. iii. Part I. cap. 1.) Epiphanius directly mentions a fact of this kind, (contra

20 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 I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lift up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

Heres. tom. ii. lib. 1, p. 155.) and it appears, from what Eusebius had cited from a writer against the Montanists, to have been no uncommon case. (Eccles. Hist. lib. v. cap. 15, p. 230.) The custom has since been confirmed and illustrated in the celebrated instance of Acosta. (Liber boreh Collat. cum Jud. p. 349, 350.) Compare note\* on Mat. x. 17, Vol. I.



23 And as they cried out and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade 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, 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, 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.

And as they were crying out in this furious manner, and were rending their garments in token of indignation and horror at this pretended blasphemy, and casting dust into the air, that it might fall down on their heads, and so they might appear more completely in the habit of mourners for the dishonour done to God and his people; The Tribune, not knowing the particulars of what had passed; but perceiving by the effect, that Paul had exasperated rather than appeased them by the apology he had been permitted to make, commanded that he should be brought into the castle; and as no witnesses regularly appeared to give information against him, he ordered that he should be put to the question by scourging him in the severest manner; that so he might know from his own confession, since he could learn it no other way, for what cause they raised such an outcry against him.

And as they were binding him with thongs for this purpose, Paul said to the centurion who stood by to command the guard upon this occasion, Is it indeed lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen, and this too while he is uncondemned? Consider before you do this how you will answer for the violation of my privilege, of which at a proper time you must expect hereafter to hear. And the centurion hearing [this] presently went and told the Tribune, saying, Consider what you are about to do, or you may be entangled in a difficulty of which you seem not to be aware; for this man says, he is a Roman, and consequently protected by the privileges of a free citizen from such usage as is preparing for him. And upon this the Tribune, who was alarmed at this report, came and said to him, Tell me truly, as knowing how unsafe it will be to trifle with me by offering a plea of this nature, if it cannot be supported; art thou indeed a Roman citizen, as I am told thou hast asserted? And he said, Yes, I most assuredly am; and I am capable of producing proper evidence of it, if it be insisted

SECT.  
L.  
Acts  
XXII 23

d He put to the question by scourging.] That the Romans used this method is proved by several learned writers, particularly by Dr. Lardner, Credib. Book I, chap. 2, sect. 1, 2, Vol. 1, p. 496-498,

and Mr. Biscoe, chap. ix. sect. 9, p. 355, 356.

e To scourge a man who is a Roman.] See on this head notes on Acts xvi. 22, p. 245.

ACT.  
L.  
Acts  
XXII. 28

upon, in due time and place. *And the Tribune answered, I am surprized to hear this considering the appearance thou now makest; for I, who (as thou seest) am a person of high rank in the army, obtained this freedom with a considerable sum of money, which I can hardly suppose thou shouldst have been able to pay, unless there has been some extraordinary change in thy circumstances. And Paul replied, but I was under no necessity of making any purchase at all of this kind, for I was free-born,<sup>1</sup> my father having been entitled to that honour and privilege before me.*

- 29 *They therefore who were about to have put him to the question, immediately departed from him: And the Tribune was glad to compound the matter so; for he was much afraid when he knew that he was indeed a Roman, and was greatly concerned because he had bound him, in order to his being scourged; which was a breach of privilege, for which he might have been accused by Paul to his superiors. He contented himself therefore with confining him a little while, till he could bring him before the Jewish council; fearing lest if he had dismissed him immediately the Jews would be incensed against him, and he might thus have been in danger of something much worse from Paul's enraged and tumultuous enemies.*

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 examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

Verse 17, 18 WE learn from this scripture, as well as from many other passages, that our Lord Jesus Christ, though invisible, is present while the proclamation of his gospel is made, and is ever attentive to the temper with which it is received. Justly therefore doth he resent the injury that is done him, when these messages of life and peace are neglected: Justly doth he often in the

<sup>1</sup> *I was free-born.* I cannot think with Mr. Cradock, Tillemont, and some other critics, that this was the consequence of his being a native of Tarsus. Dr. Lardner has, I think, produced unanswerable arguments against admitting that city to have been a colony, or what the Romans called *municipium*, that is, a place where all the natives were free of Rome by birth. I therefore think it much more probable, that 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, that several Jews were. (*Antiq. lib. xiv. cap. 10. [al. 17.]* sect. 13, & seq.) See Dr. Lardner, *Credid. Book I. cap. 10. sect. 6. Vol. I. p. 502—513.* He observes in the next section, not only that the freedom of the city might be bought, but that some of Claudius's favourites and creatures at last sunk the price scandalously low.

course of his providence, remove those ordinances which men have ungratefully slighted, and call away the faithful ministers who have stretched out their hands all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people. (Rom. x. 21.)

It is not an easy thing for a servant of Christ, who is deeply impressed with divine truths himself, to imagine to what a degree men are capable of hardening their hearts against them. They are ready sometimes to think with Paul, Surely it must be impossible for any to resist such arguments, and such addresses. But experience makes them wiser, and shews, that though they smite the rock again and again, it is in vain, till divine grace melt it into streams of water.

Blessed be God, that when his gospel is removed from one place it is sent to another; nor shall it ever be totally rooted out of the world, while seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, continue their revolutions. Adored be that grace which sent Paul and the other apostles to speak unto the Gentiles that they might be saved! The life of our souls was in that commission, and all our eternal hopes, take their rise from it. But what cruel malignity did these Jews express, whom all the wonders of this astonishing story 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, and the instrument of deliverance to thousands of perishing sinners, they raise a cry against the ambassador of God, 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 here. But thus forbidding the apostles to speak to 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.)

Most unrighteous was it in the Roman officer, on this popular clamour, to attempt putting this best of men to the torture: Most reasonable was Paul's plea, as a Roman citizen to decline that suffering. It is a prudence worthy of being imitated by the bravest of men, not to throw themselves into unnecessary difficulties. Nor are we under any obligation as Christians to give up our civil privileges, which we are to esteem 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 that are to come after us, should engage us to labour and strive that we may transmit them improved, rather than impaired, to posterity as yet unborn.

## SECT. LI.

Paul being brought before the Sanhedrim, after having been unjustly smitten by the command of the high priest, occasions a dissension in the council, on which his sentence is delayed; but a conspiracy being formed against his life, he informs the Tribune of it. Acts XXII. 30. XXIII. 1-22.

## ACTS XXII. 30.

SECT.  
LI.Acts  
XXII.

WHEN the Roman officer had rescued Paul from the people, in the manner already described, he lodged him in the castle that night; and on the morrow, desiring to know clearly and certainly of what he was accused by the Jews, which he could not make out from what had already passed, as he did not understand the Hebrew language, in which Paul had made his apology to them, he loosed him from his bonds in which he had laid him a close prisoner, and commanded the chief priests and all the other members of their Sanhedrim to come together and to hold a court: And bringing Paul down from the castle, he set him before them, that he might be examined and tried according to the laws and usages of his own country; that so the most seditious of the Jews might have no reason to complain of the manner in which they were treated.

Acts  
XXIII. 1

And Paul looking attentively on the Sanhedrim, as he stood before it, that he might observe whether he could recollect the faces of any whom he had formerly known in that court, said, Men and brethren, though I am brought before you as a malefactor, to be examined and judged by you, I have the secret pleasure of being conscious to myself, that none can justly advance any charge against me; but whatsoever be objected to me, I appeal unto the searcher of all hearts, that I have even to this day, though it is long since I have declared myself a Christian, conversed before God in all good conscience,\* and

ACTS XXII. 30.

ON the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Acts XXIII. 1.

And Paul earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God, until this day.

\* I have even to this day conversed before God in all good conscience. Paul could not intend by this to intimate, that he thought himself free from guilt while persecuting the Christians, since he so expressly de-

clares 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 have re-

lived in the faithful discharge of my duty to him, and to my fellow-creatures.

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?

ferred to his conduct while a persecuting Jew, though it were indeed true, that he did not then act against his conscience, how criminal soever he was in suffering it to continue uninformed. The plain sense of this 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 prepared to abide all extremities in his defence. Well might there be in such a case a natural sally of joy, arising in an upright heart, from a consciousness of its own integrity, amidst such violent calumnies as were now advanced against him.

<sup>b</sup> Ananias the high priest.] Dr. Benson, (Hist. Vol. II. p. 221.) Mr. Biscoe, (Boyle's Lect. chap. iii. § 8. p. 70—76.) and several others, have justly observed from Josephus, (Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 5. [al. 5.] sect. 2, 3: & cap. 6. [al. 5.] sect. 2.) that this was Ananias the son of Nebodons; who by his station was head of the Sanhedrim. He had formerly been sent prisoner to Rome, to give an account to Claudius Cæsar of his behaviour, in the

But Ananias the high priest,<sup>b</sup> who knowing in his own heart his inveterate enmity to Paul, and the steps he had openly taken for his destruction, thought himself insulted by such a solemn declaration of his innocence, commanded those that stood by him at the bar to smite him on the mouth, for what he represented as so insolent an assertion; which was accordingly done.

Then Paul, animated on a sudden by the secret impulse of a prophetic spirit, which bore him, as it were, for that moment beyond himself, said to him, God is about to smite thee in a very awful manner, O thou whited wall! thou false painted hypocrite! For sittest thou on the tribunal of justice, pretending to judge me according to the law of God, and yet in a presumptuous violation of the law commandest me

quarrel which happened between the Jews and Samaritans during the government of Cumanus in Judea, but was acquitted, probably by the intercession of Agrippa the younger. The difficulties which have been urged from Josephus, against his being high-priest now, are answered by Mr. Biscoe in a very learned and judicious manner.

<sup>c</sup> God is about to smite thee, O thou whited wall!] Alluding to the beautiful outside of some walls, which are full of dirt and rubbish within. The account Josephus gives of the character and fate of this wretch abundantly illustrates this speech of Paul. He might well be called a whited wall, not only as he committed this indecency while gravely sitting in a sacred character on the tribunal of justice, but also as, at the same time that he carried it very plausibly towards the citizens, and stood high in their favour, he most impudently and cruelly defrauded the inferior priests of the subsistence which the divine law assigned them, so that some of them even perished for want, (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 9. [al. 8.] sect. 2.) And God did remarkably smite him, as, 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. (Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 17. al.

SECT.  
LI.  
Acts  
XXIII. e

SECT. I.  
Acts XXIII  
to be smitten,<sup>d</sup> though convicted of no crime, and guilty of no indecent behaviour? The supreme Judge will not suffer thee finally to escape, but will ere long animadvert upon thee in righteous vengeance for this violence.

4 But they that stood by were greatly offended, and said, Dost thou, who pretendest to so much religion, presume impiously to revile the high-priest of God, the most sacred person in our nation, and consequently in the whole world?

4 And they that stood by, said, Revilest thou God's high-priest?

5 And upon this, Paul, unwilling 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, only touched upon a circumstance attending it, which was of a more ambiguous nature, and said, Indeed, brethren, in the sudden transport of my mind, I was not aware that it was the high-priest,<sup>e</sup> otherwise I should have been cautious how I had taken such a liberty; for I know that it is written in the word of God, (Exod. xxii. 28,) which I desire at all times, and under the greatest provocations, to make my rule, "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people;" and I should be sorry that any should take encouragement from what I then said, to fail in paying due respect to magistrates, whatever their personal character may be.

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.

18.] (2. 6, 9;) an event, which happened about five years after this, in the very beginning of the Jewish war.

<sup>d</sup> In violation of the law commanded me to be smitten. God in his law forbade all violence in judgment. (Lev. xix. 15.) Yet we find repeated insults of this very kind, indecent as they always are, offered to the prophets, 1 Kings xxii. 24; Jer. xx. 2, and even to Christ himself. John xviii. 22.

<sup>e</sup> I was not aware that it was the high-priest. This is a natural rendering of the words *οτι ον ον ειναι ο αντιστοιχος*, which cannot fairly be translated, I do not acknowledge him to be the high-priest; nor can it be imagined, that Paul would enter on so curious and so dangerous a question, as the justice of his accession to that office. Some have thought, he did not know him personally; but his habit and place in the Sanhedrim, might distinguish him; or if we were to suppose with

Rivetus, that Paul, bearing the voice while looking another way, did not know from whence it came, the solution is utterly insufficient; for Paul's answer plainly shows, he knew the person speaking, whoever he were, to be a judge. It seems therefore much more convenient to follow the explication of this matter given in the paraphrase, which will easily reconcile all that passed, with Christ's promise of being with his apostles when appearing before councils: (Mat. 18. 19; Mark xiii. 11;) for according to Paul by inspiration uttered a true prediction, and then alledged a true fact to prevent any ill use of the circumstances in which it was spoken; only waving something, which he might justly have urged in his own vindication, and from which he had undoubted right to recede, if he thought fit. In the mean time, the candour both of the historian and of the apostle is well worthy our remark.

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, 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 dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 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, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him,

But Paul perceiving, as he looked about him, that the one part of the court were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, cried out in the Sanhedrim, Men and brethren, I was by my education, and still am in my judgment, a Pharisee, as I was also the son of a Pharisee; nor is there any one more zealous for the great fundamental doctrine of that celebrated sect: And I am well satisfied, that if the whole secret of my prosecution were fairly and thoroughly laid open from its first principles, it would be found that it is for the hope I have of a future state, and the zeal with which I teach the resurrection of the dead, that I am now brought into judgment; nor would some of my greatest enemies have expressed such indignation against me, had not the whole tenor of my public teaching so evidently tended to confirm a doctrine against which they are so violently prejudiced.

And on his speaking this, the council fell to disputing, and there was presently a contention on this head between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, several persons of each sect appearing warm in the debate: And the multitude was greatly divided: For it is well known that the Sadducees say, there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor separate spirit; but the Pharisees not only confess both, but contend earnestly for the certainty of the resurrection, and the real existence of angels and other spirits.

And upon this there was a great clamour in the assembly; and the scribes [who were] on the side of the Pharisees arose and contended, saying, We find no evil in this man, and can perceive no reason for his being condemned or detained; but if a Spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, in the manner he represents, let us acquiesce, and wait the event; and as Gamaliel formerly expressed it among us, in an argu-

\* *Part were Sadducees*] Josephus assures us, that many of this sect were in places of high dignity among the Jews. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiii. cap. 10, [al. 11,] 5, 6; & lib. xviii. cap. 1, [al. 2,] 5, 4.

† *For the hope and resurrection of the dead, &c.*] Oratio charges this upon Paul, as an artful manner of declining persecution unworthy the character of an upright and generous man. (Lindbergh.

Collat. cum Jud. p. 104, 105.) But there is no just reason for the charge, since this was a part, though not the whole of the truth; as the chief thing which enraged the Sadducees against Christianity, was the demonstration which it gave to the doctrine of a resurrection, which they so eagerly opposed. See Acts iv. 2, with the paraphrase, p. 45, and chap. v. 17, p. 61.

SECT. LI.

Acts XXIII. 6

SECT. ment which then was judged by the Sanhedrim let us not fight a-  
 LI. worthy of its regard, *let us not fight against God,* gainst God.  
 which must end in our ruin.<sup>b</sup> (Compare Acts

Acts  
XXIII  
v. 39)

10 *And as a great disturbance arose, some of them* 10 And when there  
 urging, that he should be set at liberty, while arose a great dissen-  
 others eagerly insisted on his condemnation, sion, the chief cap-  
*the Tribune was informed of their disorderly tain, fearing lest*  
 proceedings: and *fearing lest amidst the tumult, Paul should be torn in pieces by them,* he com-  
*manded a party of the Roman soldiers to go down, and take him by force from the midst of them, and so to bring him up again into the castle of Antonia from whence he had been led.*

11 *And after they had lodged him there, it came* 11 And the night  
 to pass, that *in the following night the Lord following, the Lord*  
 Jesus Christ appeared to Paul in a vision, and stood by him, and said, *Be of good courage, Paul; for as thou hast testified the things concerning me at Jerusalem,* and all the malice of the Jews has not prevented thee from faithfully dis-  
 charging thy commission, *so thou must also bear thy testimony to me and my doctrine at Rome;* and notwithstanding all the difficulties thou hast now before thee, I will support thee to go through the trial, and turn it abundantly to mine own glory, and to thy consolation.

12 *And when it was day, some of the bigotted* 12 And when it  
*Jews, who were exceedingly provoked that Paul was day, certain of*  
 had thus been rescued from the council, resolved the Jews banded to-  
 that they would be the means of his destruction, and *entering into a conspiracy, bound themselves under a curse, saying, That they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.*

13 *Paul.* And though it was so black and horrid a design, yet they were more than forty of them who had made this rash and barbarous agreement. 13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

<sup>b</sup> *Let us not fight against God.* When he 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 Paul had professed to have received in his late speech to the people, as Dr. Benson observes, Hist. Vol. II. p. 225. The reader will perceive here a remarkable resemblance to the speech of Gamaliel, referred to in the paraphrase; but it appears from Dr. Prideaux, (Connect. Vol. II. p. 399.) that this happened after the death of that celebrated rabbi.

<sup>c</sup> *The Lord standing by him said, &c.* This plainly shews, that our Lord approved the part Paul had acted before the Sanhedrim, though some have censured it, without understanding or considering the circumstances of it. The pious as well as learned professor Witsius well observes, that it must be a greater consolation to so faithful a soldier of Christ as Paul was, having been thus approved and encouraged by his general, to be led on to farther combats, than to be immediately dismissed. And such a temper he expresses, Phil. i. 30—36.



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.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain, that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though you would inquire something more perfectly concerning him; and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul cal-

And having fixed upon a scheme for putting it in execution, *they came without reserve to the chief priest, and to those of the elders whom they knew to be his enemies, and said, We are so transported with zeal at the outrage that has been done to our sacred law, that we have one and all bound ourselves by a solemn anathema, not to taste any thing or food till we have slain this Paul;* whom we look upon as so notorious an enemy to God and his country; that if the course of public justice against him be obstructed, it will no doubt be a meritorious action, which you will certainly approve, as what must be pleasing to God himself, to take him off by such a method as this: *Now therefore do you, with the other members of the Sanhedrim, signify it as your request to the tribune, that he would bring him down from the castle to you to-morrow, as if you would more accurately examine and discuss what relates to him; and we are ready at all adventures, even at the hazard of our lives, to kill him before he can come near you:* And we will manage the attack in such a manner, that you shall not appear at all concerned in it, nor have any alarm about the matter, till you hear that he is actually dead.

But how privately soever this matter was conducted, the providence of God so ordered it, for the deliverance of his faithful servant from this inhuman and bloody conspiracy, that *Paul's sister's son hearing of the ambush, came, and entering into the castle of Antonia, where (as we observed before) he now lay confined, told Paul the whole story. And Paul calling one of the*

<sup>k</sup> We have bound ourselves by a solemn anathema. ] This seems a proper rendering of the very emphatical form in the original, *Αναθηματι συνδεδεσμενοι εαυτοις*: Such venerable vows as these, were not unusual with the Jews, who esteemed 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 justified in killing them. Josephus mentions a case, not much unlike to this, of some that bound themselves with an oath to kill Herod, in which they gloried as a laudable intention, because he had violated the ancient customs of the nation. (Antiq. lib. xv. cap. 8. [21. 11.] §

3, 4.) 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 Paul, who were so far from blaming them for it, that not long after they renewed the same design themselves. (Act. xxv. 2, 3.) See Dr. Lardner's Credits, Book I. chap. 2, sect. 9, vol. I. p. 454—455, and Mr. Biscue at Boyle's Lect. chap. vii. sect. 3, p. 278—281.—Dr. Lightfoot has shewn from the Talmud, (Hor. Hebr. in loc.) that if they were prevented from accomplishing such vows as these, it was an easy matter to obtain an absolution from their rabbis.

SECT.

LI.

Acts

XXIII.

14

centurions to him,<sup>1</sup> who commanded part of the cohort under the tribune, presented his kinsman to him, and said, I desire thou wouldst conduct this young man to the Tribune, for he hath some-  
 17 thing of importance to tell him. He therefore  
 18 took and led him to the Tribune, and having introduced him, said, Paul the prisoner calling me to him, desired that I would bring this young man to thee, who has something of considerable importance to tell thee, though what it is I do  
 19 not at all know. And the Tribune in a very obliging and condescending manner taking him by the hand, and leading him into a retired place, where none might overhear them,<sup>m</sup> inquired [of him] saying, What is it that thou hast to tell me? speak freely, for I shall give thee an attentive  
 20 hearing. And he said to the Tribune. I have received certain intelligence, that the Jews have agreed together to ask thee, that thou wouldst bring down Paul to-morrow to the Sanhedrim, as if they would inquire something more accurately  
 21 concerning him: But if thou hast any regard for the life of so innocent and worthy a man, do not be prevailed upon by them to order him to be so brought down; for there are more than forty of them lie in an ambush for him, who have obliged themselves by a curse neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him; and they are now ready, with their weapons as it were in their hands, to execute this their murderous purpose, waiting only an order from thee to bring him by the place where they are posting themselves, in expectation it will prove the signal for his death.  
 22 The Tribune therefore hearing this, dismissed the young man, with a charge, saying, [Be sure thou] tell no man that thou hast discovered these things to me, and depend upon it that I will bear in mind what thou hast told me, and do what is proper upon the occasion. And accordingly he took immediate measures for Paul's security from this intended assassination, of which a particular account will hereafter be given.

led 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 wouldst 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 showed these things to me.

<sup>1</sup> Paul calling one of the centurions to him.] Though Paul had an express promise from Christ for his security, (ver. 11,) yet he did not neglect any proper means of safety. Compare Act xxvii, 21, 25, 31.

<sup>m</sup> Taking him by the hand, &c.] It is observable, that Lysias seems to have conducted this whole affair, like a man of great integrity and prudence.

IMPROVEMENT.

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 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 whited wall with speedy destruction, which had stood in such a haughty opposition to his gospel.

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. lxxix. 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 wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*; (Mat. x. 16.) both these characters are joined in 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 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 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 he hath sent us by his apostles, and the life and immortality which he promises in his gospel.

SECT.  
LI.  
Vers 1

4, 5

6, 7, 8

9

SECT. LI. Graciously did Providence provide for the rescue and deliverance of 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 counsels with righteous abhorrence, and he 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 Paul, as 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 counsel of the forward headlong, (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.

## SECT. LII.

*Paul, for the preservation of his life from the conspiracy of the Jews, is sent by night from Jerusalem to Cæsarea, where he is presented to Felix, and quickly after is accused by Tertullus in the name of the Sanhedrim. Acts XXIII. 23, to the end. XXIV. 1—9.*

## ACTS XXIII. 23.

SECT. LII. IN the last section it was shewn, how the conspiracy which the Jews had formed against Paul's life had been discovered to the Roman Tribune: Now as this officer was a very equitable and worthy person, he was determined to consult the safety of his prisoner, whose innocence he was the more convinced of, from such base methods taken to destroy him; and finding it necessary for this purpose to remove him from Jerusalem, he called to him two of the centurions in whom he could particularly confide, and said to them, *Prepare immediately the two hundred soldiers under your command, that they may be ready to go directly to Cæsarea; and take with them a further guard of seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen, and let them begin their*

ACTS XXIII. 23. AND he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cæsarea, 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. sect. 111. Acts XXIII. 24

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix, sendeth greeting.

27 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,

\* And I have since learnt that he is a Roman. ] As it appears from the preceding story, that, when Lysias first rescued Paul out of the hands of the populace, he did not so much as imagine him to be a Roman, it is plain, that *quod* here as Grotius well observes, is put for *non quod*, according to the turn given in the paraphrase; and consequently, no shadow of an argument can be drawn from hence to prove, that the Jews had then a power of putting those of their countrymen to death, who were not Roman citizens, as Dr. Lardner has well argued in his large, and I think very conclusive, examination of this question. (Credib. book I. chap. 2. See especially sect. 10, Vol. I. p. 134—146. Beza thinks, Lysias represents the fact a little unfairly, and would have made Felix believe, that he knew Paul was a Roman before he rescued him: but his conduct appears in the main so honourable, that I rather think, he only means in the general to intimate, that he had on the whole been more solicitous to provide for Paul's security, out of regard to his being a Roman citizen.

344 *The soldiers take Paul to Caesarea, and deliver him to Felix.*

SECT. "bonds: Nevertheless, I chose to keep him  
 LI. "confined for a few days, that I might not too  
 "much exasperate the people by dismissing  
 "him immediately. *But when during this time*  
 Acts "it was signified to me, that an ambush would  
 XXIII. "be laid by the Jews for the unfortunate man,  
 30 "with an intention to assassinate him; and  
 "with this view a scheme was formed to have  
 "him brought down from the castle to the  
 "Sanhedrim, on a pretence of farther ex-  
 "amination, that they might kill him by the  
 "way; I thought it my duty immediately to  
 "provide for the security of his life, and there-  
 "fore have sent [him] under a guard to thee,  
 "commanding his accusers also, who by these  
 "unwarrantable measures have rendered them-  
 "selves much suspected, to come and declare  
 "before thee what they have to alledge against  
 "him. And so, with all due respect, I bid  
 "thee most heartily farewell."

- 31 *The soldiers therefore, as it was commanded them, taking up Paul, and mounting him according to the kind provision which Lysias had made, brought him by night-marches through Nicopolis and Lydda to Antipatris,*<sup>b</sup> a city within the borders of the tribe of Manasseh, which lay not far from the Mediterranean sea, about thirty-eight miles distant from Jerusalem. *And the next day after their arrival at that city, as they concluded he was now pretty secure from danger, the two companies of foot returned with the spearmen to the castle at Jerusalem, leaving the seventy horsemen to go with him to the end of his journey; Who accordingly guard-*

30 And when it was told me, how that the Jews had 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. Farewell.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle.

<sup>b</sup> *Brought him by night to Antipatris,*] Very different accounts are given of the situation of Antipatris, which must however have been north-west of Jerusalem, as it was in the way from thence to Caesarea. Its ancient name was Capharsabma, (1 Mac. vii. 31; and Joseph. Antiq. lib. xii. cap. 10, [al. 17,] sect. 4,) or Chabarzaba; (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xiii. cap. 15, [al. 23,] sect. 1;) but Herod the Great rebuilt it, and gave it the name of Antipatris, in honour of his father Antipater, (Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 21, [al. 16,] sect. 9; & Antiq. lib. xvi. cap. 5, [al. 9,] sect. 2.) Some have supposed, it was but eighteen or twenty miles from Jerusalem; but Mr. Bisce (whose account is followed in the paraphrase,) has shewn, it was something

more than thirty-eight of our miles; which must have been too far for one night's march; he therefore very well observes, it is not necessary to conclude, that 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, they took Paul with them from Jerusalem at night, and reached Caesarea the next day, when it appears from Josephus, that from Jerusalem to Caesarea was six hundred furlongs, or near seventy miles. (Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 7, sect. 5; & Antiq. lib. xiii. cap. 11, [al. 12,] sect. 2.) See Mr. Bisce at Boyle's Lect. chap. 10, p. 288—291.

33 Who when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. ed him the rest of the way, and entering with him into Caesarea, which was about thirty miles from Antipatris, acquitted themselves of their trust; and delivering the epistle they had brought from Lysias to Felix the governor, they presented Paul also before him, and so completed the affair with which they had been charged. SECT. LII. Acts XXIII. 33

34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; And when the governor had read [the letter,] and understood that Paul was sent as one accused of the Jews, that he should try his cause, he presently asked of what province he was: And being informed that he was of Cilicia, I<sup>35</sup> will hear thee, said he, and thoroughly examine

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall. into this matter, when thine accusers are also come; which I suppose will be in a few days. And in the mean time he commanded him to be kept bound in Herod's praetorium,\* where a body of soldiers were quartered, under whose guard, prisoners were often detained.

Acts XXIV. 1. And after five days, Ananias the high-priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. And according to the expectation of Felix, it was not long before he had occasion to call for Paul again; for after he had been but five days at Caesarea, the high priest Ananias, apprehending the matter to be of the utmost importance, came down in person, with several of the elders, who were members of the Sanhedrim; and they brought along with them a certain orator [called] Tertullus, whose business it was to open the cause, and to harangue the governor in the most agreeable manner that he could: And they all made their appearance in form before the governor, and advanced a general accusation against Paul, on which they desired to be more particularly heard. Acts XXIV. 1

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying— led to hear his charge, and make his defence, Tertullus began to accuse him,<sup>d</sup> saying, with more regard to interest than truth, May it please your excellency, as we enjoy great peace by your means,<sup>e</sup> and many illustrious

\* Herod's praetorium.] This was a palace and court, built by Herod the Great, when he rebuilt and beautified Caesarea, probably, some tower belonging to it might be used as a kind of state-prison, as is common in such places.

<sup>d</sup> Tertullus began to accuse him.] Almost every word of this oration is false; the accusation of Paul, the encomium of the government of Felix, and the decla-

ration of a lawful intention in what they had done and attempted.

<sup>e</sup> We enjoy great peace by your means.] He probably refers to what Felix had done to clear the country of robbers and impostors; for all historians agree, that he was 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

sect. *deeds are happily done to this whole Jewish nation,* and many disorders rectified, by the continual care and vigilance of *your prudent administration*; *We accept [it] always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all imaginable thankfulness,* and it grieves us to be under this unfortunate necessity of troubling you with our complaints, though we are well assured of your

LII.  
Acts  
XXIV 3

4 *generous disposition to remedy them. Nevertheless,* it is impossible that the wisest governors should prevent some troubles arising to the state under their care, while so much sedition and wickedness remain in those who ought to behave as orderly subjects; and therefore *that I may not trouble you further* with any laboured introduction, *I humbly beseech you to hear us* what we have to offer *in a few words*, according to your well-known goodness and humanity, *with your [usual] candour*, and to bear with me while I briefly open the charge against this notorious offender, whom we are obliged to pursue even to this august tribunal.

5 *For indeed to speak with that plainness which truth and justice require on such an occasion, we have found this man a most pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world; and to give the completest idea of his malignity that a few words can express, he is not only a member, but even a ringleader, of the detestable sect of the Nazarenes; than which none has ever sprung up amongst us more dishonourable to the law of the Jews, or more dangerous to the government of the Romans. It would be easy to alledge many gross instances of his impiety, which*

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 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 pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

5 Who also hath

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 insufferable oppressions, and had certainly ruined him, if his brother Pallas had not interposed in his favour. (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xx. cap. 8, [al. 6, 7.] sect. 5, 7, 9.) See also Tacit. Histor. lib. v. sect. 9, & Annal. lib. xii. sect. 54.

*Illustrious deeds are happily done, &c.]* Elmer (Observ. Vol. I. p. 472, 473.) proves this to be the exact sense of the words *ἀειμακάριον ἔργον*, *illustrious*

*undertakings happily accomplished,* and shows the compliment was here the higher, as it was usual, even at this time, among the Romans, at least in public discourses, to refer such events to divine Providence, rather than human efforts, of which he brings many remarkable instances, which shew either the piety, or the policy, of the great men of antiquity, who made use of such language. On the other hand, apparent slights put upon religion by persons in public stations are proofs of a weak understanding, that cannot fail of making them contemptible, not only among all religious, but all prudent men.



gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

they who have known his conduct abroad fail not to testify; but it is needless to insist on any other facts, against a criminal *who has been so audacious, that but very lately he attempted also to profane the temple,* by bringing uncircumcised persons within the sacred boundaries from which they are excluded, even by your authority as well as by our law, on pain of death. As he is one therefore who has rendered himself on such a variety of accounts obnoxious and odious to our whole nation, and against whom we have so many accusations, we seized him a few days ago as a notorious offender, and would have judged him according to our law, which in such a case as this, it is well known, we had a right to execute in its fullest extent, and might have done it even on the spot.

7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,

*But Lysias the tribune, commander of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem, coming upon us with a great and armed force, took him away out of our hands, and so interrupted the course of our just and regular proceedings against him:*

8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee, by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.

Nor had we troubled you with hearing us on this occasion, had not he sent him hither, *commanding his accusers to come to you, if they intended to prosecute the affair any farther; by which means you might yourself, on a proper examination, take cognizance of all these things of which we accuse him.* We promise ourselves therefore, from the known wisdom, equity, and goodness of your excellency, that as we can all aver the truth of these facts on which we ground our charge, you will please to consider the importance of the case, in which the national honour, safety, and religion are so nearly concerned, and will either punish this notorious criminal as he deserves, or order him

*Has attempted also to profane the temple.* Tertullus artfully mentions this, as the most express fact he had to charge upon him, as he knew that the Romans allowed the Jews a power of executing, even without forms of law, any person who should be found in such an act of profanation, and seems to have intended 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 Lysias had justly charged them with attempting to do: And it is observable, that he no where

expressly avows so much as a design to have put Paul to death, though it was undoubtedly intended, so that I cannot but wonder, that this story should ever have been urged to prove, that the Jewish courts had the power of executing capital punishments without a warrant from the Romans. The phrase, which Tertullus afterwards uses of the accusers being commanded to come to Felix, (ver. 8.) though the high priest himself was known to be one of them, shows plainly to what subjection they were reduced.

SECT.  
LII.  
Acts  
XXIV. 6

SECT. back again to Jerusalem, and interpose your  
 LII. authority, which is here supreme, to prevent  
 any farther opposition to the legal proceedings  
 of the Sanhedrim against him.

Acts  
 XXIV. 9

And when Tertullus had concluded his smooth and flattering oration, *the Jews also* who were present gave their assent to all that he had urged, saying to Felix, that it was true, that all these things were so as he had alledged in his discourse, and that he had truly represented the cause which had now brought them to Cæsarea.

9 And the Jews also assented saying, that these things were so.

And on this Felix ordered Paul to offer any thing which he had to urge in his own defence, of which, with the issue of the cause, an account will be given in the next section.

#### IMPROVEMENT.

Acts  
 XXIV.  
 2—9

To hear the most amiable goodness injured by false and virtulent accusations, is what we have been accustomed to in the perusal of this sacred history, in which we have now advanced so far. The surprise of it therefore is abated. But who would not lament, to see the great talent of eloquence, in itself so noble, and capable of such excellent use for the public good, abused to such infamous purposes, on the one hand to varnish over crimes, and on the other to render innocence suspected, and virtue itself odious! Had that of Tertullus been much greater than it appears by this specimen, it would only have served to perpetuate his own shame to posterity for the mean flattery he addressed to Felix, and the cruel and unjust invectives which he poured out against Paul. But history is juster than panegyric or satire, and has left us the character of the one, and the other, painted in its true colours: And much more evidently shall every character appear in the justest light before the tribunal of a righteous God, where Paul, and Felix, and Tertullus, and Ananias, are to meet again. There may we, with the apostle, have honour and praise, whatever eloquence may now arraign, whatever authority may now condemn us!

Verso  
 2, 3

In the mean time, where we enjoy great peace under the magistrates which Providence has set over us, and worthy deeds are done by them for the honour of God and the good of mankind, let us always thankfully accept it, and take care ourselves to be quiet in the land. Should they, who call themselves the followers of Jesus, be indeed pestilent fellows and movers of sedition, they would act not only beneath their character as Christians, but directly contrary to it, and in a manner which must by necessary consequence forfeit it; nor should they affect to be ringleaders in sects and parties. Their Master is the Prince of peace! In his service let them exert themselves, but always in the spirit of love,

labouring by the meekness of their tempers, and the usefulness of their lives, to silence, and if possible to shame, the clamours of their ignorant and malicious enemies. SECT. LII.

SECT. LIII.

*Paul vindicates himself from the accusation which the Jews by the mouth of Tertullus had advanced against him, in such a manner, that Felix only orders him to be kept under a gentle confinement at Caesarea. Acts XXIV. 10—23.*

ACTS XXIV. 10.

ACTS XXIV. 10.  
**T**HEN Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered,

**T**ERTULLUS, and the Jewish priests and elders who were come from Jerusalem to Caesarea with him, opened their charge against Paul, in the presence of Felix the Roman governor, in the manner which was represented in the former section. Then Paul also, after the governor had made a signal, by his nodding to him, that it was now his time to speak, answered the accusation they had brought against him in terms to this purpose:

SECT. LIII.  
 Acts XXIV. 10

—Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: *Knowing that thou, O Felix, hast been for several years a president and judge to this nation, and consequently art not wholly unacquainted with its customs, or with the temper of its rulers and people, I answer for myself with the more cheerfulness in thy presence:*<sup>b</sup> And after all that

<sup>a</sup> *Hast been for several years a judge to this nation.* It might be more exact to render πολλῶν ἔτων, many years; but it seems to be used with some latitude here. Bishop Pearson thinks, it could not have been more than five years and a half; but Mr. Biscoe has attempted to prove, (I think very successfully,) that it might now have been more than seven years since Felix entered on his government here. This was considerably longer than any of his three predecessors, Fadus, Alexander, or Camianus, had presided in that province. See Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. ii. § 2, p. 44, 45.

<sup>b</sup> *I answer for myself, &c.* Mr. Cradock in his valuable Apostolical History, Part II. p. 288, 289, (which, with his Harmony, I cannot but recommend, especially to young students, as among the most useful and judicious expositions of the New Testament I have ever seen,) well observes, how exactly Paul's answer corresponds to the three articles of Tertul-

lus's charge, sedition, heresy, and profanation of the temple.—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 them in fact to produce any evidence of such practices. Ver. 11—15. As to the second, he confesses himself to be a Christian, but maintains it to be a religion perfectly agreeable to natural right, and to the revelation of the prophets, and consequently not deserving to be branded with any infamous or injurious 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 there in a most peaceful and regular manner, so that his innocence had been evidence even before the Sanhedrim, where the authors of the tumult did not dare to appear against him, (ver. 17—21.)

LECT. LIII. Acts XXIV. has been said by my accusers, I have no cause to fear they should impose upon thy judgment by the charges they have brought against me, as thou mayest easily know by evidence which

- 11 cannot be disputed, *that it is no more than twelve days ago, the greatest part of which I have been confined, since I went up to worship at Jerusalem, and publicly to pay my homage there to God, on my return from a long journey I had taken into distant parts: And so far was I from attempting to excite sedition, that I aver it to the face of these mine adversaries, and defy any one to prove the contrary, that they neither found me so much as disputing with any man in the temple, nor making any where an insurrection or any manner of disturbance among the people, either there, or in the synagogues, or in any other place in the city of Jerusalem: Nor can they, notwithstanding all their positive assertions, produce any fair and sufficient proof of this, or any other of the things concerning which they now accuse me, though I am charged with so much confidence as a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition.*
- 12 *But as to what they have alledged against me with regard to the sect of the Nazarenes, this I confess unto thee; and am not ashamed publicly to avow it in the presence of the greatest personages upon earth, that after the way which they call a sect or heresy, so do I worship the God of my fathers; even according to the rules and precepts which Christ my great Master has given; which is so far from being heresy in any infamous sense of the word, since it is most consistent with firmly believing all things which are written, both in the law and in the prophets,*

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 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, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets:

*After the way which they call heresy.]* I cannot but think this a place where the word *heresy*, which I own to be often indifferent, is used in a bad sense; for Paul plainly intimates, that Christianity did not deserve the name they gave it. Yet, while it was not the national religion, but its professors were distinguished from most of their countrymen by their adherence to Christ, as the leader they chose to follow, they might properly be called a sect, or a party, of men, unless the very word *sect*, or *party*, be taken always in a bad signification, which

none well acquainted with the Greek language can imagine.

*The God of my fathers.]* It has been justly observed, that this was a very proper plea before a Roman magistrate, as it proved, 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: And Elser has shewn, that a regard to paternal deities was held honourable among the Greeks and Romans. *Observ. Vol. I. p. 475—477.*

15 And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16 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 alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me puri-

and is indeed most evidently built on those sacred oracles, when rightly understood and explained. And while I act on this maxim, I rejoice in the midst of all the tribulations which can befall me, *having* a cheerful and assured hope towards God [of that] great event which they themselves also profess to expect, even that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust, when every man's true character shall be laid open, and he shall receive according to what he has done. And upon this account, in the firm expectation and the hope I have of this, I daily exercise myself, and make it the continual care and study of my life, to have always an inoffensive conscience, both towards God and towards men; that so, whatever accusations are brought against me, my own heart may not condemn me as long as I live, but I may always find a support within, amidst all the injuries I may meet with in a mistaken and unkind world.

They have represented me indeed as a profane and lawless person, as if I had thrown contempt upon religion, and done them a great deal of wrong; but so far have I been from doing any thing to injure or expose the Jews, to whom by birth I belong, or from attempting to profane the temple, as these my enemies falsely pretend, that I have given many public and important proofs of my particular regard for the good of my country, and of the veneration that I have for all that is sacred. Accordingly now after several years, which I had spent in other parts, I came to Jerusalem, to bring alms to the poor of my nation which I had been collecting for them in the Gentile provinces where I had any interest; and went, as one that had a vow, to have made the offerings which the law requires: (Compare chap. xxi. 26.) Upon which, at the very time when I was thus employed, some Asiatic Jews, who raised the first outcry against me, found me

\* And upon this account, &c.] I am sensible, the phrase *exerceo*, which literally signifies in this, is unambiguous and may refer to what goes before, or to what follows: but, as in the latter construction it seems almost an expletive, and

has great weight and spirit in the former, Leloesius with *notius* to explain it as referring to his hope of a resurrection. That *exerceo*, some times signifies on the occasion, is shown by Raphaelius, Annot. ex Xen. p. 185.

SECT.  
LIII.Acts  
XXIV.

18

purified in the temple, which it is manifest I had a right to enter as a Jew, and where I attended *neither with any multitude about me, nor with any design of raising a tumult,* (as they have taken upon them to insinuate,) but behaving myself with that composure and reverence which became the act of solemn devotion in which I

19 was engaged. Those very persons therefore *who began the commotion, and by their falsely charging me with bringing Greeks into the temple, raised such a flame among the people, that I was in immediate danger of my life, if Lysias had not come and taken me away, ought now to have been present before thee, and should have come to accuse [me] face to face, if they had any thing material to alledge against me:* But it may justly be concluded, that the prosecutors in their own conscience know my innocence, and therefore they have not thought fit to produce them, nor even to single out any one fact to be legally proved by the deposition of proper witnesses; but would rest the matter on general invectives and uncertain report, as thou

20 must thyself have observed. *Or if it be otherwise, let these themselves who are here present say, though they are my most inveterate enemies, if when I stood before the Sanhedrim they found any crime in me; Unless it be their pleasure to accuse me with relation to this one word, which I cried out when I stood among them, That it is surely for the zeal with which I appear in defence of the great doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, I am judged by you this day.* (Chap. xxiii. 6.) A word, to the truth of which I am persuaded their consciences must bear witness, whatever other cause of persecution or complaint they may artfully pretend.

22 *And when Felix heard these things, and perceived how little they made out their accusation against Paul, he put them off without bringing the matter to a decision, saying, After I have been more accurately informed concerning [this] way or form of religion which Paul teaches,*

sted in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult:

19 Who ought to have been here before 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

<sup>1</sup> After I have been more accurately informed concerning this way. The words in the original are very ambiguous, and might be rendered, "That Felix when he

<sup>2</sup> had heard these things, having been more accurately informed concerning this way of Christianity, and knowing, it not to be so mischievous a thing as these ac

them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the utmost 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.

and have inquired more particularly into its principles and tendency, when Lysias the tribune comes down to Cæsarea, and gives me an account of what he knows as to the facts in question, I will take farther cognizance of the affair between you, and will be ready to hear any witnesses, on one hand, or the other, which either party may think proper to produce, that I may finally determine it.

And in the mean time, dismissing the assembly, he commanded the centurion, to whom he had before been committed, to keep Paul as a prisoner at large, and let him have all the liberty consistent with securing him, and to hinder none of his friends from assisting [him,] or coming to him: thereby plainly shewing, that he was convinced, it was merely a malicious prosecution, and that he was a person no way dangerous to the public.

IMPROVEMENT.

WE here behold the righteous as bold as a lion, under false accusations most confidently advanced by persons of the highest rank, and the most sacred, though (by a strange contrast) at the same time the most detestable character: And the more Felix was exercised in affairs, the more easily might he discern the genuine traces of innocence and integrity in his whole defence, to which, plain as it was, he seems to have paid more regard, than to all the complimentary and insinuating harangue of Tertullus; so great is the native force of truth, even on minds not entirely free from some corrupt bias!

causers suggested, put them off." But I rather think with Beza, Grotius, and others, that they are all the words of Felix, and take the meaning to be, "That he would take an opportunity of being more particularly informed of this sect and of its aspect on the public tranquillity, and when Lysias should come, and give him an account of what he had observed concerning it, as well as of the circumstances attending Paul's apprehension, &c. he would determine the affair." Which answer was the more proper, as Paul did not deny, that he was indeed a leading person among the Christians, which made a part of their accusation; and we soon after find, that Felix sent for Paul, to give him an account of his religion, (ver. 24.) and en-

deavoured by this, as well as other means, to inform himself in it.

To hinder none of his friends from assisting him, &c. This was a circumstance graciously ordered by divine Providence, which would make Paul's confinement much lighter than it could otherwise have been, and give him an opportunity of much greater usefulness. Raphaelus shews, Annot. ex Xen. p. 185, 186, that the word *synghe* is sometimes used for assistance in general, where personal ministrations 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. Compare Luke viii. 3.

SECT.

LIII.

Acts

XXIV.

22

Verse

10

- SECT. LIII. Justly did Paul dare to avow his serving God according to the purity of Gospel-institutions, by whomsoever it might be called heresy; nor need any fear that charge who make scripture the standard of their faith, and in the sincerity of their hearts seek inward divine teachings, that they may understand the sense of it; taking care not to run before their guide, and, with this injured servant of Christ, making it their daily exercise to maintain, in the whole of their conversation, a conscience void of offence towards God and men; A noble, though in some instances an arduous exercise; such an exercise, that he who maintains it may look forward with pleasure to the unseen world, and, through the grace of God in a Redeemer, may entertain a cheerful hope of that resurrection: which, how terrible soever it may be to the unjust, shall be to all the righteous the consummation of their joys and of their glory.
- 16
- 22 Whatever danger such may incur in consequence of a steady regard to that hope, let them courageously commit themselves to him that judgeth righteously, who knows how to raise them up protectors where they might least expect it, and to make, as in this instance, those that are strangers to religion and virtue themselves, the means of delivering them from unreasonable and wicked persecutors, and not only of guarding their lives from violence, but of securing to them many conveniencies and comforts.
- 23

## SECT. LIV.

*Paul, after having been heard by Felix several times, and once with great conviction, is nevertheless left a prisoner by him, when Festus his successor arrived at Casarea, before whom, being again accused by the Jews, he is obliged to appeal to Caesar. Acts XXIV. 24, to the end; XXV. 1--12.*

## ACTS XXIV, 24.

SECT. LIV. *AND* after Paul had been kept *some days* in this gentle confinement at Casarea, *Felix*, who had been absent for a short time, *coming* thither again *with Drusilla his wife, who was a Jewess,* sent for Paul, that he might hear from

ACTS XXIV. 24. *AND* after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard

\* *Drusilla his wife who was a Jewess.* Josephus gives us a particular account of this lady, who was the daughter of Herod Agrippa, and sister of that Agrippa mentioned in the next section. She had been married to Azizus, king of the Emesenes; 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; which, more to avoid the envy of her sister Bernice, than out of love to Felix, she did, though Azizus had but a little before submitted to circumcision, and so embraced Judaism, as the condition of the nuptials. She was afterwards (according to Dr. Hudson's interpretation of a dubious passage of Josephus, supported by the express testimony



him concerning the faith in Christ.

his own mouth what were the principles of his religion, and might gratify her curiosity as well as his own, in obliging that celebrated prisoner to give some account of himself before them; and he heard him discourse at large concerning 24 that *faith in Christ* as the Messiah, which he taught as of so great importance. But as Paul 25

SECT.  
LIV.  
Acts  
XXIV.

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.

knew the character of his hearers, he took occasion to attend what he delivered on this subject with proper remarks, concerning the obligations we are naturally under to the moral law, the guilt incurred in various instances by the breach of it, and the account finally to be given to God; all which render the knowledge of a Saviour, and a cordial acceptance of him, so absolutely necessary; and adding such illustrations as might best suit the characters and circumstances of the persons to whom he was addressing, he particularly *reasoned concerning righteousness*, as he knew Felix was an unjust and oppressive governor; and concerning *temperance*,<sup>b</sup> as he knew that both he and Drusilla had notoriously violated it, she having left her lawful husband to cohabit with him; and to enforce these reasonings, he faithfully admonished all that heard him, of an awful and tremendous judgment that was certainly to come, at which the highest personages should appear, and stand upon equal terms with others before that righteous tribunal. And while he was copiously and seriously insisting on these important subjects, as one who felt the weight of what he said, *Felix* was so deeply impressed, that he could not conceal the inward perturbation of his mind, but *trembling* in a manner that was apparent to Paul and all that were present, answered him, *Go thy way for this time*, for I have other engagements before me which require my attendance; and *I will take some future opportunity*<sup>c</sup>

of Zonaras) consumed with the son she had by Felix in a terrible eruption of Vesuvius. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. ix. cap. 7, [at. 5.] sect. 1, 2. That learned editor justly observes, on the testimony of Tacitus, (Hist. lib. v. cap. 9.) that Felix was also married to another Drusilla, (probably before this,) the grand-daughter of Antony and Cleopatra. See also Dr. Lardner's Credib. Book I, chap. 1, sect. 8, p. 41—43.

<sup>b</sup> Concerning righteousness and temperance.] How suitable this discourse was to the character and circumstances of so unjust and lewd a prince, may appear from the preceding note, and note <sup>c</sup> on ver. 9, p. 345.

<sup>c</sup> And I will take some future opportunity.] This the phrase *καιρος δε προσδοκειω* fully expresses. He thought, it did not become the dignity of a judge on the bench to receive even such oblique ad-

SECT. *to call for thee, and hear thee talk more largely*  
 LIV. *on these subjects than the urgency of my affairs*  
 Acts *will now admit.*  
 XXIV.

26 *And this he said, as he hoped also at the same time that money would be given him by Paul, that he might set him at liberty;*<sup>a</sup> for he had observed what he hinted in his defence against the Jews, (ver. 17,) that the alms of the Christians had been deposited in his hands, upon which account he hoped for some considerable ransom; and therefore, in this mean and dishonest view, he sent the more frequently for him, and discoursed with him, but never appeared under equal impressions any more.

27 *Now after Paul had been in custody till two years, were ended, Felix was succeeded in his government of that province by Portius Festus:* And as he knew that he had by his oppressive administration furnished the people with abundant matter of accusation against him, Felix being willing to ingratiate himself with the Jews at quitting the government, in a vain hope that it might prevent them from pursuing him with their complaints, left Paul a prisoner;<sup>e</sup> though he was in his own conscience persuaded, not

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftner, and communed with him.

27 But after two years, Portius Festus came into Felix's room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

monitions and reproofs from a prisoner, and therefore might really intend to give him a saller audience in private. Paul must no doubt discern those marks of confusion, that would be so apparent in his countenance, which would give him some hopes of succeeding in this important attempt for such a conversion, and consequently would give him spirit, when he resumed the discourse. This must naturally increase in Felix a conviction of his innocence, and esteem for his virtues; yet, in spite of all, he was so far from reforming his life in general, that he would not do justice to Paul, however the conviction might perhaps prevail so far, as to engage him to persist in his resolution of not delivering him to the Jews. How affecting an instance and illustration of the treachery of the human heart!

<sup>a</sup> He hoped also that money would be given him, &c. He might not only have a view to the money collected by Paul, which he brought to Jerusalem; but perhaps he might also imagine, that Paul being so considerable a person among the Christians, his charitable sect, that had sold their possessions to maintain their poor

brethren, would contribute largely for his deliverance.

<sup>e</sup> Left Paul a prisoner. It has already been observed, (note <sup>a</sup> on chap. xxiv. 2, p. 345,) that this base artifice did not prevent their clamorous accusations from following him 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, and on the whole the security of his fortune too, had he reformed his life on Paul's admonition, and cultivated those serious impressions which were once so strongly made upon his conscience!—It was during the two years of 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. See Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 12, [al. 12.] sect. 7; & cap. 14. [al. 12.] sect. 4, 5.

ACTS XXV. 1.  
Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Casarea 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, laying wait in the way to kill him.

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Casarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able,

only of the innocence, but the worth of his character.

When Festus therefore was come into the province of Judea, he had no sooner taken possession of the government, but after three days he went up from Casarea, which was the usual residence of the Roman governors, to Jerusalem, the capital city; both that he might gratify his curiosity in the sight of so celebrated a place, and also that he might there, as at the fountain-head, inform himself of the present state of their public affairs. And the high priest, and several persons of the chief rank among the Jews, appeared before him with an accusation against Paul; and earnestly intreated him that he would not, as they pretended Lysias and Felix had done, obstruct the course of public justice against one whom they knew to be so notorious an offender; Begging it as the only favour they desired against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem to be judged there: forming a scheme at the same time in their own secret purposes, of 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.<sup>1</sup> But Festus prudently answered, as God inclined his heart,<sup>2</sup> that as he had business of another kind to employ him while he continued at Jerusalem, he thought it best Paul should be kept a while longer at Casarea, and that he himself would shortly set out [for that place:] Therefore, said he, let those of you who are best able to manage the prosecu-

SECT. LIV.

Acts XXV. 1.

<sup>1</sup> Laying in ambush to kill him by the way.] The high priests about this time were, according to the account Josephus gives of them, such monsters of rapine, tyranny, and cruelty, that it is not to be wondered, such a design should have been favoured by him who now bore the office. Josephus mentions a great number of assassins at this time, called sicarii, or poignardiers, from the weapons they carried, by whom many innocent persons were murdered. Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 13, [al. 12.] sect. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Answered, as God inclined his heart.] It was really strange, that Festus, who as a new governor could not but incline to make himself popular, should deny this request, when it seemed to be so reason-

able, and came from persons of such eminent rank in the Jewish nation. If curiosity had inclined him to hear this cause himself, since it is certain, Paul might have been hurried up from Casarea within four or five days from the issuing of the order, and Festus stayed on the whole more than ten at Jerusalem, one would imagine he might have done it: But, when we consider how much edification to the churches depended on the continuance of 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 blessed God governs the world, with what silence, and yet at the same time with what wisdom and energy!

SECT. tion, and who can most conveniently undertake  
 LIV. the journey, go down along with [me;] and if  
 Acts there be any thing criminal in this man, for  
 XXV. 5. which he should be punished by the Roman  
 laws, let them accuse him in my hearing.

6 And thus having continued among them more  
 than ten days, he went down, as he had said, to  
 Casarea; and several of the Jews attended him,  
 as being determined to lose no time, but to pro-  
 secute the affair in the most strenuous manner  
 they possibly could. And the next day, sitting  
 down on the tribunal, he commanded Paul to be

7 brought before him. And when he appeared,  
 the Jews who came down from Jerusalem, pre-  
 sented themselves in a numerous company, and  
 stood round about him: bringing many heavy ac-  
 cusations against Paul, like those which Tertul-  
 lus had formerly advanced before Felix, which  
 nevertheless it was evident that they were not  
 by any means able to prove by proper witnesses.

8 Paul therefore, while he answered for himself,  
 insisted on his innocence, and said, Whatever  
 my accusers take upon them to alledge against  
 me, I aver, that neither against the law of the  
 Jews, to which I was expressing my regard at  
 the very time I was seized, nor against the tem-  
 ple, to which I came with a design to worship  
 there, nor against Caesar, to whom I always have  
 behaved as a peaceable subject, have I commit-  
 ted any offence at all: I openly deny their charge  
 in every branch of it, and challenge them to  
 make it out by proper evidence in any instance  
 or in any degree.

9 But Festus, willing to ingratiate himself with  
 the Jews by so popular an action at the begin-  
 ning of his government, answered Paul and said,  
 I am a stranger in a great measure to the ques-  
 tions in debate among you, which the Jewish  
 council must no doubt understand much better:  
 wilt thou therefore go up to Jerusalem, when I  
 return thither, and there be judged before me in  
 their presence concerning these things that so  
 the persons who were eye-witnesses may be more  
 easily produced, and I may have the sanction  
 of the Sanhedrim's advice in the sentence I pass,  
 in a cause which has given so great an alarm,  
 and which is apprehended to be of such public  
 importance?

go down with me, and  
 accuse this man, if  
 there be any wicked-  
 ness in him.

6 And when he had  
 tarried among them  
 more than ten days,  
 he went down unto  
 Casarea; and the  
 next day sitting in  
 the judgment-seat,  
 commanded Paul to  
 be brought.

7 And when he was  
 come, the Jews which  
 came down from Je-  
 rusalem, stood round  
 about, and laid many  
 and grievous com-  
 plaints against Paul,  
 which they could not  
 prove;

8 While he answer-  
 ed for himself, Nei-  
 ther against the law  
 of the Jews, neither  
 against the temple,  
 nor yet against Caesar,  
 have I offended any  
 thing at all.

9 But Festus willing  
 to do the Jews a plea-  
 sure, 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 judgment 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,

<sup>h</sup> *I am standing at Cæsar's tribunal.* Grotius and other writers have abundantly proved, that the tribunal of the Roman præcursors in the provinces, as it was held in Cæsar's name, and by commission from him, was looked upon as Cæsar's tribunal.

<sup>i</sup> *No man can give me up to them, merely to gratify, &c.* The paraphrase expresses the force of *παριστάνω*, which I knew not how to do by any one English phrase. This, as Dr. Lardner observes, will by no means prove, that the Jews had the power of life and death in their hands; *Credib.* Book I. chap. 2, sect. 10, Vol. I. p. 141, 142; for Paul might reasonably apprehend, not only that he might be murdered by the way, (as he

But Paul apprehensive of the attempt which might be made upon his life in his journey, or in the city itself, said, *I am standing at Cæsar's tribunal,*<sup>h</sup> where as a Roman citizen I ought to be judged; and I insist upon my privilege of having my cause decided there: *I have done no wrong to the Jews, as thou, O Festus, knowest perfectly well,* and must have perceived clearly by what has this day been examined before thee. *For if indeed I have done wrong to any,*<sup>i</sup> or have committed any thing worthy of death, I pretend not that there is any thing so sacred in my character as to exempt me from human jurisdiction; and in that case *I refuse not to die,* nor do I expect or desire any favour; but what I insist upon is strict and impartial justice equally due to all mankind; and if, as I know in my own conscience, and as thou hast from the course of this trial the greatest reason to believe, *there is nothing but malice and falsehood [in these things] of which these mine enemies accuse me, no man can justly give me up to them,* merely to gratify their prejudice and cruelty.<sup>j</sup> And since it is an affair of so great importance, in which I have reason to believe my life is concerned, *I must insist upon the privilege which the laws of Rome give me, and appeal unto the hearing of Cæsar himself,*<sup>k</sup> before whom I doubt not but I shall be able to evince the justice of my cause.

*Then Festus having spoken for a while in private with the chief persons of the Roman army and state about him, who constituted a kind of*

probably would have been,) but that, had the Sanhedrin condemned him, Festus might for political reasons have acted the part that 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 Mat. xxvii. 24, 26.

<sup>k</sup> *I appeal unto 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. See Dr. Rensou's Hist. Vol. II. p. 237, and Mr. Bincoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. ix, sect. 9, p. 358.

LIV.  
Act<sup>s</sup>  
XXV. 10

SECT. *council*,<sup>1</sup> called in the prisoner again, and answered him, *Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar thou shalt go:* For how desirous soever I am to oblige the people of my province, I will never allow myself, upon any occasion, to violate the privileges of a Roman citizen: I will therefore give proper orders as soon as possible for conveying thee to Rome, that thou mayest there be presented before the emperor himself.

LIV.  
Acts  
XXV. 12

answered. Hast thou  
appealed unto Caesar?  
unto Caesar shalt thou  
go.

In the mean time, Paul was remanded to his confinement, and his accusers returned to Jerusalem a second time, with the mortification of not having been able to accomplish their purpose against him.

## IMPROVEMENT.

Acts  
XXIV.  
—25

In the conduct of Paul towards Felix, we see the character of a gospel-minister illustrated in a most amiable manner: What could argue greater magnanimity, than to deal thus plainly with a man in whose power his liberty was? Yet he did not soothe and flatter him, but acted the part of one infinitely more concerned about the salvation of his hearers than his own temporal interest. He chooses faithfully to represent the evil of those vices to which Felix was especially addicted, and displays the terrors of the judgment to come, as enforcing the sacred laws of righteousness and temperance, which Felix had presumed so notoriously to violate.

Let the haughtiest sinners know, even upon their tribunals, and upon their thrones, that the universal Judge, and the universal King, will shew his superior power, and will ere long call them to his bar; and if they are conscious of allowed disobedience and rebellion against that supreme Lord of all, let them, like Felix, tremble.

- 25— Great is the force of truth, and of conscience, in which the prisoner triumphs, while the judge trembles. And O! how happily might this consternation have ended, had he pursued the views which were then opening on his mind! But, like thousands of awakened sinners in our day, he deferred the consideration of these important things to an uncertain hereafter.
- 26 He talked of a more convenient season for reviewing them; a season, which, alas, never came! for, though he heard again, he trembled no more, that we can find, or if he did, it was a vain terror, while he went on in that injustice which had given him such

<sup>1</sup> Constituted a kind of council.] Dr. Lardner has abundantly shewn, by apocryphal testimonies from Josephus, Philo, and Dio, that it was customary for a considerable number of persons of some distinction to attend the Roman prefects

into the provinces, with whom they were used to advise, especially in matters of judicature. (Credib. Book I. chap. 2, sect. 16, Vol. I. p. 225—227.) See also Mr. Biscoe, (as above,) p. 357.

dreadful apprehensions, of which his leaving Paul bound was a flagrant instance. Let every reader seriously weigh this remarkable, but terrible case, and take heed of stifling present convictions, lest they only serve to increase the weight of guilt, and to render the soul for ever more sensible of that greater condemnation to which it will be exposed by wickedly overbearing them.

In the mean time, we do not find that Drusilla, though a Jewess, was thus alarmed:<sup>m</sup> She had been used to hear of a future judgment; perhaps too she trusted to her being a daughter of Abraham, or to the expiations of the law, which were never intended to answer such purposes; and so, notwithstanding the natural tenderness of her sex, was proof against those terrors which seized so strongly on her husband, though an heathen. Let it teach us to guard against those false dependencies which tend to elude convictions, that might otherwise be produced by the faithful preaching of the word of God. Let it teach us to stop our ears against those syren songs which would lull us into eternal ruin, even though they should come from the mouths of those who appear like angels of light; for the prince of darkness himself could preach no more pernicious doctrines than those which reconcile the hopes of salvation with a corrupt heart and an immoral life.

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.

## SECT. LV.

*Agrippa and Bernice coming to visit Festus, Paul is at their request brought forth to be examined before them, in a large assembly of persons of considerable rank and figure. Acts XXV. 13, to the end.*

ACTS XXV. 13.  
AND after certain days, King A-

ACTS XXV. 13.  
THUS Paul continued in confinement, by the order of Festus the governor, till an opportunity could be found of sending him to

<sup>m</sup> We do not find, that Drusilla, &c.] to Bishop Atterbury in his unequalled sermon on this subject.  
For this excellent remark I am indebted

SECT. Rome, that he might there be tried by Cæsar. Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cæsarea to salute Festus.  
 LV. *And when some days were passed* after his appeal, King Agrippa, (the son of Herod Agrippa, and great grandson of Herod the Great,) who had considerable territories in that neighbourhood,<sup>a</sup> and Bernice his sister, with whom he was suspected of living in an incestuous commerce,<sup>b</sup> came to Cæsarea to pay their respects to Festus, and to congratulate him on his arrival in the province.

- 14 *And as they continued there many days, Festus, among other subjects of discourse which occurred, laid before the king the business of Paul; saying, there is a certain man, whose name is Paul, left here in bonds by Felix, who has occasioned a great deal of speculation in these parts, and indeed involved me in some* 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:
- 15 *difficulties: Concerning whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews were very earnest in their applications to me, and informed [me] of him as a notorious criminal; desiring judgment against him for several facts which they laid to his charge, and pre-* 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 *tended to be highly illegal. To whom I answered, that it is not the custom of the Romans, when a crime is charged upon a person, to give up any man to destruction (which I plainly perceived they intended to bring on this Paul) till he that is accused have the accusers openly produced, to give their evidence against him face to face,* 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

<sup>a</sup> King Agrippa.] The prince here mentioned was the son of Herod Agrippa spoken of before, chap. xii. 1, (see note <sup>a</sup> on that text, p. 167.) and grandson of Aristobulus the son of Herod the Great. As he was but seventeen years of age when his father died, the emperor Claudius did not think proper to appoint him king of Judæa in the room of his father, but made it a Roman province; however, on the death of his uncle Herod, he made him king of Chalcis, which, after he had governed it four years, he exchanged for a greater kingdom, and gave him the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysania, to which Nero afterwards added part of Galilee, with several towns in Perea. Josephus speaks largely of him in a multitude of passages, the most material of which are collected by De Lardner, (Credib. Book I. chap. 1, § 9, Vol. I. p. 46—50.) and Mr. Biscoe, (Boyle's Lect. chap. ii. § 3, p. 49, 50.)

<sup>b</sup> And Bernice his sister, &c.] Of this incestuous commerce Juvenal speaks in a celebrated passage, (Sat. vi. ver. 155, & seq.) as well as Josephus in the passage cited below. It is certain, this lady had first been married to her own uncle, Herod king of Chalcis, after whose death, on the report of her scandalous familiarity with her brother Agrippa, she married Polemon king of Cilicia whom she soon forsook, though he had submitted to circumcision to obtain the alliance. (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xv. cap. 7, [al. 5.] § 3.) This was also the person, whom Titus Vespasian so passionately loved, and whom he would have made empress, had not the clamours of the Romans prevented it. See Sueton. in Tacit. cap. 7, cum Not. Pitisc. and Tacit. Histor. lib. ii. cap. 2, & 81.

<sup>c</sup> Have the accusers face to face.] That, according to the Roman law, accusations were not to be heard in the absence of the



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 I 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.

accused person, Dr. Lardner has shewn, *Credib. Book I. chap. 10, sect. 8, Vol. I. p. 515, 516.*—It evidently appears from hence, (as Beza well argues,) that the judgment they demanded against 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 Paul's being a Roman citizen, that engaged him to determine to try the cause himself.

[*Relating to their own religion.*] As Agrippa was a Jew, and now came to pay a visit of respect to Festus on his arrival at his province, it is improbable, (what ever Beza insinuates to the contrary,) that he would use so rude a word as su-

and he have also liberty to speak, and be allowed an opportunity of making his defence as to the crime laid to his charge; which has so evident a foundation in reason and equity, that one would imagine it should be the common law and custom of all mankind. *When therefore upon*

*this they attended me from Jerusalem, and were come with me hither to prosecute him here, I without any delay sat down upon the tribunal, the very next day after my arrival, and commanded the man to be brought forth before me.* A-18

*Against whom, when the accusers stood up, and offered what they had to say, they brought no charge of such things as I supposed they would have done, from the general clamour they had made against him, as a seditious and dangerous person: But instead of this, they had certain* 19 *matters of debate, or questions of a different nature, which they urged against him with great vehemence, relating to some niceties of their own religion; and particularly about one Jesus of Nazareth that was dead, whom Paul unaccountably affirmed to be alive; though at the same time he acknowledged that he had been crucified at Jerusalem, and expired on the cross.*

*Of this he pretended to produce some extraordinary, and to me utterly incredible proofs: But as I was still dubious of the question relating to him, how far it might affect the state of the Jews in general, I said to Paul, that, if he were willing, he should go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me; where I thought I might have an opportunity of hearing the* 20

perdition, so that this text affords a further argument, that the word *δικαιοσύνης* will admit a milder interpretation, like that given it above in the version of Acts xvii. 22. See note 3 on that text, p. 259. And it is very remarkable, not only that the Jewish religion is spoken of by this word in several edicts, (reported by Josephus,) that were made in its favour, *Antiq. lib. xiv. cap. 10. [al. 17.] sect. 15, 14, 16, 18, 19;* but that Josephus himself uses it in the same sense too; *Bell. Jud. lib. ii. cap. 9. [al. 8.] sect. 3;* where he has the phrase *το τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἡρώτης*, to signify their invincible attachment to their religion. See Elshur, *Observ. Vol. I. p. 476, 477.*

SECT. LV.

Acts XXV. 16

SECT. cause, and of examining into several particulars  
LV. with greater advantage. *But Paul*, apprehensive  
(as I plainly perceived,) of some clandestine at-  
tempt upon his life, was so averse to this, that  
Acts he immediately prevented any further thought  
XXV. 21 of trying him at Jerusalem, by pleading his pri-  
vilege as a Roman citizen, and *appealing to be kept to the hearing of [our] august emperor himself;*<sup>\*</sup> upon which *I commanded him to be kept under confinement as before, till I could send him to Caesar*, by some convenient opportunity.

22 *Then Agrippa said unto Festus*, I know this affair has made a great deal of noise in the world, and therefore should be glad of an opportunity of gratifying my curiosity with a more particular and authentic account of it; so that *I also would desire to hear the man myself*,<sup>†</sup> that I may learn from his own mouth what it is that he maintains, and on what principles he proceeds. *And Festus* who was willing to oblige the king in this respect as soon as possible, promised that *he would order Paul to be produced, and said, Tomorrow thou shalt hear him*, as largely as thou pleasest.

23 *The next day therefore, king Agrippa and his sister Bernice coming with great pomp and splendour, and entering into the place of audience, with the tribunes and other officers of the Roman army, and likewise with the principal men of note and eminence in the city of Caesarea, at the command of Festus the governor, Paul was brought forth.*

24 *And Festus opened the occasion of their meeting with a short speech, and said, O king Agrippa, and all ye who are present with us in this numerous and splendid assembly, ye see this man, Paul of Tarsus, concerning whom all the multitude of the Jews have pleaded with me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out with the greatest*

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 Caesar.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with 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

<sup>\*</sup> *Our august emperor.*] Since Augustus was not properly one of the names of Nero, (as it was of Titus,) I thought the import of *Augustus*; here, which was plainly a complimentary form of speaking, might be most justly expressed by this version.

<sup>†</sup> *I also would desire to hear the man myself.*] No doubt but Agrippa had learnt from his father, by whom it is to be remembered, James had been put to death,

and Peter imprisoned, Acts xii. 3, 5, and from many others, something of the history and pretensions of Christianity; so that he would naturally have a curiosity to see and discourse with so eminent a Christian teacher as Paul was; who, on account of what he had been in his unconverted state, was to be sure more regarded and talked of among the Jews, than any other of the apostles.

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 committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself had 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, and especially 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.

earnestness, that he was a man of the most infamous and mischievous character, and ought not to be suffered to live upon earth any longer.

But for my own part, after the most diligent and impartial inquiry, I could not apprehend him to have done any thing worthy of death, or find that he was guilty of a breach of any of our laws; yet when I would have seen whether the Jews had any evidence at home to have supported any material charge against him, as he himself declined that trial to which I would have brought him at Jerusalem, and has appealed to the judgment of [our] august emperor, I have determined to send him to Rome to be heard by him. But the account I have received of him

is so confused and inconsistent, that he is one concerning whom I have nothing certain to write to his imperial majesty: \* Wherefore I have this day brought him out before you all, and especially before thee, O king Agrippa, who art well acquainted with the Jewish customs, that after farther examination taken, I may have something more intelligible and more considerable to write, and may know better how to represent his cause. For it seems to me very absurd, as I doubt not but it will also appear to you, to send a prisoner to be tried before Cæsar, and not to signify also at the same time what are the crimes or causes of complaint [alleged] against him, on which the emperor may proceed in giving judgment on his case.

## IMPROVEMENT.

MYSTERIOUS as that dispensation was which permitted 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 Cæsar.

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 Paul gave them, for learning the way of salvation: But how

\* To his imperial Majesty.] *Imperio* empire, a title, by which it is well known plainly signifies, To the great Lord of the the emperor was now often spoken of.

SECT.  
LV.

Acts  
XXV. 25

Veras  
14

13, 17

- SECT. LV. 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,
- 19 Verse 19
- 20 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 Cæsar, far more stable than the foundations of the earth.
- 22 It is no wonder that Agrippa had a curiosity to hear Paul; it is no wonder that the gospel-story in general should move curiosity; but God forbid that it should be considered merely as an amusement: In that view it is an amusement that will cost men dear.
- 24-26 In the mean time the prudence of Festus is to be commended, who was desirous to get farther information in an affair of such a nature as this; and his equity, which bore a testimony to the innocence of the apostle, is worthy of applause; as well as the law which provided, that none should be condemned unheard: a law, which as it is common to all nations, (courts of inquisition only excepted,) ought to be the rule of our proceeding in all affairs, not only in public but private life; if we would avoid acting an injurious part in the censures we pass on the character of others, and exposing our own to the just reproach, which they seldom escape who take upon them to judge a matter before they have heard it. (Prov. xviii. 13.)

## SECT. LVI.

*Paul makes his defence before Agrippa, Festus, and the rest of the audience, in a manner which leads them to conclude, he might have been set at liberty had he not appealed to Cæsar.*  
Acts XXVI. 1. to the end.

## ACTS XXVI. 1.

SECT. LVI.  
Acts XXVI. 1.

WHEN Agrippa said unto Paul, when he stood before him and Festus, and that great assembly of nobility and gentry which was met at his examination, *It is now permitted unto thee to speak for thyself*; do it therefore with freedom, and be assured that all due regard shall be paid to what thou hast to offer on this occasion.

ACTS XXVI. 1.  
WHEN Agrippa said unto Paul, thou art permitted to speak for thyself.

— Then Paul 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 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.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews.

5 Which knew me from the beginning, (if they would ten-

Then Paul, stretching forth his hand, in a graceful and respectful manner,<sup>a</sup> addressed himself to the splendid audience before which he stood, and made his defence in terms like these:

O King Agrippa, I esteem myself peculiarly<sup>2</sup> happy, and look upon it as no small advantage to me and my cause, that I am this day called to make my defence before thee, concerning all those things of which I am accused by the Jews; Especially<sup>3</sup> as I know that thou art accurately acquainted with all things that relate to the customs which prevail, and the questions which are in debate among the Jews;<sup>b</sup> to some of which my cause and discourse will refer: wherefore I humbly intreat thee, that thou wilt hear me with patience and indulgence, since it is necessary for me to enlarge circumstantially upon some important particulars, which cannot be justly represented in a few words.

I will therefore begin with observing, that the<sup>4</sup> manner of my life from my youth, which from the beginning of that age<sup>c</sup> was spent among those of my own nation at Jerusalem, is well known to all the Jews there, Who were acquainted with me<sup>5</sup> from the first of my setting out in the world, and indeed from the very time of my entrance upon a course of liberal education under that celebrated master Gamaliel; and if they would candidly testify what they know to be true, they

<sup>a</sup> Stretching forth his hand.] Elser (Observ. Vol. I. p. 478, 479.) shows this to have been esteemed at that time a very decent expression of an earnestness in one that spoke in public, though some of the most illustrious Greek orators in earlier ages, such as Pericles, Themistocles, and Aristides, thought it a point of modesty to avoid it. But this was the effect of a false taste; and it is plain the eloquent Demosthenes often used the same gesture with St. Paul here.

<sup>b</sup> Especially as thou art acquainted with all the customs, &c.] Some manuscripts have added here *ὁμοίως*; or *ὁμοίως*, which our translators have received into their version; but there is no necessity for this addition, as appears from several instances of the like construction in the most approved Greek authors, which are produced in their remarks on this place by De Dieu, and Paphilius. Annot. ex. Xen. p. 187. It is apparent, that Agrippa must have had great advantages for

an accurate acquaintance with the Jewish custom; from his education under his father Herod Agrippa, and his long abode at Jerusalem; and agreeably to this, by the permission of the emperor, he had the direction of the sacred treasure, the government of the temple, and the right of nominating the high priest, as Dr. Lardner has observed and proved; Credib. Book I. chap. 1, § 9, Vol. I. p. 49.

<sup>c</sup> From the beginning of that age.] Probably as Dr. Wells observes in his just criticism on these words (Sacred Geography Vol. III. p. 286.) he had in his childhood been brought up in the schools of Tarsus, and there formed to an acquaintance with the politer of the Greek and Roman authors, till he entered on a kind of academical course under the celebrated Gamaliel about the 15th or 16th year of his age, when he came to Jerusalem, and was there educated from the beginning of his youth.

SECT.  
LVI.Acts.  
XXVI.

SECT. world join with me in assuring you, *that I lived* (ify,) that after the  
 LVI. *a Pharisee, according to the rules observed by* most straitest sect of  
 that which you well know to be *the strictest sect* of our religion, I lived  
 Acts of *our religion,*<sup>d</sup> in every thing relating not only a Pharisee.  
 XXVI. to the written law of God, but likewise to the  
 5 traditions of the Fathers. *And now I stand in* 6 And now I stand,  
 6 *judgment in the midst of this assembly, not for and am judged for*  
 any crime that I have committed, but indeed the hope of the promise  
*for the hope of that promise* of a resurrection made of God  
 to eternal life and happiness by means of the unto our fathers:  
 the Messiah, *which in time past was made by God*  
 7 *unto our fathers:*<sup>e</sup> To the accomplishment of 7 Unto which promise  
 which important [promise] all the known remain- our twelve  
 ders of *our twelve tribes,* in one part of the world tribes instantly serving  
 or another *hope to attain:* and by the expectation God day and  
 which they have of it, are animated in all night, hope to come:  
 their labours and sufferings for religion, while for which hope's  
 they are *worshipping continually night and day,* sake, King Agrippa,  
 in the stated and constant performance of their I am accused of the  
 morning and evening devotions, whether in the Jews.  
 temple, or in other places in which they present  
 their prayers; *concerning which hope, O King*  
 Agrippa, glorious and reasonable as it is, I may  
 truly say *I am now most unjustly and inconsistently*  
*accused by the Jews:* For the doctrine I preach  
 contains the fullest assurance and demonstration  
 of a resurrection that ever was given to the world;  
 and I am persuaded it is this that provokes those  
 of my enemies who disbelieve it, to prosecute me  
 with so much malice. But can there indeed be any  
 evil in maintaining this doctrine myself, and endeavouring  
 to convince others of it? Permit me, O my  
 honoured auditors, to appeal to you and say,  
*Why should it be judged an incredible thing,* by  
 any of you; *that God,* a being of infinite  
 perfections, and the original author of the human

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you

<sup>d</sup> *The strictest sect of our religion.*] So Josephus calls the sect of the Pharisees, almost in the very words which the apostle uses, Bell. Jud. lib. i. cap. 5. <sup>e</sup> *ab. 4.*] sect. 2. and in a variety of other passages collected by Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. iv. sect. 3. p. 92. And Dr. Whitby has shown, (in his learned note on this text,) that it was in many respects stricter, both as to doctrine and life, than that of the Essenes. It appears from the gospels, that many rigorous severities were used by them. Compare Luke xviii. 11, 12; Mat. xxiii. 5,

23, 25, 28. And Witius assures us, (I suppose on the authority of some rabbies,) that they 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. Wits. Miletum, cap. 1. sect. 15.

<sup>e</sup> *That promise which was made by God unto our Fathers.*] See the paraphrase and notes (and # on Luke xx. 37, 38, Vol. II, sect. 155.

that God should raise the dead?

frame, *should raise the dead*, and continue their existence in a future state? Will not his almighty power enable him to do it? and will not the honour of his moral attributes be hereby illustrated and vindicated? And if it be credible, is it not important enough to deserve the most attentive regard? I am confident, Sirs, you would all have thought it so, had you passed through such extraordinary scenes as occasioned a change in my views and conduct; which therefore I will plainly and fully open to this august assembly.

SECT. LVI.  
Acts XXVI.

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

*I once indeed, thought with myself, that I ought in conscience to do many things most contrary to the name, and destructive of the interest and religion of Jesus the Nazarene, whom under that title I once impiously derided, esteeming all his pretences to be the Messiah most false and contemptible. I determined therefore to exert all my power against those who*

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.

*owned him under that character; Which accordingly I did, particularly in Jerusalem, where many now living were witnesses of my wild rage, and cannot but remember, how I shut up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests to do it; and how when [some of them] were killed, I gave my vote against them,* and did all I could to animate both the rulers and the people, to cut them off from the face of the earth: (Compare Acts viii. 1, 3; xxii. 19, 20.)

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blas-

*phemise the name of Jesus Christ, which I now so highly revere,*

<sup>c</sup> *Why should it be judged an incredible thing, &c.]* Beza would place a mark of interrogation after *To* and read it, *What? is it thought incredible? &c.*—which is indeed suited to the animated manner of Paul's speaking; and a thousand such examples occur in ancient authors, where the persons introduced must be supposed perfectly to understand the rules of decorum.

<sup>d</sup> *I gave my vote against them.]* Paul had no vote in the Sanhedrim, nor do we certainly know that any more than Stephen were put to death for Christianity before Paul's conversion, in whose con-

demnation there was no voting at all. But the meaning plainly is, (as Beza well observes,) that he instigated 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 was hinted before, note<sup>e</sup> on Acts xvii. 4, p. 324.) might perhaps be more than are recorded; accordingly the Syriac renders it, *I joined with those that condemned them;* and Grotius observes, that the Greek phrase *καταψηφισα* has sometimes this general signification.

<sup>e</sup> *I compelled them to blaspheme.]* I can-

- sect. and openly to renounce all dependence upon  
 LVI. him: *And being exceedingly mad against them,*  
 Acts I persecuted them even to those foreign cities to  
 XXVI. which some of them had fled, hunting out the  
 11 poor refugees, and endeavouring to drive them,  
 not only out of their country, but out of the  
 world.
- 12 *In this view as I was going to Damascus, with  
 authority and commission from the chief priests  
 to execute this cruel purpose against all the  
 Christians I could find there, (compare Acts*  
 13 *ix. 2, & seq.) At mid-day, [while I was] in the  
 way thither, and was drawing near the end of  
 my journey, I solemnly declare before thee, O  
 King Agrippa, and before this assembly, as in  
 the presence of God, I saw a great and most  
 astonishing light from heaven, exceeding the  
 splendour of the sun, shining about me, and those*  
 14 *who travelled with me. And when we were all  
 fallen down to the earth, as if we had been struck  
 with lightning, I very distinctly heard a voice  
 speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew lan-  
 guage, Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?  
 [It is] hard for thee to attempt an opposition  
 to me, and madly to presume to kick against*  
 15 *the goods. And I said in astonishment, Who  
 art thou, Lord, and which way have I persecu-  
 ted thee? And who can judge of my surpris-  
 e, when he who appeared to me in this divine lus-  
 tre and glory, said, I am Jesus the Nazarene,  
 whom thou persecutest by the opposition thou*  
 16 *art making to my cause and interest. But  
 though, by engaging in this desperate attempt,  
 thou hast forfeited thy life, I am determined  
 graciously to spare it, and to use thee hereafter  
 as the instrument of my glory; arise, therefore,  
 and stand upon thy feet; for to this purpose I  
 have in this extraordinary manner appeared unto  
 thee, even to ordain thee a minister of my gospel,  
 and a witness both of the things which thou hast  
 now seen, and of those in which I will hereafter*
- 12 Whereupon as  
 I went to Damascus,  
 with authority and  
 commission from the  
 chief priests;  
 13 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, as if we had been  
 struck with lightning,  
 I heard a voice speak-  
 ing unto me, and say-  
 ing in 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 But rise and  
 stand upon thy  
 feet: for I have ap-  
 peared unto thee for  
 this purpose, to make  
 thee a minister and  
 a witness both of  
 these things which  
 thou hast seen, and  
 of those things in  
 the which I will ap-  
 pear unto thee:

not think with the learned Witsius, that this refers to his obliging them to use that form of prayer ascribed to Gamaliel in which the Christian religion was mentioned as heresy; and by imposing which, he supposes it was intended to prevent Christians from joining in synagogue-worship. (Wits. Meltem. cap. 1, § 22.) But the frequent instances we have of the apostles going into the synagogues,

and joining in their worship, plainly shew that prayer not to have been so anciently received. A known passage in Pliny, (lib. x. epist. 94.) proves that heathen persecutors obliged Christians, that fell under the trial, not only to renounce Christ, but also to curse him; and I think, it appears from hence, that the Jews imposed the like test upon them.



17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, *appear unto thee:* 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 thou shalt encounter with among the Gentiles, to whom I now send* 17

SECT.  
LVI.  
Acts  
XXVI.

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. *thee;*<sup>1</sup> That I may make thee instrumental by the preaching of my gospel to open their eyes, which are now in a miserable state of blindness, that they may turn from that spiritual darkness in which they are now involved, to the light of divine knowledge and holiness,<sup>2</sup> and from the power of Satan, to which they are now in a wretched subjection, unto the love and service of God; that so they may receive the free and full forgiveness of all their sins, be they ever so many, or ever so aggravated, and may obtain an inheritance among them that are sanctified, through that faith which is in me, which terminates in me as its great object, and consists in devoting the soul to my service, and committing it to my care as the Saviour of men.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was *From that ever-memorable time, O King* 19  
Agrippa, I was *Agrippa, through the grace of God subduing my heart, I was not disobedient to the heavenly*

<sup>1</sup> *The Gentiles to whom I now send thee.*] This text entirely overthrows the scheme which Lord Barrington and Dr. Benson have taken so much pains to establish, relating to Paul's receiving his first commission to preach to the idolatrous Gentiles several years after his conversion, viz. in his second journey to Jerusalem. See note <sup>2</sup> on Acts xii. 17, p. 329. To support that hypothesis, (for it is no more,) they are obliged to maintain, that these words were not spoken by Christ when he met him on the way to Damascus, but in the vision he had in the temple at the time referred to above. But, as the words make a part of the sentence, in which Christ bids him rise from the astonishment into which his appearance to him on the way to Damascus had thrown him, and as he afterwards (ver. 19, 20.) speaks of his first preaching Christ at Damascus, as the effect of these words, I think every unprejudiced person must see, that they belong to the story of his conversion; and this is as reconcilable with Peter's first opening the Christian church to the uncircumcised Gentiles, as the general commission which Christ gave to all the apostles before his

ascension. Mark xvi. 13; Mat. xxviii. 19. The plain answer to the seeming objection arising from both is, that though these commissions were indeed very extensive, yet they were not at first fully understood by those that received them; and Paul, as well as the twelve, might perhaps imagine, that, if any Gentiles were converted, (which to be sure, the apostles all expected multitudes would be,) they must first be received into the Jewish church by circumcision, and then into the Christian by baptism.—Many good manuscripts and ancient versions do indeed leave out *ver, non;* see Dr. Mill. in loc. but few of these read *ἀποστολῆν, I will send thee;* and if we admit the reading *ἀπὸ ἀποστολῆν, to whom I send thee;* the sense will be much the same, as if we retain that which is commonly received.

<sup>2</sup> *That they may turn, &c.*] This seems to be the sense of the original, *ἐκ τῆς σκοτίας εἰς τὸ φῶς,* which (as Dr. Diefenbach observes,) 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 the word is generally used in other places. Compare chap. ix. 75; xi. 21; xv. 19; xxvi. 20; xxviii. 27.

SECT.

LVI.

Acts

XXVI

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vision, with which he was pleased thus miraculously to favour me, *But* I immediately engaged, with all the united powers of my soul, in the service of that divine Master, against whose interest and kingdom I had hitherto been acting in so strenuous a manner; and accordingly I openly declared, first to them at Damascus, where I was going when this vision happened; and afterwards to those at Jerusalem, and through all the country of Judea, and [then] to all the Gentiles wherever I came, in my various and wide-extended travels from one country to another, that they should repent of their sins, and turn to God with their whole hearts, performing deeds worthy of that repentance which they profess, and without which the sincerity of it can never be approved in his sight.

- 21 Now let any one judge, whether for this I should be treated as a criminal worthy of death, or whether indeed I have deserved these bonds; Yet on account of these things, and for no other cause, the Jews, who have the same inveteracy against the gospel of Jesus that I once had, seizing me in the temple some time ago, attempted in a tumultuous manner to have killed me with their own hands:<sup>1</sup> And since I was rescued at first by Lysias the Tribune, they have repeated the attempt again and again, contriving to assassinate me in my way to the council, before which they urged that I might again be brought.

- 22 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;<sup>m</sup> 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

not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying

<sup>1</sup> To have killed me with their own hands.] Beza justly observes, that this is the exact import of *ἐκείνων χερσίν*, which was the more properly used here, as there was reason to apprehend, that Paul would have been actually pulled to pieces [*διασπασθῆναι*] in an assembly, as it seems, less numerous and less violent than that

which seized him in the temple. Compare chap. xxiii. 10. p. 338.

<sup>m</sup> Having obtained help from God, &c.] This may very probably express the sense he had of the late interposition of Providence in his favour, touched upon in note *ε* on chap. xvi. 4, p. 357.

none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

24 And, as he thus spake for himself, 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

<sup>a</sup> *Much study drives thee to madness.*] This is the exact import of the original, ἡ δὲ οὐκ ἔσθ' ἄλλο τι ἢ ἡ πολλὴ μελέτη. Perhaps he might know, that Paul in his present confinement spent a great deal of time in reading; and this was the most decent turn, that could be given to such a mad charge. But nothing can be at once more invidious and ridiculous, (as those two properties often go together,) than the gloss which Mr. Collins gives to these words, Grounds and Reasons, p. 172, as if Paul's applying the Old Testament Scriptures in an allegorical sense had led Festus to make this reflection; whereas it is not certain, that Paul quoted any particular scripture in this whole discourse, much less in an allegorical interpretation; nor would it have been possible for Festus, (an entire stranger to the Jewish prophecies,) to have made any judgment as to the propriety or impropriety with which they were applied: And any person of common candour

by Christ Jesus my Lord: Thereby indeed in effect saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses have declared should be; That is, in short, that the Messiah having suffered, and being the first of those who rose from the dead to an immortal life, should discover light, and be the means of revealing knowledge and happiness, both to the people of the Jews, and also to the Gentiles; that by following his instructions, and obeying his commands, they also might at length obtain a glorious resurrection, and a life of everlasting felicity in the heavenly world.

And as he was thus making his defence, Festus, astonished to hear him represent this despised gospel of Jesus of Nazareth, as a matter of such high and universal concern, and thinking the vision he had related as introductory to that assertion quite an incredible story, said, with a loud voice, which reached the whole auditory, Paul thou art distracted: Much study of these ancient records, on which thou layest so great a stress, drives thee to madness; or thou wouldst never talk of such facts as these, or expect to be credited in such wild assertions.<sup>b</sup>

But this invidious imputation was so far from provoking Paul to any indecency, that with a perfect command of himself he calmly and gravely replied, I am not mad, most noble Festus;

would easily see, that, if such a thing had been in question, (as indeed it was not,) the conviction of Agrippa, so well versed in Jewish affairs, would have been a much stronger argument that the prophecies were applied right, than the censure of Festus could be for the contrary.

<sup>b</sup> *In such wild assertions.*] Besides what is hinted in the paraphrase; it would appear quite absurd to Festus, to hear Paul (as he did in the last sentence of his speech,) 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 people, but even the Gentiles too, and, among the rest, the polite and learned Romans and Greeks. This, in conjunction with what Paul had said of the manner in which this was revealed to him, would lead such a half-thinker as Festus appears, to conclude roundly that he was a visionary enthusiast.

- SECT. *but I utter the words of truth and sobriety,*<sup>r</sup> which speak forth the words  
LVI. will bear the test of the severest examination; of truth and sober-  
ness.
- Acts  
XXVI.  
26 *and I desire nothing more than that they may be brought to it. For the King himself knoweth of these things, and is no stranger to them, to whom also I speak with freedom, emboldened by his permission, and assured of his candour: For I am persuaded he has better and more favourable thoughts of what I have been saying, as none of these things are entirely hidden from him; for this is not [an affair] that was transacted in a corner; the death of Jesus, the preaching of his gospel, my rage against it, and sudden conversion to it, were all open and notorious facts, of the truth of which, thousands had opportunity of being certainly and thoroughly informed; and I am satisfied the king has often*
- 27 *heard of them: Nor can he be ignorant of the correspondence of these things to the predictions of the Old Testament: O King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? Yes, I know that thou believest them to have been written by a divine inspiration, and art aware of the weight of those arguments which are derived from the authority of their testimony.*
- 28 *Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou hast given such an account of these matters, and hast delivered that thou hast been saying in so natural and so earnest a manner, that thou almost persuadedst me to become a Christian myself, instead of condemning thee under that character.*
- 29 *And Paul, powerfully struck with so remark-*
- 26 For 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 the prophets? I know that thou believest.
- 28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadedst me to be a Christian.
- 29 And Paul said,

[*I am not mad, &c.*] This answer, in this connection, appears inexpressibly beautiful; and if great and good men, who meet with rude and insolent treatment in the defence of the gospel, (which is often the case,) learn to behave with such moderation, it will be a great accession of strength to the Christian cause.—Daphneus shows, (as Boza had before observed,) that *σωφροσύνη, sobriety*, is with the strictest exactness opposed to *μωχία, madness*; Annot. ex. Xen. p. 188.

[*Thou almost persuadedst me to become a Christian.*] To interpret this as an irony, *εὐλαβῶς με πείθεεις, &c.* as if he had said, "This is a very compendious way of persuading me to become a Christian," is supposing Agrippa very unreasonably and absurdly ludicrous; and though there

may be some ambiguity in the words, if read alone, yet it is certain the manner of his speaking, which must either be very solemn and earnest, or, with a most contemptuous sneer, would determine the sense beyond all doubt. Now it plainly appears from Paul's answer, and from the sense in which he there uses *εὐλαβῶς, almost*, in opposition to *εὐπείθως, altogether*, that he took 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 persuadedst me to be almost a Christian," or, "to become an almost Christian," that is, an hypocritical professor, is quite foreign to the purpose; nor could Agrippa have any temptation to be so.

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.

able an acknowledgment, said, with great fervency of spirit, and yet with perfect decency, O King, 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:\*

My afflictions I would bear myself, till Providence shall release me from them, but my satisfaction in the truth of the gospel is so entire, and the consolations I experience from it are so solid and noble, that I could wish nothing greater and better to this illustrious audience, than that every one present had an equal faith in it, and equal zeal to promote its interests; which I earnestly pray that God may excite in your hearts.

30 And when he had thus spoken, the 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 Caesar.

And as he said this, that the impression Paul began to make upon the court might reach no farther, the King arose, and Festus, the governor and Bernice, and those who sat with them, upon the bench; for Agrippa was able to hear no more. And when they had retired to the governor's apartment, they spoke one with another, saying, It is evident, so far as we can judge by this discourse, which hath all imaginable marks of candour and sincerity, that this man, whether his reasonings be or be not conclusive hath done nothing worthy either of death or of bonds. And Agrippa said to Festus, This man might certainly have been set at liberty upon this hearing, without any farther debate, if he had not appealed unto Caesar:† But as he has judged it necessary to take that step, he has indeed put it out of our power to discharge him, and therefore he must stand by Caesar's award; to whom it will be convenient to send him as soon as possible.

\* *Except these bonds.*] Some have thought (as Grotius does) that he refers to his imprisonment in general, arguing, that it would have been indecent to have brought him to plead before Agrippa and Bernice in chains. But it has been justly replied, that such instances are to be found in antiquity. See Tacit. Annal. lib. iv. § 28.

† *This man might have been set at liberty, &c.*] Though this declaration of Agrippa would not secure 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. I shall only add, that though it might seem in this view an unhappy circumstance that Paul had made this appeal; yet, as it was, at the time that he made it, the properest method he could take for his own security, he would have reason to reflect upon it with satisfaction, and we before observed, that his visiting Rome under the character of a prisoner was over-ruled by Providence, to answer some important purpose. Compare Phil. i. 12, & seq.

SECT. LVI. Acts XXVI. 29

## IMPROVEMENT.

SECT. PERFECTLY does our blessed Redeemer, in this instance, appear to have answered his promise, that when his disciples were brought before governors and kings for his sake, it should be given them in that hour what they should speak: (Mat. x. 18, 19.) For indeed it is impossible to imagine what could have been said more suitable, or what more graceful, than this discourse of Paul before Agrippa;<sup>1</sup> 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 a most happy union.

Verse There was no appearance of flattery, in congratulating himself  
 2 upon an opportunity of speaking before one skilled in the manners and in the records of the Jews; for the more they had been attended to, with the greater advantage would the cause of Christianity have appeared. There was no arrogance in his in-  
 4, 5 sisting upon the strictness of his former life; since those things which were once gain to him, he had long since counted loss for Christ. (Phil. iii. 7.) The excellency of the end that inspired  
 7 him was proportionable to the manner in which he was impressed with it: Well may they serve God instantly day and night, who have the hope of a happy resurrection before them; nor is  
 8 the hope presumptuous and vain, since it is founded on a divine promise: Why should it seem incredible with any, that he who gave life should restore it; that God should raise the dead?  
 9, 11 It was this expectation that supported the Christians, while Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter against them; (Acts ix. 1.) while mad with a profane and impious rage against Jesus of Nazareth, he compelled them to blaspheme, and persecuted them even to strange cities. But a conduct like this must occasion to him the keenest remorse, when he came to know what  
 14, 15 he did, and to see how gracious and condescending a Lord he had been persecuting in his members: When he took so gracious a method to reclaim him, it is no wonder that it left an indelible impression on his memory and on his heart. Indeed the story is so pleasant, and so instructive, that we may well bear to read it a second and a third time; or rather may rejoice in it, as so many instructive circumstances are added to those which we before endeavoured to illustrate and improve. (Compare Acts 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 men, in com-

<sup>1</sup> This discourse of Paul before Agrippa. The reply of Paul to Agrippa is so excellently illustrated, in Three Discourses on Irresolution in Religion, by my much honoured friend, the Reverend

Dr. Samuel Clark of St. Albans, that I cannot but earnestly recommend them to the perusal of all, who desire thoroughly to enter into the strength and spirit of this beautiful part of the sacred story.

parison with that into which it was intended to bring them? A gospel-ministry was to open their eyes before blinded, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; that they might receive the remission of their sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Enlighten, O Lord, the dark corners of the earth; vindicate the wretched slaves of Satan into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and adopt them to that inheritance which thou hast prepared for thy sanctified ones.

Wonderful scheme of divine goodness! and happy the men who are employed in promoting it! Let the profane world call their zeal madness, and account for it in a less decent and candid manner than Festus himself did; these would be found the words of truth and sobriety, and the God of truth and of wisdom will approve them as such, when the wisdom of the world shall all appear foolishness and madness. (1 Cor. iii. 19.)

God grant that none of us may rest in being almost persuaded to be Christians; when convictions begin to open, let us follow the celestial ray whithersoever it leads us, and not be disobedient to the heavenly vision. Would to God, that all who shall read or hear this discourse, might be not only almost, but altogether prevailed upon to be Christians, and might attain to a temper like that of the blessed Paul, even though his bonds were not to be excepted! For that religious joy which such a disposition must introduce, would render chains, yet heavier than his, light; and they would quickly be transformed into ornaments of glory which shall deck the soul in the presence of God, with a lustre infinitely superior to that which the diadem of Agrippa, or the robe of Festus, could.

SECT. LVII.

*Paul sets out on his voyage from Cæsarea to Rome, and having suffered great extremity in a storm, receives assurance of his preservation by a vision, which he communicates to his companions for their encouragement.* Acts XXVII. 1—26.

ACTS XXVII. 1.

AND when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered

ACTS XXVII. 1.

IT was observed in the conclusion of the last section, that Agrippa apprehended Paul might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar; but the appeal being made could not be recalled: *And therefore, as it was determined that we should sail into Italy,*<sup>a</sup> they

<sup>a</sup> As it was determined that we should sail. Some ancient copies and versions read it, that [he] should sail, which may seem most proper, as those that sent away Paul had

no power over Luke or Aristarchus; yet they also determined, though freely, to sail.

SECT.  
LVII.  
Verse  
18

SECT.  
LVII.  
Acts  
XXVII.

SECT. delivered Paul and some other prisoners in his  
LVII. circumstances <sup>b</sup> to a centurion of the Augustan  
cohort, whose name was Julius. And going on  
Acts board a ship of Adramyttis, a city of Mysia not  
XXVII. far from Pergamos, we weighed anchor, intending  
2 to sail by the coasts of the Lesser Asia; Aristarchus a Macedonian, a Christian brother of the city of Thessalonica, being with us,<sup>c</sup> who was glad of the opportunity of attending Paul, on an occasion of so great importance to him, and to the church.

3 And steering our course northward from Cæsarea, the next day we reached Sidon, a celebrated city on the Phœnician shore; and Julius the centurion treating Paul with great humanity, permitted [him] to go to his friends there whom he had not been able to visit in his way to Jerusalem, (chap. xxi. 3, 7.) and to enjoy the benefit of their kind care, towards rendering his voyage as agreeable as they could, as well as affording him some present refreshment.

4 And weighing anchor from thence, we sailed under the island of Cyprus, leaving it on the left hand, because the winds were in the south-west quarter, and so were contrary to us, and consequently prevented our taking the more direct course, which we might otherwise have done, by sailing more to the west, and leaving Cyprus to the north. And sailing through the sea that lies over against Cilicia and Pamphylia, without an opportunity of calling on any of our friends at Tarsus, Attalia, Perga, or Antioch in Pisidia, where Paul had once and again made so delightful a progress, (see Acts xiii.

Paul, and certain other prisoners, unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus a Macedonian, of Thessalonica, being with us.

3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came

<sup>b</sup> They delivered Paul and some other prisoners.] Dr. Lardner proves at large, particularly from several passages of Josephus, that prisoners of importance used frequently to be sent, as from other provinces, so from Judæa, to Rome; Credib. Book I. chap. 10, sect. 10, Vol. I. p. 331, 332.

<sup>c</sup> Aristarchus a Macedonian, &c.] This good man, by birth a Thessalonian, had been with Paul in Ephesus at the time of the tumult there, (chap. 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. (Chap. xx. 4.) He

now accompanied him to Rome, and was a fellow-prisoner with him there; Col. ii. 10, and is mentioned in Paul's epistle to Philemon, ver. 24, who was probably their common friend, as a valuable assistant in his ministerial work. It was to be sure a great comfort to the apostle, to have the company of two such friends as 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. Compare ver. 9.



to Myra, a city of Lycia.

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over-against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over-against Salmone:

8 And hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The Fair Havens, nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

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,

13, 14; xiv. 25, 26; xv. 40, 41;) we came to the port of Myra, [a city] of Lycia, whose celebrated promontory we might descry at a considerable distance. And there the centurion finding a ship of Alexandria, that was bound for Italy, quitting the other vessel which had brought us to Myra, he put us on board it, and embarked with us.

And when we had sailed slowly for several days, 7 by Rhodes and several other small islands which lay near the Carian shore, and were hardly got over-against the point of Cnidus, a celebrated port of Caria, the wind not permitting us to make greater dispatch, we steered to the south, and sailed under Crete, over-against the promontory of Salmone, on the eastern coast of that island: And passing it with difficulty, when we had made the cape, we came to a certain place, called The Fair Havens, the most considerable port in that part of Crete, in the neighbourhood of which was the city of Lasea.<sup>d</sup>

And as much time was spent in making of this 9 little way, and the season of the year was so far advanced that sailing was now hazardous, because the fast of expiation was already over, and consequently winter was coming on apace, Paul spake to those who had the chief direction of the voyage, and prudently exhorted them, not to put out to sea: Saying unto them, Sirs, I 10 perceive, that if this voyage be pursued according to the present scheme you have in view, it will be attended with much injury and great

<sup>d</sup> The city of Lasea.] I see no reason, with Beza, to change this reading for Alassa or Elea, merely because we do not read of Lasea elsewhere. It is very possible, a place may be but once mentioned in ancient history, or that this may be the Lasos of Pliny, which he describes as situated in the eastern part of Crete; see Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. x. § 4, p. 379; a circumstance which well suits the explication we have given, though not that of Beza, who takes Salmone to have been the promontory Salmonium, which he places in the western coast, a situation that no way agrees with the rest of the description, nor with the authority of Dionysius, Perieg. ver. 110. But this is not a place to adjust geographical controversies; otherwise I think it would be easy to shew, that this ex-

cellent critic has given, in many respects, a very wrong account of this voyage.

<sup>e</sup> Sailing was now hazardous, because the fast was already over.] The fast here spoken of was the day of atonement, which was ordered to be kept on the tenth day of the seventh month, called Tisri by the Jews, and consequently must have been about the 25th of our September. See Lev. xvi. 29; xxiii. 27; Numb. xxix. 7. Philo, in several passages quoted by Dr. Whitby in his note here, speaks of this as an ill time to sail, as Aratus also does; and it would naturally be so, not only on account of winter approaching, but also because of the Michaelmas flows, that are still well known in the Mediterranean. See Rapbel. Not. ex Herod. p. 397; and Veget. de Re Militari. lib. iv. cap. 39.

SECT. damage, not only to the lading that we have on  
 LVII. board and to the ship itself, but also in all human  
 ~~~~~ probability to our lives; and therefore I should  
 Acts think it highly conducive to our common safety,
 XXVII. 10 rather to winter here than to attempt to proceed any farther.

11 But Julius the centurion, in whose breast the determination of the affair lay, paid greater regard in this instance to the opinion of the pilot, and the master of the vessel, than to those things which were spoken by Paul; imagining, notwithstanding the esteem he had for him in other views, that these were more competent judges

12 in the business of navigation. And as the haven, notwithstanding its agreeable name, was not commodious to winter in, the greater part of the company advised to set sail from thence, if they might possibly reach to Phœnice to winter there; [which is] a kind of double haven on the southern coast of Crete, looking to the south-west and north-west, where, in consequence of a jutting point of land which defended it, they hoped on getting into the upper part of it, to lie secure from almost any wind that could blow.

13 And as the weather came to be more favourable, and the south wind blew gently, which would prevent their driving out to sea, supposing they were now secure of their purpose, and by the help of a side wind might coast along the island, they weighed anchor from the Fair Havens, and sailed on close to the shore of Crete.^f

14 But not long after they had put to sea, the ship was in great danger, as on a sudden there arose against it a very tempestuous whirling kind of wind, which by the mariners in this sea is called Euroclydon, or in modern language a Levanter;^g

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 Phœnice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth towards 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 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon.

^f [Close to Crete.] That *arose* is to be taken as an adverb, and not as the name of a place, Beza has so fully demonstrated, that nothing need be said in proof of it here.

^g [Tempestuous wind, which is called Euroclydon.] The learned Dr. Bentley (in his Remarks on Free-thinking, Part. II. § 69, 70.) has taken a great deal of pains to establish the reading of the Alexandrian Manuscript, admitted also by Grotius and Cluverius, Siell. Antiq. lib. ii. p. 442, which is *εὐροκλύων*, agreeable to the vulgar *euroquilon*, the north-east wind;

which was indeed proper to carry the ship from Crete to the African shore, and so might expose them to the danger of the Syrtis, (ver. 17.) But I think my learned friend Mr. Brekell, in his ingenious introduction to his discourse called Euroclydon, has advanced such objections against that interpretation as cannot be answered, and abundantly proved that it could not be a point-wind, but was rather a kind of hurricane, often shifting its quarter, and accordingly not bearing them forward any one way, but tossing them backward and

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

which often shifts the quarter from whence it blows, and accordingly, in our case, was first east and by north, and afterwards several degrees southward of the east. *And as the ship was violently hurried away by the force of it, and was not able to bear up against the wind, which was so very boisterous, that (as the seamen used to speak) she could not look the storm in the face, we gave [her] up to the wind, and were driven before it.* *And running under a*

SECT.

LVII.

Acti

XXVII.

15

16 And running under a certain island, which is called *Clauda*, we had much work to come by the boat:

certain island called Claudia, a little to the south of the western coast of Crete, the violence of the storm was such, that with the utmost difficulty we were hardly able to get masters of the boat; which we were willing to secure from being staved, as what might be of use in any exigence: Which when at last they had hoisted

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.

up, they used all the helps they could to make the vessel able to ride out the storm, undergirding the ship to keep it from bulging; and fearing, as the wind had varied more to the north, and blew them towards Africa, lest they should fall upon the greater or the lesser Syrtis, those quicksands on the African shore so famous for the destruction of mariners and vessels, they struck sail, that so their progress might be slower and some more favourable weather in the mean time might come for their relief, and so were driven before the storm.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with the tempest, the next day they lightened the ship:

And as we were exceedingly tossed by the storm, and there was danger of the vessel's foundering, the next day they lightened the ship, by heaving overboard the goods that she was laden with, and throwing out the heaviest wares into the sea. And the third day the tempest was

19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

so great, that all the passengers as well as mariners were employed; and we cast out with our own hands the very tackling of the ship, which in such circumstances we should have been desirous to have preserved, preferable to the most precious wares with which she could have been laden.

forward in the Adriatic; (ver. 27.) which is very agreeable to the account which the learned and accurate Dr. Shaw gives of the matter in his *Travels*, p. 358—361. where he explains it as one of the furious kind of winds, now called *Levanders*, which are easterly winds, not confined to one single point, but blowing in all

directions from the north-east to the south-east.—See also Erasmus on this place.

^b *Lest they should fall upon the quicksands.*] See a good collection of the descriptions given of the greater and the lesser Syrtis, by approved writers of antiquity, in Gualperius's note on this verse.

SECT.

LVII.

Acts

XXVII.

20

Now as we knew not where the wind had driven us, for neither sun nor stars appeared for several days, and still the sea ran high, and no small tempest pressed upon [us,] all the little remainder of hope, that we might be saved and delivered from the danger we were in, was in a manner taken away from us; and the whole company expected nothing but that the ship would certainly be lost, and we should perish with it.

21 And when in all this time they had no heart to think of taking any regular refreshment, so that there was great want of food, and their distress was such that they were quite dispirited, then Paul standing in the midst of them, said, *Sirs*, if it were proper to reflect upon what is past, and now irretrievable, I might tell you that you ought to have hearkened to me, and not to have loosed from Crete at so inconvenient a time, and so to have gained this injury and loss which you have already suffered,¹ and be exposed to that distress which you are farther to endure.

22 Nevertheless, even now, bad as the situation of affairs may appear, I exhort you to be of good courage: for though you are ready to conclude you must inevitably perish, I assure you, that there shall be no loss of any single life among you; but only of the ship, which must indeed be

23 dashed in pieces. Nor is it without good authority that I speak in so express and positive a manner, with regard to an event which seems to you at best very uncertain,

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 to 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

¹ To have gained this injury and loss.] Both these words, *ζημιαν* and *ζημιαν*, are used ver. 10, and I doubt not, but they have here a reference to what the apostle had declared before.—The first, *ζημιαν*, generally signifies some kind of wrong, and accordingly, it, and its compounds and derivatives, are almost always used in this sense. (Compare 2 Cor. xii. 10; Matt. xxii. 6; Luke xi. 35; xviii. 32; Rom. i. 30; 1 Tim. i. 13.) But it extends to any violent assault, (Act. xiv. 5; 1 Thes. ii. 2.) and is here used for that of waves and winds; I apprehend the English word *injury* exactly corresponds to it, and is used in the same latitude: Thus none would scruple to say, a ship had been much *injured* by a storm.—The other word, *ζημιαν*, signifies a loss,

especially a fine; (compare note^c on Mark viii. 26, Vol. I.) and perhaps it may be used to insinuate that this loss was a kind of fine paid for their own imprudence. To gain a loss seems so odd a phrase, that one would think *ζημιαν* was here put for *sustaining*, unless the use of it were intended to intimate, that in such extrinsic danger, they were to look upon it as a circumstance of great advantage, to escape with their lives, or (as it is elsewhere expressed with great spirit,) to have life given for a prey. (Jer. xxi. 9; xxviii. 2; xxxix. 18; xlv. 5.) And it seems to me, that, in all the instances collected by Elmer here, though in another view, the word has precisely this sense and force; Elmer Observ. Vol. I. p. 486.

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 Caesar; 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.

or rather utterly improbable; for there appeared to me this very night an angel of the God whose servant and property I joyfully confess that I am, and whom I humbly and diligently worship, though most of you are so unhappy as

to be ignorant of him: He is so great a God, that all the heavenly hosts adore him, and are ever ready to execute his commands; and one of them hath come to visit me on this occasion, saying, Fear not, Paul, for thou must be presented before the tribunal of *Caesar*; and, behold, God hath not only determined to rescue thee from this imminent danger, but he hath also given thee the lives of all them that sail in this vessel with thee, who shall be preserved for thy sake. Wherefore, take courage, Sirs, and lay aside your fears, for I trust in God, whose word is faithful; and his power almighty, that it shall certainly be so, according to the manner in which it hath been spoken to me. But I know also, that we must be cast upon a certain island, and that the vessel will be wrecked upon the coast of it: Nevertheless we shall, if we take care to use the proper means for that purpose, all escape, and get safe to land; and from thence shall pursue our voyage to Italy more prosperously in another vessel.

IMPROVEMENT.

We see in this renewed instance the great force of a virtuous character, and of a truly worthy and honourable behaviour, towards engaging the esteem of all around us. Julius the centurion had a reverence and affection for Paul, which, as in the beginning of this voyage it procured for him the satisfaction of conversing with his friends at Sidon, and receiving the fruit of their affection, so it was in the progress of it the occasion of saving this great apostle's life, and with it that of the rest of the prisoners, (ver 42, 43.) Let us learn thus to soften the fierce and to convince the prejudiced, and humbly trust in that God who, if our ways please him, can turn our enemies into friends, (Prov. xvi. 7,) and can 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 which Paul and his companions suffered upon the mighty waters, let us learn to pity those who being providentially engaged in a sea-faring life, are often in such deaths as these. When we hear, as it may be we do, while far from the shores of our island, the stormy winds raging around us, and see the ef-

SECT.
LXII.
Acts
XXVII.

Ver. 4

3

17, 20

SECT. LVII. *fects of their fury in those stupendous instances which sometimes appear, let us send up, as it were upon their rapid wings, our compassionate cries to that God who holds them all in his fists, (Prov. xxx. 4.) that he would help and save those that are ready to be swallowed up quick in a watery grave, and perhaps many of them, while just on the brink of eternity, in the number of those that are of all others most unprepared for it.*

Verse 22-25 *Happy the man, in whatever extremities of danger, that is conscious of a relation to the God of heaven, as his God and his father; that can say, like Paul, in this blessed parenthesis, whose I am, and whom I serve! Let us, when we can use the language, take the comfort of it, and commit ourselves to the guardian care of our God with cheerfulness: He knoweth them that are his, and will take care of his own. Let our faith put a reality into all his promises, that it shall certainly be, even as he hath spoken unto us. Thus let us encourage ourselves in the Lord our God, (1 Sam. xxx. 6.) and the event shall not shame our hopes; but we shall find by happy experience, that God will not only save us from ruin, but conduct us to joy as well as to safety everlasting. Amen.*

SECT. LVIII.

Paul and his companions, after having suffered further extremities in their voyage, are at length shipwrecked on the shore of Malta; but all escape with their lives. Acts XXVII. 27, to the end.

ACTS XXVII. 27.

SECT. LVIII. *SEVERAL threatening circumstances of the violent storm, which Paul, and his companions met with in their voyage, were described before; and we now proceed to observe, that*
 Acts XXVII. 27 *when the fourteenth night was come, as we were tossed up and down in the Adriatic sea,^a the mariners suspected about midnight that they drew near*
 28 *some land: And sounding the depth of the water, they found [it] twenty fathoms; and having gone a little way from thence, and sounding again, they found [it] only fifteen fathoms; which decrease of their soundings convinced them,*
 29 *that this apprehension was just. And therefore, fearing lest they should fall upon some rocky shore,*

ACTS XXVII. 27 *BUT when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adra, 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 farther, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.*
 29 *Then, fearing*

^a *In the Adriatic sea.] It is well known to those acquainted with ancient geography, that all that part of the Mediterranean which lay south of Italy was called*

the Adriatic Sea, and that which is now the Gulf of Venice was the Sinus Adriaticus. See Grotius in loc. and Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. x. § 4, p. 380, 381.

lest we 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 fore-ship,

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.

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,

^b Unless these continue in the ship, ye cannot be saved.] To what I have said of this in the paraphrase and improvement, I shall only add, that 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 Paul to urge the necessity of that compliance, as what he

where there might not be depth of water sufficient to keep the vessel from striking, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and heartily wished that the day would break, and more clearly discover our situation.

But when the mariners perceived the danger so extreme, they endeavoured to flee out of the ship, and to provide for their own safety by making to the shore; and when to compass their design they had let down the boat into the sea, and were just going into it, under pretence that they were about to carry out anchors from the ship-head, to make the vessel more secure by dropping them at a distance, Paul, who knew that it was the will of God, that all proper endeavours should be used for their preservation, in a dependence on the promise he had given them, perceiving the design they had in view, said to Julius the centurion and the soldiers that were with him, Unless these mariners continue in the ship, without whose help we know not how to manage her, ye cannot be saved;^b for the promise made you of your lives was to be understood, as given on condition of your taking the most prudential measures to secure them, which present circumstances will admit. Then the soldiers, who had learnt from their commander to pay a deference to what Paul said, that the success of this intended fraud might be effectually prevented, cut off the cords of the boat, by which it was fastened to the side of the ship, and let it fall off into the sea, before any of the mariners were got into it.

And while the day was coming on, before they had light sufficient to discern what they should do, Paul earnestly exhorted them all to take [some] food, saying, To-day you are looking for the fourteenth day since you have been in this distress, and all of you continue fasting, having

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 application of this remark to other affairs of greater moment appears to me both easy and important.

SECT.
LVIII.
Acts
XXVII.
29

SECT. taken nothing of a regular meal; ^c the necessary consequence of which is, that you must thus be

LYIII. very faint and weak, and unfit for those fatigues

Acts which may farther lie before you; for it will be

XXVII. 33 a narrow escape that we are to expect, and we may find great difficulties in getting on shore.

34 As therefore till the morning rises we can attempt nothing by way of approach to land, I exhort you to improve this little interval of leisure by making use of it to take [some] food; since it is plain that this is proper to be done for your safety, as it will make you fitter to act for your own preservation, according as future circumstances may require; and you may allow yourselves this refreshment with the greater cheerfulness, for I can renew the assurance I before gave, that whatever risk you run, and whatever labour we pass through, *not a hair shall fall from the head of any of you* ^d.

35 And when he had spoken thus, and had took bread, he begged a blessing on it, and gave thanks to God before them all, for that provision which he gave them in their necessities, and for the assurance of life with which he had favoured them by so particular a revelation; and having broken it, he set them an example, and he himself began to eat heartily. And being all encouraged by the cheerful and pious discourse of the apostle, they also took some food, as he had done; and on the whole, sad as their circumstances were, they made a comfortable and re-

36 freshing meal. And by the way, we had a great number of persons aboard, and were in all in the ship no less than two hundred and seventy-six souls. And after they had done their meal,

37 And we were in all in the ship, two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat; for this is for your health; for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you:

35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all, and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

37 And we were in all in the ship, two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.

^c Continue fasting, having taken nothing.] Apollon 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 must be given to this phrase, which Mr. Brekell also thinks may intimate, that they were now at short allowance as they were like to have a much longer voyage than was at first intended, and had two hundred and seventy-six souls on board. (Jerome's note, p. 26.) But Grotius declares against this last opinion, which is to be sure uncertain, though I

think it might possibly be the case, and that ver. 38 is not decisive to the contrary.

^d Not a hair shall fall from the head of any of you.] Some think this alludes to a custom among mariners, to make vows in times of extremity, and to have their heads in consequence of them, and so interpret these words, as if it were said, "You need not *rew your hair*; you shall be safe without that expedient." (See Dryden's note on Juvenal, p. 183.) But it appears to have been a proverbial and general expression of entire safety. Compare 1 Kings i. 52; Mat. x. 30; Luke xii. 7; xxi. 18.

38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea. *being satisfied with food, they once more lightened the ship, and having been told by Paul that they should run upon some island, they threw away the very stores they had on board, and cast out the remainder of the corn into the sea.* 38

SECT.
LVIII.Acts
XXVII.

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. *And when it was day, they had the shore before them, but did not know the land, and still were at a loss what course to take; but they perceived a certain creek, having a level shore convenient for landing, into which they were minded, if they were able, to have thrust the ship.* And 40

40 And when they had taken up the anchors they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder-band, and hoisted up the main sail to the wind and made toward shore. *with this view, when they had weighed the anchors they committed [the ship] to the sea, and tried to stand in for the creek, at the same time loosing the rudder-bands, that they might reach the land with greater safety, and hoisting up the main sail to the wind, which seemed to set right for their purpose, they made for the shore.*

41 And falling into a place where two seas met, 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. *But falling on a place which was a neck of land, where two seas met, such was the violence of the current, that they ran the ship aground; and the forepart which struck upon the sand stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, while the hinder part was broken to pieces by the force of the waves.*

In this critical juncture, as there were several prisoners aboard, who were to be conveyed in custody to Rome, there was a most unjust and

* *When they had weighed the anchors, they committed [the ship] to the sea.* Some rather choose to render this, that, *having cut the anchors they left them in the sea*; and the original indeed is dubious, and will admit of either sense: *ἠρπάξαντες ἄγκυρας, ἔβαν ἐν τῷ θαλάσσῳ*. See De Dieu in loc.

† *Loosing the rudder-bands; ἀνῆλθε τὰς ζεύξεις τῶν ῥυδδίων.* Dr. Benson observes agreeably to the judgment of Grotius, that their 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, the rudders sunk deeper into the sea, and by their weight rendered the ship less subject to be overset by the winds. (Hist. Vol. II. p. 216.) But it seems rather, that the rudders had been fastened before, when they had let the vessel drive, and were now loosened, when they had need of them to steer her into the creek; and, 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.—That they had frequently two rudders to their ships, Bochart and Elaur have confirmed by several authorities. See Bochart. Hieroz. Part II. lib. 4. cap. 4. p. 453; and Elaur. Observ. Vol. I. p. 488, 489.

‡ *Hoisting up the main sail to the wind.* So our translators render the word *ἤρπασαν*; and I, who am not accurately acquainted with the form either of ancient or of modern ships, shelter myself under their authority; but Grotius (who contends that *ἤρπασαν*, ver. 17, signifies the main mast, and consequently that the main sail was now gone, ver. 19,) supposes, it was a sail near the forepart 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 in the word *Artemon*.

- SECT. L VIII
 Acts XXVII.
 42
- cruel purpose formed against them, *and the counsel of the soldiers was, that they should kill the prisoners; lest any one should take this opportunity to swim away, and should escape out of their hands; of which they did not care to run the hazard, as they well knew how severe the Roman law was in such cases, where there was any room to suspect the guards of connivance or negligence. But the centurion, being desirous to save so worthy and considerable a person as Paul,^h hindered them from executing [their] purpose, and commanded those that could swim to throw themselves out first into the sea,*
- 43 *and get away to land: And as for the remainder, some adventured themselves upon planks, with which the wreck supplied them, and others upon some of [the things] which they found means to get out of the ship; and so, through the singular care of divine Providence, it came to pass according to the prediction of Paul, that they all got safe to land, and there was not one single life lost.*
- 42 And the soldiers counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.
- 43 But the centurion, 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:
- 44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship; and so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

IMPROVEMENT.

- Verse 31, 32
- THE section we now have been reading, contains 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 that we are to expect his powerful aid; and all the grace, beauty, and wisdom of the promise would be lost, if we were to take it in any other view: To abuse it in a contrary view, is at best vain and dangerous presumption, if all pretence of relying upon it be not profane hypocrisy.
- 18, 19
- How solicitous are men in danger for the preservation of this mortal and perishing life! They cast out their goods in a storm; they throw away the tackling of the ship to lighten it; and for

^h Being desirous to save Paul.] Thus God, for 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 a scheme, had they been all condemned malefactors, and had the guards, instead of conveying them to their trial, been carrying them to the place of execution.

many succeeding days forget even to eat their bread: O when shall we see a solicitude any thing like this about the concerns of their never dying souls! Alas, amidst the extremest danger, they are rather like those who, in such a storm as this, should have been sleeping on the top of a mast. (Prov. xxiii. 34.) Let us not wonder, if, when awakened on a sudden, and made to see and to feel the extremity of their case, they are for a while taken off from attending as usual 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 Paul was amidst the rage of winds and waves, under a sense of the faithful care of his God; and how the assurance which he gave to the rest, that their lives should be preserved, though their possessions in the ship were all lost, animated them to eat their bread with cheerfulness. With how much greater cheerfulness may they sustain all temporal losses, and relish, in the midst of them, all the remaining bounties of Providence, (as some always remain,) whose eternal life is secured by the word of God, and the engagement of a covenant which he has confirmed by an oath?

To conclude, It was to Paul that the lives of those that sailed with him were given; and his fellow-prisoners owed to him a double preservation, first from the sword, and then from the sea. Thus may a relation to God's faithful servants, and a community of interests with them, be the means of great temporal advantage even to those that are strangers to the covenant of promise. 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 be very inexcusable if they did not henceforward commence his attentive hearers and humble disciples. Those of them who did so, would find their deliverance from the fury of the sea, but an earnest of another deliverance infinitely greater and better; and are long ere this lodged with him on a far more hospitable shore, and in a more peaceful harbour, than Malta, or than earth could afford.

SECT. LIX.

Paul and his companions are hospitably entertained at Malta: he miraculously escapes the fatal effects of a viper's bite, cures Publius's father of a fever, and then pursues his voyage to Rome.
Acts XXVIII. 1--16.

ACTS XXVIII. 1.
AND when they were escaped, THE apostle Paul and all the rest of the ship's company having escaped the danger of the shipwreck, and being thus got safe [to land] they

SECT. had no sooner reached the shore but some of
 LIX. the inhabitants came to them, and *they then*
 Acts knew that the island on which they were cast
 XXVIII was called *Melita*, or Malta.^a And the barbarians
 2 of that place, (as the Romans, though in many respects more barbarous themselves, proudly accounted those who were its native inhabitants,) *treated us with an uncommon degree of humanity,^b for having kindled a fire, they brought us all to [it,] because of the present rain,* which had followed the storm, and because of the cold, with which we were almost ready to perish.

3 Now as Paul was gathering up a bundle of sticks, and laying them upon the fire, a viper which had lain concealed among the wood, coming out of the heat upon feeling the warmth of the fire, fastened upon his hand and bit it.

4 And as soon as the barbarians saw the fierce animal^c hanging on his hand, as they perceived he was a prisoner, and had some notion of a divine Providence and its moral government, they said one to another, *This man is certainly a murderer;^d or some other detestable criminal, whom*

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 murderer,

^a *Melita*, or Malta.] It is well known, that this small island (about twelve miles broad and twenty long, and sixty distant from Sicily to the south,) took its name from the abundance of honey found in it: It also yields a great deal of cotton, and, though it has but three feet depth of earth above the solid rock, is very fruitful. Paul's shipwreck here engaged a kind of superstitious regard to it, in consequence of which it was given A. D. 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 are a thousand in number, of whom five hundred always reside, and are called Hospitaliers.

^b *The barbarians treated us with uncommon humanity.*] The Greeks and Romans reckoned all other nations but their own Barbarians, as differing from them in their customs or language; and all mankind are therefore comprehended by the apostle Paul under the distinction of Greeks and Barbarians, Rom. i. 14. This island, which had several commodious havens, was peopled by a colony of the Phœnicians, and the inhabitants were noted for their civility to strangers. See Theodor. Sic. lib. v. p. 203. Edit. Steph.

^c *The fierce animal.*] This is the proper import of the word *Greus* here used. Bos has well shown, (Exercit. p. 30, 31.) that the physicians use it to express any poisonous animal, and Lucian in particular applies it, as here, to a viper; (Philipsend. tom. ii. p. 353, Edit. Græv.) but to render it *beast* is by no means justifiable. See Bochart. Hieroz. Part II. lib. 3. cap. 2.

^d *This man is certainly a murderer.*] Elsner says, (Observ. Vol. I. p. 489—491,) they concluded he was a murderer, rather than guilty 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 (as he shows by many curious and entertaining instances,) 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 justly observes, that *εὐκταστὸν* should be rendered, according to its exact form, *hath not permitted*, to signify that they looked upon him as in effect a dead man, after having been bit by that venomous creature.

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.

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 possessions 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.

the divine vengeance hath not permitted to live, though he be saved from the danger of the sea.

But as the miraculous power of Christ instantly interposed to heal him, (compare Mark xvi. 18; Luke x. 19.) he without any manner of confusion shaking off the fierce animal into the fire, suffered no evil, and took no farther notice of what had happened. However they expected,

according to what they had known to be usual in such cases, that the venom would soon operate, in such a manner that he should either have swollen, or suddenly have fell down dead upon the spot: And having waited a considerable time to observe the effect of it upon him, and seeing no mischief at all befall him,^e instead of taking him to be a murderer, changing their minds they said, that he was surely some deity, descended in a human form; as nothing less than the power of a god could ward off so extreme a danger.^f

And in the neighbourhood of that place where our shipwrecked company had met with so kind a welcome, there was the estate of the chief magistrate or governor of the island,^g whose name was Publius; who with a generous and friendly disposition, having received us into his house, entertained us there in a very courteous and hospitable manner for three days together.

And so it was, that at this very time the father of Publius was dangerously ill, being seized with a fever and bloody flux, by which he was confined to his bed; to whom Paul going in, made him a visit in the apartment where he lay, and having prayed for his recovery, laid his hands on him, and healed him.

^e Seeing no mischief befall him.] Elsew observes, that many of the heathens thought, there was something divine in the nature of serpents, and that devils, or good genii, who were made use of as the instruments of delivering and honouring those that were the peculiar favourites of the gods, often appeared in that shape: (Elsn. Observ. Vol. I. p. 492, 493.) Hence idols were often made with serpents near them; and there have been numerous, and indeed astonishing instances of religious worship paid to that kind of animal, absurd as it may seem. See Revelat. exam. with candour, Vol. I. p. 80, 81; Dr. Jenkins on Christianity,

Vol. II. p. 246—248; Ep. Stillingfleet, Orig. Sacr. p. 516—518; and Dr. Cha. Owen on Serpents, Dissert. IV. p. 216, 222.

^f They said that he was a god.] Grotius, Dr. Whitby, and some others think, they took him for Hercules *Αχιλλεύς*, who was worshipped in the island, and was, according to Ptolemy, (Geograph. lib. iv. cap. 4.) one of the gods of the Phoenicians.

^g The chief of the island.] Grotius has produced an ancient inscription, by which it appears, that the title of *αρχιστρατηγός*, or chief, was given to the governor of this island, and so it is used here by St. Luke with his usual propriety of expression.

SECT. LIX. Acts XXVIII

SECT.

LIX.

Acts
XXVIII

Now therefore when this [miracle] was wrought on a person so well known, and of so great importance, the news of it soon spread abroad; and as they were desirous to obtain the same advantage, all the rest also who had disorders of any kind in the whole island, as many as were able to travel, or could any way be brought, came to Paul and were healed. And this was followed with the highest testimonies of esteem and gratitude from all the people, who also seeing such a divine power exerting itself by means of one in our company, honoured us with great honours, as men peculiarly favoured by heaven: And such was the respect and kindness they had for us, that when we departed thence, they brought us plenty of provision, and put on board such things as were necessary for our comfortable accommodation; so that by the good providence of God, and the generosity of these hospitable and grateful people, we were well furnished for pursuing our voyage to Rome.

11 And after we had been ashore three months, we departed from thence, having shipped ourselves (as we had done before, chap. xxvii. 6) in a ship of Alexandria, that had wintered in the island, whose sign was Gemini, or the twins, that is, *Castor and Pollux*,^b fictitious deities of the heathen, who were supposed to have some peculiar power over storms; their figure there-

9 So when this was done, others also which had diseases in the island, came and were healed:

10 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 Alexandria, which had wintered in the island, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

^b *Whose sign was Castor and Pollux.* It was the custom of the ancients to have images on their ships, both at the head and stern; the first of which was called *παραναυαξ*, the sign, from which the ship was named, and the other was that of the tutelar deity, to whose care the ship was committed; which probably might give occasion to the fable that Europa was carried away by Jupiter in the shape of a bull. There is no doubt, but they had sometimes 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 deity, and be committed to the care of another. (See Bochart. Chan. lib. ii. cap. 3, init. and Mr. Biscoe at Royle's Lect. chap. viii. § 12, p. 326, 327.) The figure that was used for Castor and Pollux, as Dr. Lightfoot says, was that of two young men on horseback, with each of them a javelin in his hand, &c. But others have

observed, that the sign of Castor and Pollux was that of a double cross; and though the Greeks took them for a sign in the zodiac, which was called the Twins, and considered as sacred to these fictitious deities, whom they supposed to be the sons of Jupiter by Leda, it was not at first represented by two boys, but by two beasts, as referring to the fruitfulness of goats, in producing twin kids about the time the sun was in that constellation. (See Hyde, Relig. Pers. cap. 32; and Nature Displayed, Vol. I. § 2, p. 263, 264.) The appearance of both these constellations together was (as Dr. Hammond has observed, after Strabo, Pausanias, and other ancient writers,) thought favourable to mariners, 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, which the sacred historian does not scruple to use.

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 them 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: whom when

fore was placed on the head of the vessel, and to them it was peculiarly dedicated. And not long after we had left Melita, we made the island of Sicily: and being arrived at Syracuse, the most considerable city of that island, we continued there three days. From thence we coasted

round the eastern shore of Sicily, and came over-against the city and promontory of Rhegium in the southernmost part of Italy, from which, as the name of that place implies, it was supposed the island of Sicily was broken off. And after lying by one day, we had a favourable gale, and the south wind arising, we pursued our voyage, and came in two days to Puteoli, a noted town for trade, which lay not far from Naples, and was very famous for its hot baths; Where we had no sooner landed but we found some Christian brethren, and were earnestly intreated to stay with them seven days, that they might have the better opportunity of hearing Paul, and of conversing with him; and the centurion was so good as to consent that we should stay: And so, having left the ship, we went the rest of the way by land to Rome.

And from thence several of the Christian brethren who resided at Rome, having heard of our affairs, and particularly that we were on our way thither, (as they were sensible of the great character of Paul, and the important obligations which they were under to him for his excellent epistle to the Romans, written a few years before this,) came out to meet us, and to attend us in our entrance into that illustrious city: And [some] of them came as far as Appii Forum, a town adjoining to the famous Appian way, which was fifty-one miles distant from Rome; and [others] only to a place called Tres Tabernæ, or the Three Taverns, which was

¹ Syracuse.] This capital city of the island of Sicily lay on its eastern coast, and is said to have been twenty-two miles round, and to have equalled Carthage in its riches. (See Strab. lib. vi. p. 180; and Liv. Hist. lib. xxv. cap. 31.) It was by this time well recovered from the desolation which Marcellus had brought upon it, two hundred and ten years before Christ, when the celebrated Archimedes was slain here.

² The Christian brethren who resided at Rome.] It is very remarkable, that we have no certain information by whom Christianity was first preached in Rome. Probably, as some inhabitants of that most famous city were present at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, (Acts 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.

SECT. but about thirty: *Whom when Paul saw, he* Paul saw, he thank-
 LIX. *thanked God* for the encouragement which this ed God, and took
 ~~~~~ courage.  
 Act. ~~~~~  
 XXVIII. ~~~~~  
 15 ~~~~~  
 acquaintance with him, would be a support to him during his confinement there, and a means of promoting the success of any attempts of usefulness, which he might be able to make among them; and accordingly he *took courage*,<sup>1</sup> and pursued the small remainder of his journey with new spirit and alacrity.

16 *And when we came to Rome, Julius the centurion, who ever since we set out from Cæsarea had treated us in so friendly a manner, and whose regard for Paul could not but be greatly increased by what had passed at Melita, delivered the prisoners, according to his commission, to the prefect or captain of the prætorian band:*<sup>m</sup> But as he gave a very kind and honourable account of Paul, he *was permitted to dwell apart from the other prisoners in an house of his own,*<sup>n</sup> *with a Roman soldier that guarded him,*<sup>o</sup> till his cause might be heard; which, by one accident

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him.

<sup>1</sup> *He thanked God, and took courage.*] This expression may perhaps intimate, that his courage began in some measure to be shaken. He knew there was a famous church at Rome, which had been long planted; Rom. i. 8, and to which about three years before this journey, he had written a long epistle, (compare note \* on Acts xx. 3, p. 295.) in which he had expressed an affectionate desire to see them; Rom. i. 11; xv. 32; in a near view of doing which, 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, they would contribute much to lighten his bonds, as no doubt they did, though so strange a panic seized them, when he appeared before Cæsar to make his apology, 2 Tim. iv. 16.


<sup>m</sup> *To the prefect or captain of the prætorian band.*] It was customary for prisoners, who were brought to Rome, to be delivered to this officer, who had the charge of the state-prisoners, as appears from the instance of Agrippa, who was taken into custody by Marcio, the prætorian prefect that succeeded Sejanus, (Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. cap. 6. [al. 5.] § 63; and from Trajan's order to Pliny when two were in commission. (Plin. lib.

x. epist. 65.) See Dr. Lardner's *Credib.* Book I. chap. x. § 11, Vol. I. p. 532, 533; and Mr. Biscoe at Boyle's Lect. chap. ix. sect. 9, p. 366.—The person who had now this office, was the noted Burrhus Afranius; but, both before and after him, it was held by two; Tacit. *Annal.* lib. xii. sect. 42, & lib. xiv. sect. 51.

<sup>n</sup> *Apart from the other prisoners in an house of his own.*] Raphaelus has shown (*Annot. ex. Xen.* p. 191.) that the expression *αὐτῷ ἑαυτοῦ* may signify either *apart*, (for which see Bos, *Exercit.* p. 91.) or *in his own pleasure*. But it is well known, it often signifies *at one's own house*; and so ver. 30 seems to explain it here. 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 man of his sense, education, and piety.

<sup>o</sup> *With a soldier that guarded him.*] This soldier was probably chained to him, as the Roman custom was. Who, that had met Paul in these bonds, would have guessed at his real character, and have imagined him to have been one of the most upright, benevolent, and generous of mankind! Yet such the apostle was, doubtless was.



and another, was put off from time to time, so sect.  
 that it was not dispatched till above two years LIX.  
 after his arrival at Rome. 

## IMPROVEMENT.

LET us again pause, and, on this new occasion of doing it, Verse  
 adore the wise conduct of *Providence*, though *its ways were in* 1, 2  
*the sea, and its paths in the great waters.* (Psal. lxxvii. 19.)  
 Still did our dear Redeemer take care of his faithful servants  
 and ministers, not only delivering them and their companions  
 from destruction by shipwreck, but providing tenderly for them  
 in their destitute condition, when their wet and probably torn  
 garments seem to have been all they could call their own. The  
 custom of Rome and Greece taught them to call all nations but  
 their own barbarous; but surely the generosity which these un-  
 cultivated inhabitants of Malta shewed, was far more valuable  
 than all the varnish which the politest education could give,  
 where it taught not humanity and compassion.

It is with pleasure that we trace amongst them the force of 4  
 conscience, and the belief of Providence; which some more  
 learned people have stupidly thought it philosophy to despise:  
 But they erred in concluding that calamities must always be in-  
 terpreted as judgments; and let us guard against the same error,  
 lest, like them, we unwarily censure, not only the innocent, but  
 the excellent of the earth.

God wrought a most seasonable miracle for the preservation 5  
 of Paul from the fury of the viper; and this frank and honest,  
 though ignorant people, immediately retract their censure: But, 6  
 as human nature is apt to do, they fall immediately from one ex-  
 treme to another, and from pronouncing him a murderer, con-  
 clude him a god. They afterwards submitted to be better taught, 10  
 and learnt to regard him as what he really was, a holy man fa-  
 voured of heaven, and raised up to be an instrument of great  
 good, both to the bodies and souls of his fellow-creatures. Let  
 us also be willing candidly to correct and confess our mistakes,  
 when means of better information offer; and study to adjust our  
 notions of men's characters according to truth; that we may  
 neither calumniate nor deify them, but judge righteous judg-  
 ment. (John vii. 24.)

Well was Publius, the chief of the island, with the other inha- 7, 8, 9  
 bitants of it, rewarded for their kindness to these distressed  
 strangers, by the cures wrought on the diseased in their respec-  
 tive families; and naturally did their kindness and liberality to  
 them increase, with such experience of the miraculous power  
 which wrought by Paul. We cannot but conclude, that this  
 holy apostle, whose heart was always so warm with zeal for  
 Christ, especially when it was quickened with such a deliverance,  
 would take this happy opportunity of diffusing the savour of his

SECT. name here. He would tell them, no doubt, who it was that healed  
 LIX. them, and testify to them of that greater salvation and more  
 important cure, which they were to seek from him; nor can we  
 imagine that his labour was entirely in vain in the Lord. Happy  
 wreck! on the ruins of which the temple of the Lord was raised,  
 by occasion of which Barbarians were transformed into  
 Christians! Who can say, how many distempered minds were  
 healed? how many sons and daughters were born to God and to  
 Verse 11 glory, in these three months which Paul and Luke spent here?  
 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 the pious labour. And  
 how naturally did all this tend to raise the regard of the ship's  
 company for these servants of the most high God, to whom, as  
 instruments in the hand of his good providence, they first owed  
 their lives, and now their accommodations; to whom also, we  
 hope, some of them owed even their own souls!

- 16 It is extremely probable, that the indulgence shewed to Paul  
 in 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 await the happy  
 event which shall at length prove the wisdom and kindness of  
 thy most mysterious conduct.
- 14, 15 In the mean time, even while travelling in the bonds of afflic-  
 tion, may we see thine hand in all the countenance which we  
 meet with from our Christian brethren; and cheered with their  
 converse and their friendly offices, may we, like Paul, thank  
 God, and take courage, in an humble assurance that thou wilt  
 stand by us in every future unknown extremity; and wilt either  
 manifest thy power and goodness in raising up human supports,  
 or display thine all-sufficiency in a yet more glorious manner,  
 by bearing us up when they all fail us!

## SECT. LX.

*The history concludes with an account of a solemn audience which  
 Paul had of the Jews at Rome, soon after his arrival there; most of them reject the gospel he published among them, but he  
 continues to preach it during two years of his confinement.  
 Acts XXVIII. 17, to the end.*

## ACTS XXVIII. 17.

PAUL's confinement at Rome was not so strict, but he had liberty to send for persons to him; and while he waited for his appeal

ACTS XXVIII. 17  
 AND it came to pass, that after

*Paul sends for the Jews at Rome, and tells them his case.* 397

three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together.—

to be determined, he was willing to remove the prejudices of his countrymen, and, notwithstanding the injurious treatment he had met with, would suffer nothing to be wanting on his part, to make them sensible of the affectionate regard that he had for them: Accordingly it came to pass that after he had been there three days, Paul called together those that were the chief of the Jews who sojourned then at Rome.

SECT.  
LX.  
Acts  
XXVIII.  
17

—And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though 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 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, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

And when, according to his desire, they were come together in the private house where he dwelt, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have done nothing contrary to the interest and honour of the Jewish people, or to the authority of our paternal customs as derived from the holy patriarchs or Moses, yet was I delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans; Who having examined me, and heard all that my adversaries could suggest against me, were willing to have set me at liberty; as there was no offence which they could judge to be a sufficient cause of putting me to death, or of keeping me under longer confinement, to be discovered in me. But when some of the Jews, who in con-

sequence of gross misrepresentations had entertained strong prejudices against me, contradicted and opposed my discharge, and were violently set upon preventing [it,] I found it necessary to remove my cause to Rome, and was obliged to appeal to Cæsar: And this I assure you I have done, not as having any thing of which to accuse my own nation; for whatever injury I have received from any particular persons, I heartily forgive them, and wish the whole Jewish people, without excepting even my most inveterate enemies among them, all possible prosperity and happiness; but I was, contrary to my inclination, forced on this appeal purely in my own defence, and to prevent that assassination which I knew some ill-disposed persons, were contriving against me. For this reason therefore, as soon as I came hither I intreated that I might see and speak with you, my dear brethren, hoping to prevent any prejudice which might be entertained to my disadvantage: For indeed I am rather worthy of your compassion and friendship than of your resentment; as [it is] on

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of

20

- SECT. account of that which is the great common hope of all Israel that I am bound with this chain; my sufferings arising from my regard to that glorious Messiah for whom Israel professes to wait, and to that eternal life which he hath purchased and procured for those that receive him under that character.
- IX. *Israel I am bound with this chain.*
- Acts XXVIII. 20
- 21 *And they said to him, We have neither received any letters as yet from Jerusalem, or any other part of Judea, concerning thee; nor has any one of the brethren of our nation that has come hither, related to us what is the purport of the charge on which thou art to be tried before Cæsar; or so much as said any evil at all concerning thee.*
- 21 *And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea, concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came, shewed or spake any harm of thee.*
- 22 *But we desire thou shouldst give us an account of thy doctrine, and desire to hear from thee what thou thinkest; what thy particular sentiments are, and what thou hast to say in defence of thy tenets, as a disciple and missionary of Jesus of Nazareth; for as concerning this sect, which professes so high a regard to him, it is known to us in the general, that it is every where spoken against,<sup>a</sup> and that bad sentiments are entertained of it, both by the Jews and heathens; as teaching a revolt from those ways of worship in which people have been educated, even among us as well as them, and requiring unbounded subjection to a person who seems to have no imaginable claim to it.*
- 22 *But we desire to hear of thee, what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.*
- 23 *And having appointed him a certain day which might best suit the convenience of most that were then present, many of them came to him in the morning at his lodging; to whom he expounded various passages of their own scriptures as well as the chief principles of the Christian faith; testifying in the most cogent and pathetic manner the erection and establishment of the kingdom of God under the Messiah,<sup>b</sup> and ear-*
- 23 *And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading*

<sup>a</sup> *It is every where spoken against.* Some think, this refers to a fact mentioned by Justin Martyr, (Dialog. cum Triplic. p. 171, & 368, Edit. Thirlb.) and afterwards by Origen, (contra Celz. lib. vi. p. 295, 294,) and Eusebius, (Eccles. Hist. lib. iv. cap. 18.) that the Jews at Jerusalem sent chosen men of the most distinguished character all over the world, representing the Christians as an atheistical sect, and charging them with the grossest calum-

nies, which the ignorant heathens advanced against them. The fact itself is in all respects very credible; but I apprehend, that the exact date of it cannot be ascertained, nor can I any where find (as some have asserted,) that it is mentioned by Philo Judæus. See my Sermons on the power and grace of Christ, &c. p. 263, 264, 2d. edit.

<sup>b</sup> *Testifying the kingdom of God.* Probably, as Mr. Cradock well observes,

them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 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, Well spake the Holy Ghost, by Esaias the prophet, unto our fathers,

26 Saying, Go ye to this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive.

27 For the heart of this people is

SECT. IX. Acts XXVIII.  
 nestly persuading them of the things that relate to the Lord Jesus under that character; which he proved both from the law of Moses, and from the writings of the prophets: And he was so intent upon this grand affair, that he continued 23 his discourse from morning till evening.<sup>c</sup>

And the event of what he said was various; 24 for some of them were happily persuaded to embrace Christianity, by the things which were spoken; and some on the other hand, were influenced by such strong prejudices that they believed not, but were so hardened as to reject the gospel, amidst all the evidence which he advanced to support it. And so disagreeing 25

with each other, they brake up the assembly; Paul only saying [this] one word in the close of all, on occasion of that obstinacy which he observed to prevail in most of them, Surely well did the Holy Spirit speak by Isalah the prophet to our fathers of old, (Isa. vi. 9, 10,) and well does the description it has given of them set forth the hardness of your hearts, and suit you even to this day; 26 When it says, in that awful commission the prophet was commanded to discharge, "Go to this perverse and obstinate people, to whom I have so often sent in vain, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand: and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; For the heart of this people 27

is become gross, and as it were grown stiff

(Apost. Hist. Part II, p. 306.) he insisted on two topics; — 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 Lord of that kingdom.

[From morning till evening.] The length of this conference shews, how zealous a desire Paul had for the conversion of his countrymen. It was undoubtedly a very curious and important discourse, and we should 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 seen fit to deny us that pleasure, let us acquiesce in this; that we know enough to confirm our faith in the gospel, if we discover a tenacious temper; and, if we do not, the narration of other discourses and facts

would probably have occasioned new cavils; 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.

Well did the Holy Spirit speak to our fathers, and well does the description suit you, &c.] The apostle here could not refer to them all, because some believed; but it is probable, most of them rejected the gospel. — As for the quotation from Isalah which he applies to them, I would observe, that it is quoted oftener than any other text from the Old Testament, that is, six times, in the New; here, and Mat. xii. 14, 15; Mark iv. 12; Luke viii. 10; John xii. 40; and Rom. xi. 9; yet in such a variety of expression, a plainly proves, the apostles did not confine themselves exactly either to the words of the original or of the Greek Version.

- SECT. "with fatness; and with their ears they hear  
 LX. "heavily, in a dull, stupid way; and they have  
 drawn their eyes together, as it were on pur-  
 pose to compose themselves to sleep, lest  
 Acts XXVIII 27 "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." As if he had said, They act in such  
 a manner under the most awakening means, as  
 if they had studied artful ways of rendering  
 themselves insensible, and were determined not  
 to receive my message, and the salvation which  
 28 it proposes to them. Therefore be it known  
 unto you, however your proud hearts may resent  
 it, that the salvation of God which you despise,  
 and seem to fortify yourselves against, is sent  
 to the Gentiles: and they will hear and em-  
 brace [it,] and so inherit the blessings which  
 you reject: To them therefore will be preached  
 all the words of this life, and I in particular will  
 from this day forward seek, in their faith and  
 obedience, my consolation under that grief  
 which the infidelity of my brethren gives me.
- 29 And when he had said these things, the Jews  
 departed out of the place, not being prevailed  
 upon to receive the gospel, yet having great de-  
 bates among themselves: some thinking there  
 was considerable weight in what Paul had urged  
 to defend it, while others were enraged, and  
 spoke of him and his arguments with great con-  
 tempt and indignation.
- 30 But nevertheless they who were most his ene-  
 mies, and most desirous to add affliction to his  
 bonds, were not permitted by Providence to do  
 him any harm; for after this Paul continued  
 two whole years at Rome, in his own hired  
 house, before he was heard by Caesar, or his

waxed gross, and  
 their ears are dull  
 of hearing, and their  
 eyes have they clos-  
 ed; 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 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 had great rea-  
 soning among them-  
 selves.

30 And Paul  
 dwelt two whole  
 years in his own hi-  
 red house, and recei-

\* Paul continued two whole years at Rome.] As Luke concludes his history with Paul's abode at Rome, before his journey into Spain, we may infer, as Dr. More observes, Theolog. Works, p. 220, that he wrote both his Gospel, and the Acts, while the apostle was still living, of whose actions he was himself an eye-witness, and by whom, it is very probable, this book was revised, as the ancients also say his Gospel was.

† In his own hired house.] Dr. Lardner proves from Ulpian, that the procurator

was to judge, whether a person under accusation were to be thrown into prison, or delivered to a soldier to keep, or committed to sureties, or trusted on his parole of honour. Credib. Book 1. chap. 10, sect. 9, Vol. I. p. 524, 525. It appears from hence, that the persecution against Christians at Rome was not then begun; and perhaps Paul's friends in Nero's family (Phil. iv. 22,) used their interest with the emperor to procure him this liberty.

ved all that came in unto him.

31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching these things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Many of his retired hours were also employed in corresponding, &c. It is well known, that the Epistle to the Ephesians, (or, as some think, to the Laodiceans, to whom however, it is certain Paul did write, Col. iv. 16.) to the Colossians, and Philippans, as well as that to Philemon, were written from hence during this imprisonment, and that to the Hebrews in or quickly after it; but, as for the Second to Timothy, I am ready to think it of a later date.—It seems highly probable, that, about the end of the two years here spoken of, he was set at liberty. Some have questioned, whether he ever returned into the East again, which yet from Philem. verse 22, and Heb. xiii. 23, he seems to have expected. Clemons Romanus (ad Cor. Epist. l. cap. 9.) expressly tells us that he preached in the West, and that to his utmost bounds, which must at least include Spain, whither he intended to go. Rom. xv. 24, 25. (See Chryost. Vol. VIII. p. 29.) Theodoret adds, that he went to the Islands of the sea, as elsewhere he numbers Gaul, (that is France,) and Britain, among the disciples of the tent-maker. (See Bp. Stillingfleet's Orig. Brit. p. 29.) But in what order he took these places, 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, (for chronologers differ,) and I think we may not exactly fix it,) he returned to Rome, where some say he met with Peter, who was thrown into prison with other

deputy, upon his appeal: And during this long period of time, he was solicitous to do all he could to promote the gospel of his divine Master, though he could not act so freely as he desired; in this view, therefore, he received all that came to him to be instructed in the design and evidence of the gospel, Preaching with great ardour and zeal the kingdom of God, as established in the person of his exalted Son, and teaching those things which relate to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the religion he hath instituted in the world, with all freedom of speech, [and] without any restraint from the Roman magistrates. In consequence of this, many converts were made, 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

Christians, on a pretence of being concerned in the burying of the city. Chryostom 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 is, I think universally agreed, among all ancient writers who mention his death, that he was beheaded at Aqua Salvina, three miles from Rome; for, being free of that city, he could not be crucified, as Peter was according to the tradition of the Latin church on the very same day. It is said, and there is great reason to believe it, that this glorious confessor gave his head to the fatal stroke with the greatest cheerfulness, and also, that he was buried in the Via Ostensis, two miles from Rome, where Constantine the Great erected a church to his memory, A. D. 316, which was successively repaired and beautified by Theodosius the Great, and the Empress Theodora. (See Euseb. Eccl. Hist. li. cap. 23. Not. Fleury's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. Book II. chap. 25; and Dr. Well's Geogr. of the New Testament, Part II. chap. 7, § 19—23.) But his most glorious monument remains in his immortal writings, which, if God spare my life to illustrate, I shall esteem the doing it one of the greatest honours which can be conferred upon me, and the most important service my pen can perform for the church of Christ.

SECT.  
LX.  
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XXVIII.

SECT. churches, and writing several of those excellent  
 I. X. epistles which were to be so great a blessing to  
 Acts the most distant ages.

XXVIII.

IMPROVEMENT.

LET us with pleasure observe that uniform tenor of Christian zeal, and compassionate regard to the salvation of men, which prevailed in the mind of Paul, and reigned in it even to the very period of this history, yea to that of his life. No sooner was he arrived at Rome, but an earnest desire of communicating the  
 Verse blessings of the gospel to his kinsmen according to the flesh, engaged him to send for the Jews, and to confer with them concerning the kingdom of God; generously forgetting his own  
 17 wrongs, and waving those complaints he might justly have made against his accusers and persecutors. He found them here, as well as in Judea, under prejudices which he could not conquer, with all his strength of reason and eloquence: They called the  
 22 Christian religion a sect, and maintained that it was every where spoken against: But if this were indeed the case, how far was it from being any reason against embracing and obeying the gospel! since all the men upon earth might attempt in vain to make falsehood truth, and truth falsehood, in any single instance; and might as well pull the sun from the firmament, as, by all their malice and rage, dethrone that blessed Redeemer whom God hath established, by a decree firmer than the ordinances of heaven.

26, 27 No scripture of the Old Testament is more frequently referred to in the New than the words of Isaiah, which contain so just a description of what the Jewish nation was in the days of that prophet, and in those of Christ and his apostles. How deplorable a case! to be spiritually blind and deal under the brightest light of the gospel, and its loudest proclamations! To harden the heart against the most gracious offers of healing and life, and to arm themselves against their own salvation with weapons of eternal death! Justly were they at last given over by  
 25 God, and sealed up under incurable obstinacy. May divine pity and help be extended to those who are marching on by large steps towards the same character, and as it seems towards the same end! Adored be divine grace, that any are inclined to hear,  
 28 and to obey. To them the ministers of Christ may turn with pleasure, and find, in their believing regards to the gospel, a sufficient recompence for all the labours and hazards they encounter in a faithful concern for its propagation.

To conclude all, Let us adore the gracious conduct of Providence, which secretly interposed 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. *The wrath of man praises God;*

30, 31



and *the remainder of it he restrains.* (Psal. lxxvi. 10.) He hath allotted to each of his servants, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, a due proportion both of labours and sufferings, and neither earth nor hell shall be able so to break in on his schemes, as to obstruct the one or increase the other. The sacred history, which is now closing upon us, affords many illustrations of this remark: Let us be thankful for it; and while we peruse it, let us indulge those reflections which may naturally arise from it, to establish our faith in the gospel, and to quicken our obedience to it. Amen!

SECT.

LX.

Acts

XXVIII.

# APPENDIX.

## Numb. I.

*A Dissertation on Sir Isaac Newton's Scheme for reducing the several histories contained in the Evangelists to their proper order.*

THE name of Sir Isaac Newton is so justly celebrated through the learned world, that they who know he has endeavoured to establish a method of settling a chronology of our Lord's life, (for I think one can hardly call it an harmony of the evangelists,) quite different from what has hitherto been advanced, may be curious to know what it is, and why we presume to depart from it; since it is so natural to imagine, that such a genius must demonstrate whatever he attempts to prove. I therefore think it incumbent upon me to lay the scheme before my reader, as I promised long since to do: (Note <sup>m</sup> on Mat. iv. 25, Vol. I. p. 206.) After which I shall briefly present, in one view, those reasons (many of which have been already hinted) which compelled me to tread a different road, after having most attentively considered all that this illustrious writer has urged for the support of his plan.

I cannot set myself to this task without feeling the fatigue of it sensibly allayed, by the pleasure with which I reflect on the firm persuasion which a person of his unequalled sagacity must have entertained of the truth of Christianity, in order to his being engaged to take such pains in illustrating the sacred oracles: A pleasure which, I doubt not, every good reader will share with me: especially as (according to the best information, whether public or private, I could ever get) his firm faith in the divine revelation discovered itself in the most genuine fruits of substantial virtue and piety; and consequently gives us the justest reason to conclude, that he is now rejoicing in the happy effects of it, infinitely more than in all the applause which his philosophical works have procured him, though they have commanded a fame lasting as the world; the true theory of which he had discovered, and (in spite of all the vain efforts of ignorance, pride, and their offspring bigotry,) have arrayed him as it were in the beams of the sun, and inscribed his name among the constellations of heaven.

Sir Isaac Newton has given us his sentiments on the Chronology of our Lord's history, in his Observations on Prophecy, Book I. chap. xi. p. 144—168; and, according to his usual method, he has done it concisely, only marking out some of the out-

lines; and after having endeavoured to establish some of the chief principles, by arguments which he judged to be conclusive, he leaves it to his readers to apply those principles to several other particulars; which being deducible from them, he did not think it necessary to enter into. Such is the method he has also taken in his Chronology of ancient kingdoms; and it was most suitable to that great genius, which bore him with such amazing velocity through so vast a circle of various literature. Yet it must render him less sensible of the difficulty attending some of his schemes, than he would otherwise have been, and may leave room to those, who are justly sensible how much they are his inferiors, to shew by their remarks upon him, how possible it is for the greatest of mankind to be misled by some plausible appearances of things in a general view of them, against which invincible objections may arise, when they come to be applied to unthought-of particulars.

There are many facts recorded in the evangelists, the order of which is so plain that all harmonies agree in them; and such especially are most of those with which the history begins, and most of those with which it ends, though there be some disputes about a few circumstances relating to the resurrection: But Sir Isaac enters not at all into that part of the history, nor into any thing that precedes the appearance of John the Baptist.

He lays it down as the foundation of all his other reasonings and calculations here, (on the authority of Luke iii. 1.) that John began to baptize in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, reckoning his reign to have commenced from the death of Augustus, which happened, he says, Aug. 23,\* in the year of our Lord (according to the common reckoning) 29: This is said, (Newt. p. 147,) to have been in the year of the Julian period 4727, which must surely be an error of the press for 4742, the year of that period which is universally known to have answered to the 29th of the received Christian era. He supposes the Baptist's ministry opened in the spring, when the weather was warm; and allowing the remainder of the year to the spreading of his reputation, he concludes that our Lord was baptized before the end of it, when Tiberius's 16th year was begun. (Mat. iii. 1—17; Mark i. 1—11; Luke iii. 1—18, 21—23; John i. 6—18, Sect. 15—18.) After this the temptation ensued, (Mat. iv. 1—11; Mark i. 12, 13; Luke iv. 1—13; Sect. 19,) and all those testimonies of John to Jesus, and the interviews between Jesus and his first disciples, (which are mentioned John i. 19, to the end, Sect. 20—22.) as likewise our Lord's journey to Galilee, and his first miracle there. (John ii. 1—11, Sect. 23.) Then followed our Lord's First Passover, which, according to Sir Isaac, (and I would be understood through all this part of the Dissert-

\* This is a small mistake; for Suetonius (Aug. 100.) fixes it to xlv. Kal. Septemb. that is, Aug. 19.

tation to be only reporting his opinion,) happened A. D. 30, at which he drove the traders out of the temple, (John ii. 12, to the end, Sect. 24.) had that celebrated conference with Nicodemus, (John iii. 1—21, Sect. 25, 26.) and continued for some time to abide in Judea baptizing by his disciples, while John baptized in Enon, and bore his last recorded testimony to him. (John iii. 22. to the end, Sect. 27.)

Thus the summer was spent, till John was thrown into prison about November, (Mat. xiv. 3—5; Luke iii. 19, 20; Mark vi. 17—20, Sect. 28.) and our Lord passed through Samaria in his way to Galilee about the winter solstice, that is, four months before harvest: (John iv. 1—42, Sect. 29, 30; See note <sup>c</sup> on John iv. 35.) After which he went, first to Cana in Galilee, (John iv. 43—54, Sect. 31.—) and then, after a circuit [or rather journey] in Galilee, (Mat. iv. 12; Mark i. 14, 15; Luke iv. 14, 15, Sect. 31, 32—) he came and preached at Nazareth, (Luke iv. 16—30, Sect. 32—) and being rejected there, went and settled for a while at Capernaum, where he called Peter, Andrew, James, and John. (Mat. iv. 13—22; Mark i. 16—20; Luke iv. 31, 32; v. 1—11, Sect. 33, 34.) This our author thinks must have taken up all the spring, and must bring us to our Lord's Second Passover, A. D. 31.

It is after this passover that Sir Isaac places another circuit through Galilee, which also carried his fame throughout all Syria, and added multitudes from thence, and from Decapolis to those that followed him from Judea and Jerusalem. (Mat. iv. 23, to the end; Mark i. 28; Luke iv. 44, Sect. —36.) To these he preached the celebrated sermon on the mount. (Mat. v, vi, vii, Sect. 37—43.) Immediately after which he cured the leper, (Mat. viii. 1—4; Mark i. 40, to the end; Luke v. 12—16, Sect. 44.) the centurion's servant, (Mat. viii. 5—13; Luke vii. 1—10, Sect. 55.) and Peter's mother-in-law, with many others, (Mat. viii. 14—17; Mark i. 29—38; Luke iv. 38—41, Sect. 35, 36.—)

By this time Sir Isaac supposes the feast of tabernacles approached, when our Lord passing through Samaria was refused a lodging, (Luke ix. 51—56, Sect. 127—) to which he strangely supposes a reference, Mat. viii. 19, 20, (Sect. 69.—) After which, when the feast was over, and Christ returned from Jerusalem, toward winter, he stilled a tempest as he crossed the sea, (Mat. viii. 23—27; Mark iv. 35, to the end; Luke viii. 22—25, Sect. —69.) and when he had landed dispossessed the legion: (Mat. viii. 28, to the end; Mark v. 1—21; Luke viii. 26—40, Sect. 70.) And then returning again to the western side of the sea, cured the paralytic, (Mat. ix. 1—8; Mark ii. 1—12; Luke v. 18—26, Sect. 45;—) called Matthew, (Mat. ix. 9; Mark ii. 14; Luke v. 27, 28, Sect. —45.) and having been entertained at his house,

(Mat. ix. 10—17; Mark ii. 15—22; Luke v. 29, to the end, Sect. 71.) went out to raise Jairus's daughter, curing the woman who had a bloody flux by the way: (Mat. ix. 18—26; Mark v. 22, to the end; Luke viii. 41, to the end, Sect. 72.—) And after performing other cures, (Mat. ix. 27—34, Sect. 72.) he took another circuit in Galilee, (Mat. ix. 35, to the end, Sect.—73.) gave a charge to his apostles, and sent them out: (Mat. x. 1, to the end; xi. 1; Mark vi. 7—13; Luke ix. 1—6, Sect. 74—76.) After which, having answered the messengers which John had sent, he discourses with the people concerning him, (Mat. ix. 2—19; Luke vii. 18—35, Sect. 57, 58.) and upbraids the impenitent cities of Galilee. (Mat. xi. 20, to the end, Sect. 59.) And as these events would employ the winter and the spring, our author places the Third Passover here, A. D. 32.

He does not indeed expressly assert that this was the feast at which our Lord cured the lame man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, and made that defence before the Sanhedrim related in the vth chapter of John: (Sect. 46—48.) But according to this general plan, this must be its proper place. And that there was a passover about this time, he argues from the story of the disciples rubbing out the ears of corn, which is related as in this place: (Mat. xii. 1—8; Mark ii. 23, to the end, Luke vi. 1—5, Sect. 49.) Soon after which happened the cure of the withered hand, (Mat. xii. 9—13; Mark iii. 1—7; Luke vi. 6—11, Sect. 50.) and a variety of other miracles, (Mat. xii. 15—21; Mark iii. 7—12, Sect. 51.) with that of the dispossession imputed to a confederacy with Beelzebub. (Mat. xii. 22, to the end; Mark iii. 22, to the end; Luke xi. 14—36, Sect. 61—64.) Here Sir Isaac places the parables delivered at the sea side, as he supposes about seed-time, or the feast of tabernacles, (Mat. xiii. 1—52; Mark iv. 1—34; Luke viii. 4—18, Sect. 65—68;) his renewed visit to Nazareth, (Mat. xiii. 53, to the end; Mark vi. 1—6, Sect. 73.—) and the return of the twelve, after having spent, as he supposes, a year in their embassy. (Mark vi. 30, 31; Luke ix. 10, Sect. 78.—)

About this time our author places the beheading of John the Baptist, after he had been in prison two years and a quarter; (Mat. xiv. 1—12; Mark vi. 14—29; Luke ix. 7—9; Sect. 77.) After which those multitudes resorted to Christ, whom he fed with the five loaves, (Mat. xiv. 13—23; Mark vi. 30—46; Luke ix. 10—17; John vi. 1—15, Sect. 78.) and to whom, after having crossed the lake, (Mat. xiv. 24, to the end; Mark vi. 47, to the end; John vi. 16—21, Sect. 79.) he discourses concerning the bread of life, (John vi. 21, to the end, Sect. 80—82.) As we are expressly told, John vi. 4, that when this miracle was wrought the passover was near, Sir Isaac concludes this to be the Fourth Passover after our Lord's baptism,

A. D. 33, and argues from John vii. 1, that Christ did not celebrate it at Jerusalem.

Quickly after this followed the dispute with the scribes who came from Jerusalem: (Mat. xv. 1—20; Mark vii. 1—23; Sect. 83, 84.) After which our Lord departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon; and after having dispossessed the daughter of a Syro-Phœnician woman, (Mat. xv. 21—28; Mark vii. 24, to the end, Sect. 85.) he returned to the sea of Galilee, where he fed the four thousand, (Mat. xv. 29, to the end; Mark viii. 1—10, Sect. 86.) and after having replied to the unreasonable demand the Pharisees made of a sign from heaven, and cautioned his disciples against the leaven of their false doctrine, (Mat. xvi. 1—12; Mark viii. 11—26, Sect. 87.) he came to Cæsarea Philippi, and having by the way acknowledged himself to be the Messiah, he was afterwards transfigured, and ejected an obstinate demon. (Mat. xvi. 13, to the end; xvii. 1—21; Mark viii. 27, to the end, ix. 1—29; Luk. ix. 18—43, Sect. 88—91.) He then came to Capernaum, and made provision by a miracle to pay the tribute: (Mat. xvii. 24, to the end, Sect. 92.) and there, or in the neighbourhood of it, discoursed of humility, forgiveness, &c. (Mat. xviii. 1, to the end; Mark ix. 33, to the end; Luke ix. 46—48, Sect. 93—95.)

Our author takes no notice of the mission of the seventy, and their return, Luke x. 1—24, Sect. 97—106, but he would probably have placed it here, previous to that which he supposes to be Christ's last departure from Galilee, (Mat. xix. 1, 2; Mark x. 1, Sect. 135.—) when he went up to the feast of tabernacles. (John vii. viii. Sect. 98—105.) Neither does he take notice of the visit to Bethany; (Luke x. 38, to the end, Sect. 108.) nor of the date of any of those discourses which are recorded by Luke (from chap. xi. 1, to chap. xviii. 14, Sect. 109—129.) except where any passages happen to be parallel to those in Matthew, to which *ix.* hints they are to be reduced.

He then introduces our Lord's visit to Jerusalem, and the cure of the blind man at the feast of dedication, (John ix. 10. Sect. 130—134.) after which Christ retired beyond Jordan, (John x. 40.) where he treats of divorce, (Mat. xix. 3—12; Mark x. 2—12, Sect. 135.) blesses the little children, (Mat. xix. 13—15; Mark x. 13—16; Luke xviii. 15—17, Sect. 136.) answers, and remarks upon, the young ruler, (Mat. xix. 16, to the end; xx. 1—16; Mark x. 17—31; Luke xviii. 18—30, Sect. 137, 138.) After which, on the death of Lazarus, he returns to Bethany, and raises him from the dead, (John xi. 1—46, Sect. 139, 140.) and then withdraws to Ephraim, till the approach of the Fifth Passover after his baptism, which was the last of his life: The particulars of which are related at large by the evangelists, and with the subsequent circumstances of his death, resurrection, appearances, and ascension, make up the rest

of this important history: But the contents need not be inserted here, as (for any thing that appears) there is no material difference between a harmony formed on Sir Isaac's principles or on ours.

I have taken the trouble of quoting the particular passages in each evangelist, as well as of every correspondent section in the Family Expositor, that it may be easy for any one who desires it, to read over the whole paraphrase according to this new scheme: and also to see how it transposes the passages in question, and how it differs from what I judge to be the most exact method of disposition. And the attentive reader will easily see, that there is a difference in the order of several of the stories, and a much greater in the dates we have respectively assigned to several which are placed in the same order by both.

A repetition of all the particulars would perhaps be disagreeable; I shall therefore content myself here with observing in general, that Sir Isaac constantly follows the order of Matthew, whatever transpositions of Mark and Luke it may require, which we do not; and he also concludes there were Five Passovers from the baptism to the death of Christ, whereas we, with the generality of harmonizers, suppose there were but Four. I have in my notes hinted at some considerations which determined me to the method, I have taken: But it will be expected I should here at least touch upon them again, and give a view of them together; which I the rather do as they strongly illustrate each other.

The grand reason why I do not every where follow the order of Matthew, is in one word this, That both Mark and Luke do not only in several instances agree to place the stories otherwise, though we have not the least reason to think that one wrote from the other; but also that they do, one or another of them, expressly assert, "that the events in question actually happened in a different order from that in which Matthew relates them." Whereas it is observable, that in all such cases Matthew does not so expressly assert his order, as to contradict theirs. A few instances of this may be expedient, and a few shall suffice.

Thus, though Matthew relates the cure of Peter's mother-in-law, (§ 35.) in his viiith chapter, ver. 14, 15, after the sermon on the mount, and, according to Sir Isaac, some months after the call of Peter, Andrew, James and John, which he had related chap. iv. 18—22; Mark says, this cure was immediately after they came out of the synagogue, into which they entered straightway after the call of those disciples, Mark i. 20, 21, 29.

Again, though Matthew gives us the story of Christ's calming the sea, dispossessing Legion, and curing the paralytic, in the latter part of his viiith and beginning of his ixth chapter, and does not relate the parables of the sower, tares, &c. delivered from the ship till the xiiith, and places so many facts between, that Sir Isaac concludes the miracles to have been wrought in

winter, some time before the Passover A. D. 32, and the parables not to have been delivered till about the Feast of Tabernacles, almost a year after; Mark is very punctual in assuring us, (chap. iv. 35, & seq.) that, in the evening of the same day in which the parables were delivered from the ship, Jesus calmed the sea, and dispossessed Legion; for which reason I have followed him, and placed these miracles immediately after the parables; (§ 69, 70;) but have set that of the paralytic much higher, (§ 45.) as both Luke and Mark connect it strongly with the cure of the leper, which Sir Isaac allows to have happened immediately after the sermon on the mount.

Matthew relates the message of John, and those subsequent discourses of our Lord, which are contained in his xith chapter, after having given us an account of the mission of the Apostles in his xth. But Luke (who more accurately distinguishes between their call, Luke vi. 13—16; and mission, Luke ix. 2—6; as Mark also does, Mark iii. 13—19; and vi. 7—13.) places this message, together with the account of several miracles on which it is founded, as well as the circuit which our Lord made with the twelve before he sent them out, and the fore-mentioned miracles of calming the sea, dispossessing Legion, &c. between those two events, that is, the call, and actual mission, of the twelve; the one of which must in all reason be supposed considerably to precede the other; in which he also agrees with Mark, as was observed above.

Matthew also relates the story of the disciples rubbing out the ears of corn, and the cure of the withered hand, (chap. xii. 1—13.) after the mission of the twelve; whereas both Luke and Mark place which-ever of those events they mention before the choice of them; (see Mark iii. 1—6; Luke vi. 1—11;) and Luke expressly says, that choice was in those days, (Luke vi. 12, 13.) that is, at the time which followed the fore-mentioned events.

These, and the discourse on the unpardonable sin, (§ 61,) which we readily allow might have happened twice, are all the most material transpositions we have made; and I must submit it to the judgment of the reader, whether it be not more for the honour of the New Testament in general, to suppose that Matthew might not intend exactly to preserve the order of the history, where he asserts nothing directly concerning it, than to suppose both Mark and Luke to have mistaken it, when they so expressly declare their regard to it, as in some of these instances they do.

Sir Isaac indeed urges, that Matthew (as well as John, in whom I have made scarce any transposition,) was an eye-witness; but this can have no weight, unless it be certain, that he every-where intended to observe an exact order, which, for variety of reasons or causes, many of which may be to us unknown, he might not



be solicitous about.\* And I cannot forbear observing, that, on this great man's own principles, there cannot be a great deal in the argument; for, as Matthew was not called till chap. ix. 9, he could not, according to his hypothesis, have been an eye and ear witness to all the events from chap. iv. to that place: and, if (as Sir Isaac also urges,) he was sent out as one of the twelve, chap. x. init. and continued a year on his embassy, he could not be such a witness to what passed from the beginning of chap. xi. to the end of chap. xiii. where he places their return after a year's absence: And these are the chapters, where we have made the greatest and most material transpositions, the others hardly deserving a mention.

If this branch of Sir Isaac's argument falls to the ground, and it be not allowed that Matthew observed a strict chronological order, that part of his reasoning, by which he would fix the date of each event, must fall with it; for, if it were to be granted, that Matthew hinted at the different seasons of the year when they passed, we could not fix the chronology by that, unless we were sure, that each was such a season of a different year, and not of the same, which on this supposition we cannot assert: But I think it very easy (*ex abundantia*) to shew, that passages, which Sir Isaac produces as indications of the seasons, are not so, or at least do not point them out so punctually as they ought to do, in order to justify the uses he would make of them.

One cannot but wonder, that some of the arguments, which I have now in my eye, should ever have been urged by a writer of such extraordinary discernment; as for instance, that he should conclude the Sermon on the mount must be preached later than the Passover, because multitudes followed Christ in the open fields, which he says, (p. 151.) was an argument of the summer season; though it is so apparent, that, when there were those five thousand men besides women and children assembled around him, whom he fed with the five loaves, the Passover was only at hand; (John vi. 4.) or that he should say, (p. 153.) the storm, mentioned Mat. viii. 23, "shews the winter was now come on," as if there were no storms in the summer; or once more, that it must be seed-time, when the parables in Mat. xiii. were delivered, "because sowing seed is mentioned in them," (p. 154.) when it is so evident, (as I have observed elsewhere, note <sup>d</sup> on Mark iv. 3, Vol. I. p. 356.) the very same principle would prove it to be harvest, as another parable delivered the same day refers to that season.

I am not willing to swell this Dissertation; and therefore, omitting many remarks which might easily be made on other passages, I will conclude with the mention of two or three particu-

\* Mr. Jer. Jones has hinted at some conjectural reasons in his Vindication of the former part of St. Matthew's Gospel. See chap. iii. p. 22—34.

lars, which might contribute to lead this illustrious writer into some error.

One thing that has occasioned this was, his taking it for granted, (as I observed before,) that the fifteenth year of Tiberius, in which John the Baptist opened his ministry, must needs be reckoned from the death of Augustus; whereas it ought to be computed from the time, when Augustus made him his colleague in the empire. (See note <sup>b</sup> on Luke iii. 1, Vol. I. p. 98.)

Another is, his admitting the rabbinical rules for the translation of the Jewish feasts, of which we have not one word, either in the scriptures, or in Josephus, or Philo. Yet it is on this principle, that he rejects some years from the possibility of being the year of Christ's suffering, because (as he imagines,) the Passover, two years before each, would not fall late enough to have the corn ripe on the Sabbath that succeeded the Pascal.\* (See notes <sup>b</sup> and <sup>c</sup> on Luke vi. 1, Vol. I. p. 280, 281.)

And, to mention no more, a third principle (which is also very precarious, and yet has much stress laid upon it in Sir Isaac's scheme,) is, his taking it for granted, that whenever Matthew speaks of Christ's going about Galilee and preaching in the synagogues there, he intended to tell us, that our Lord made a circuit over all the country: which, if it were admitted, might indeed make it necessary, (if Matthew's order were to be the standard,) to suppose a longer space of time, than we or most others allow, to have passed between his entrance on his public work, and the Passover just preceding the rubbing out the ears of corn, which we own on both sides to have been two years before his death; for four circuits of this kind are mentioned, before we come to the xiith chapter of Matthew, where the story last referred to is recorded; the first, John iv. 43, and Luke iv. 14, 15; the second, Mat. iv. 23; the third, Mat. ix. 35; and the fourth, Mat. xi. 1. But if we should grant, that his going about all Galilee in the second of these instances, and his going about all the cities and villages in the third, (though that might only be those on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias,) were to be taken ever so literally, yet his passing through Galilee in his way from Sichar to Nazareth in the first instance, and his departing, that is, setting out to teach and to preach in their cities in the fourth, can infer no such conclusion.

This might be suggested, even if Matthew's order were to be admitted, and would invalidate the argument for protracting the years of our Lord's ministry on that supposition; but it is to be remembered, we have produced arguments to prove, that order must sometimes be inverted, and particularly, that Christ's going about all the cities and villages, (Mat. ix. 35, § 73,) and his departing to teach and to preach in their cities, (Mat. xi. 1, § 76.)

\* I shall content myself with observing here, that on these principles, Sir Isaac places the Passover, A. D. 31, on Wednesday, March 28.—A. D. 32, on Monday, April 14.—A. D. 33, on Friday, April 3.—and A. D. 34, on Friday, April 25.

was some considerable time after the Passover, after which the ears of corn were rubbed out. (Mat. xii. 1, sect. 49.)

On the whole, I think, that, if our order be admitted, there is no part of Christ's ministry which seems so crowded with business, as that between his last Passover but one, and the following Feast of Dedication. But here, our Harmony allows more time for the work in Galilee, than Sir Isaac, who supposes "Christ never returned thither after the Feast of Tabernacles;" (p. 157;) and I leave the reader to judge, whether, if such a variety of journies and events must be allowed to have happened in these nine months, or according to him in six, we may not by a parity of reason, or rather with greater, comprehend all the preceding within the compass of about sixteen; especially when it is considered, that, according to Sir Isaac, that progress of our Lord, for which the apostles were intended to make way, and that after the embassy of the seventy, must be thrown into the first six months of this year, and is an extreme, and I think insurmountable difficulty, into which we shall not be driven.\*

\* To make the reader more sensible of this, I shall add a brief survey of the compass of time, within which I suppose the principal events between the several Passovers of our Lord's ministry to have happened, referring him to the following chronological table for a more exact view of them.

Events which we suppose between the first and second of our Lord's Passover.

Our Lord spends the summer, and beginning of the winter, in Judea; about the winter solstice passes through Samaria into Galilee; (sect. 25—30;) spends the remainder of the winter and spring in a circuit through Galilee, in which are included his visit to Nazareth, and short stay at Capernaum; and towards the close of the circuit, having preached his celebrated sermon on the mount, returns to Capernaum. (§ 31—45.)

Events between the second and third Passover.

After vindicating what passed upon rubbing out the ears of corn, and curing the withered hand, he travels to the Sea of Galilee, chooses his apostles, and makes another abode at Capernaum; visits Naim, and dismisses John's messenger; all which might pass before the end of May; (sect. 46—60;) then travels with the twelve in his train (Luke viii. 1; Mat. ix. 35,) through the places near the Sea of Tiberias, perhaps during the months of June, July, and August; (sect. 61—73;) and, intending a much more extensive circuit, dispatches the twelve to make way for him, and, probably setting out quickly after them, might employ six months in this part of it, (sect. 74—77.) and leave sufficient time for his interview with the five thousand whom he miraculously fed, and his conference with the Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem before the next Passover. (sect. 78—84.)

Events between Christ's third Passover and the Feast of Dedication, which preceded his fourth.

At, or near the time between the Passover and the end of May for his journey to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and other places in Galilee, he might return to Dalmanutha, and feed the four thousand by that name; (sect. 85, 86;) and, if subsequent events and discourses; (recorded sect. 87—96,) employed him till the end of June, he might then send out the seventy, and they might easily meet him at Jeru-

I shall conclude this Dissertation with one reflection, which may perhaps be of some use to those, who have but little relish for the niceties of this inquiry: I mean, that, when we find this great master, and I had almost said, (so far as the title can be applied to a mortal man,) this great father of reason, falling into such obvious mistakes, as I have been obliged here to point out, it tends to give us an humbling idea of the imperfections of the human mind in its present state; and consequently, we may learn from it two of the most important lessons that can be imagined in social life;—a caution, lest we assert our own opinions with too dogmatical an air;—and a care to avoid such petulancy in censuring the mistakes of others, as if we thought none but the weakest and most contemptible of mankind were capable of being misled by the specious appearances of some inconclusive arguments; and I will venture to say, that, if Sir Isaac Newton's error in the order of the Harmony teach us this candour, it will be a much greater benefit to us, than if he had placed every circumstance relating to it beyond all possibility of farther dispute.

salem at the Feast of Tabernacles in September; between which, and the Feast of Dedication near the end of December, we must place his last circuit in Galilee, (§97—127,) unless (which is possible,) we suppose it to have been begun quickly after the mission of the seventy, and so some part of July and September to have been employed in it: And indeed one cannot imagine any necessity, that all the seventy, or all the apostles, should have finished their progress, before our Lord began to follow those who were sent to the nearest places; for, if we should suppose it, and follow Sir Isaac's scheme, we must of necessity place the two circuits, which followed these two embassies, within this space of time, as was hinted above; whereas, if we consider the journey to the coast of Tyre and Sidon as an appendix to the former, we may (according to our scheme) assign near eight months to that grand tour of our Lord, in which he followed the twelve, which might make it convenient to the patch that in which he followed the seventy, in proportionably less time: And I believe, that, if we consider Galilee not to have been larger than three or four of our western counties, we shall more easily acquiesce in the competency of the time assigned to these visits to it.

*Postscript to the preceding Dissertation.*

I NEVER had, nor never took an opportunity of looking into Dupin's *Life of Christ*, till about a year ago, long after the publication of the second edition of my *Paraphrase on the Evangelists*: but then I found, to my agreeable surprise, a more perfect agreement between his scheme of the Harmony and mine, than I expected any where to have met with, and particularly in the story of the resurrection.

Of the 203 Sections, into which I have divided the Evangelists, we differ only in the order of 29; and, as several of these are inseparably connected, there are only, on the whole, nine stories or discourses, in which there is a variety in our order.

The first, Sect. 12. The wise men's visit to Christ, which he places before the presentation, sect. 11.

The second, Sect. 37—43. Matthew's account of the Sermon on the mount, which he supposes to have been coincident with that in Luke, sect. 53, 54, which I consider as a repetition of it.

The third, Sect. 69, 70. The stilling the tempest, and dispossessing Legion, which he places before the calling of Matthew, and immediately after sect. 36.

The fourth, Sect. 96. Christ's reproving John for an instance of the narrowness of his spirit, which, as a similar and undetermined fact, he subjoins to sect. 93. Christ's checking the ambition of his disciples.

The fifth, Sect. 106. The return of the seventy, which he connects with the story of their mission, sect. 97.

The sixth, Sect. 118. Christ's urging the necessity of striving for heaven, &c. which he strangely introduces between sect. 154 and 158.

The seventh, The discourses and facts, sect. 126—135, which he scatters promiscuously after sect. 105, and elsewhere.

The eighth, Sect. 170. The intimation of Judas's treachery, which he introduces after the Eucharist, sect. 172.

And the last, Sect. 181. The warning Christ gave of Peter's denying him, which he joins with sect. 171, though I take them to be two different predictions of the same event.

The reader may see my reasons for the order in which I have placed most of these sections, in the notes upon them; but I cannot forbear thinking, that such a coincidence in all the rest, where the one could not write from the other, is a strong presumption in favour of both.

## Numb. II.

*A Dissertation on the inspiration of the New Testament, as proved from the facts recorded in the historical books of it.*

NOTHING can be more evident, than that a firm and cordial belief of the *Inspiration* of the Sacred Scripture is of the highest moment, not only to the edification and peace of the church, but in a great measure to its very existence; for, if this be given up, the authority of the revelation is enervated, and its use destroyed; the star which is to direct our course is clouded, our compass is broke to pieces, and we are left to make the voyage of life, in sad uncertainty, amidst a thousand rocks, and shelves, and quicksands. I hope therefore, I may perform a service acceptable to God and my Christian brethren, while I endeavour, as plainly and as briefly as I can, to place some leading proofs of it in a convincing view; and I undertake the task the more willingly, as in the preface to the first volume of this work, I laid myself under an obligation (several years ago) to attempt something of this kind, and have often been reminded of it by persons for whom I have the highest regard.

I then proposed to handle the subject in a few sermons, to be added to those, long since published, on the evidences of the gospel. But, on a review of that particular connection, which the argument I am here to pursue, has with the History of the New Testament, I apprehended, it could no where appear better, than at the end of my Exposition on the books which contain it. The reader will, I hope, recollect, that, in the sermons just now mentioned, I have endeavoured to demonstrate the truth of that history; and every year convinces me more and more of the unanswerable force of the evidence there displayed. It is with great pleasure that I reflect on the divine blessing, which hath seemed to attend those discourses: and it is a great encouragement to me to hope, that what I am now to offer may be a means of establishing some of my readers in that regard to the sacred oracles, which will be their best preservative against the errors, and the vices, of that licentious age in which Providence hath cast our lot, whereby our fidelity and our zeal are brought to a trial, which few ages but those of martyrdom could have afforded.

It will be my business, first, to state the nature of *Inspiration* in general, and of that kind of it, which (as I apprehend) we are to ascribe to the New Testament: I shall then prove, that it was undoubtedly written by such inspiration; and after this, I shall briefly hint at the influence, which this important truth ought always to have upon our temper and conduct; by inforcing

which, I apprehend, I shall take the best method to promote a growing persuasion of the truth I am labouring to establish.

I will only premise, That I do not intend this, as a full discussion of the subject, but only as such a compendious view of the chief proofs, as may suit the place in which it stands, and as may, from the easiest and plainest principles, give rational satisfaction to the minds of common Christians, who have not leisure, nor perhaps ability, to enter into all the niceties of theological and scholastical controversy.

I. I shall state the nature of *Inspiration*, and of that kind of it, which we are to ascribe to the New Testament

In this I shall be more particular, as I apprehend the want of a sufficient accuracy here has occasioned some confusion in the reasoning of several worthy persons, who have treated this important subject more largely, than I must here allow myself to do. I shall not, however, criticise on their account of the matter, but plainly lay down what seems to me intelligible, right, and safe.

By *Inspiration* in general, I would be understood to mean, "Any supernatural influence of God upon the mind of a rational creature, whereby it is formed to any degree of intellectual improvement, beyond what it would, at that time, and in those circumstances, have attained in a natural way, that is, by the usual exercise of its faculties, unassisted by any special divine interposition." Thus, if a man were instantaneously enabled to speak a language which he had never learned, how possible soever it might have been for him to have obtained an equal readiness in it by degrees, I believe few would scruple to say, that he owed his acquaintance with it to a divine inspiration; or, if he gave a true and exact account of what was doing at a distance, and published a particular relation of what he neither saw nor heard, as some of the prophets did, all the world would own, (if the affair were too complex, and the account too circumstantial, to be the result of a lucky guess,) that he must be inspired with the knowledge of it, though another account equally exact, given by a person on the spot, would be ascribed to no inspiration at all.

But of this supernatural influence on the minds of men, forming them to such extraordinary intellectual improvements and abilities, there are various sorts and degrees, which it will be of importance for us accurately to distinguish from each other.

If a person be discoursing either in word or writing, and God do miraculously watch over his mind, and, however secretly, direct it in such a manner, as to keep him more secure from error in what he speaks or writes, than he could have been

merely by the natural exercise of his faculties, I should say, he was inspired, even though there should be no extraordinary marks of high genius in the work, or even though another person, with a stronger memory, or relating a fact more immediately after it happened, might naturally have recounted it with equal exactness. Yet still, if there was in this case any thing miraculous, we must on the principles above, allow an inspiration; and I would call this, to distinguish it from other and higher degrees, an inspiration of superintendency.

If this influence should act in such a degree, as absolutely to exclude all mixture of error in a declaration of doctrines or facts so superintended, we might then call it a plenary superintending inspiration, or, as I would choose for popular use to express myself in this discourse, a full inspiration.

Now it will from hence follow, (and I desire that it may be seriously attended to,) that a book, the contents of which are entirely true, may be said to be written by a full inspiration, even though it contain many things which the author might have known and recorded merely by the use of his natural faculties, if there be others which he did not so well know, or could not without miraculous assistance have so exactly recollected; or if, on the whole, a freedom from all error would not in fact have been found, unless God had thus superintended or watched over his mind and pen. And in regard to such a production, it would be altogether impertinent and insignificant to inquire, how far did natural memory or natural reason operate, and in what particular facts or doctrines did supernatural agency prevail: It is enough if I know that what the author says or writes is true, though I know not particularly how he came by this or that truth; for my obligation to receive it arises from its being known truth, and not merely from its being made known this or that way.—And should God miraculously assure me, that any particular writing contained nothing but the truth; and should he at the same time tell me, it had been drawn up without any miraculous assistance at all, though I could not then call it inspired, I should be as much obliged to receive and submit to it on its being thus attested by God, as if every single word had been immediately dictated by him.

It will farther follow from what is said above, that a book may be written by such full inspiration as I have described, though the author being left to the choice of his own words, phrases, and manner,\* there may be some imperfection in the style and method, provided the whole contents of it are true; if the subject be so important, as to make it consistent with the divine

\* It is very evident that the learned Maimonides thought this to be the case with regard to the prophets, though I think it least of all to be apprehended in such oracles. See Maimon. *Mor. Nov. lib. ii. cap. 29.*



wisdom miraculously to interpose, to preserve an entire credibility as to the exact truth of facts recorded, and doctrines delivered as divine. If indeed God were represented as declaring such a book to be intended by him as an exact standard for logic, oratory, or poetry, every apparent defect in either would be an internal objection against it. But if it be represented only as intended to teach us truth, in order to its having a proper influence on our temper and actions, such defects would no more warrant or excuse our rejecting its authority, than the want of a ready utterance or a musical voice would excuse our disregard to a person who should bring us competent evidence of his being a messenger from God to us.

I have been more particular in stating this kind of inspiration, because it is that which I shall endeavour to assert to the sacred books of the New Testament, and this without any exception or limitation, as they came out of the hands of the apostles; though I allow it is possible they may, in this or that particular copy, and in some minuter instances which now perhaps affect all our remaining copies, have suffered something by the injuries of time, or the negligence of transcribers, as well as printers: Which, that they have in some particulars suffered, is as notorious a fact, as that there is a written or a printed copy of them in the world; yet is at the same time a fact which no man of common sense or honesty can seriously urge against their authority.

Though it be the main point in my view, to prove that the New Testament is written under that kind of inspiration which I have been explaining, I must nevertheless beg leave to mention two other kinds, of which divines often speak, and which do also in a considerable degree belong to many parts of scripture, though I think it neither expedient, material, nor safe, to assert that they run through the whole of it: I mean, an inspiration of elevation, and of suggestion.

The former (as its name plainly intimates) prevails, where the faculties, though they act in a regular, and, as it seems, a common manner, are nevertheless elevated or raised to some extraordinary degree, so that the performance is more truly sublime, noble, and pathetic, than what would have been produced merely by the force of a man's natural genius. As for the particular degree of the divine agency, where there is indeed something of this inspiration, perhaps neither the person that is under it, nor any other creature, may be able confidently to pronounce concerning it. Perhaps, nothing less penetrating than the eye of God himself, may be able universally to distinguish that narrow line, which divides what is natural from what is supernatural, in all the productions and powers of imagination, reasoning, and language, or in the effects and powers of memory under the former head. It is a curiosity, in the minute particulars of which

we are not at all concerned; as it is the same God which, whether naturally or miraculously, worketh all and in all. (1 Cor. xii. 9.) But if any excellency in the performance itself can speak it to be more than human, productions of this sort are to be found in scripture, and the rank and education of some of the sacred penmen render the hand of God peculiarly conspicuous in the sublimity and lustre of their writings. What the gifts of the spirit may in every age of the church have done, by operations of this kind, we know not. And I think it would be presumptuous absolutely to deny, that God might act in some extraordinary degree on some of the heathen writers, to produce those glorious works of antiquity which have been, under the direction of his providence, so efficacious on the one hand to transmit the evidences of divine revelation, and on the other to illustrate the necessity of it: In consequence of which I cannot forbear saying by the way, that I think they who are intimately acquainted with them, are of all men upon earth the most inexcusable in rejecting Christianity. But our inability to mark out the exact boundaries, between nature and an extraordinary divine agency, is not much to be regretted; since it does not appear to be the design of Providence, by such elevations of sentiment, style, and manner, by any means to bear testimony to the person adorned with them as a messenger sent to speak in his name; which may as effectually be done in the plainest and simplest forms of expression, without any thing which looks like the heightenings of art, or the sparklings of an extraordinary genius.

The other, which divines have called immediate suggestion, is the highest and most extraordinary kind of inspiration, and takes place when the use of our faculties is superseded, and God does as it were speak directly to the mind; making such discoveries to it as it could not otherwise have obtained, and dictating the very words in which these discoveries are to be communicated to others: So that a person, in what he writes from hence, is no other than, first, the auditor, and then (if I may be allowed the expression) the secretary of God; as John was of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he wrote from his sacred lips the seven epistles to the Asiatic churches. And it is, no doubt, to an inspiration of this kind that the book of the Revelation owes its original.

It is evident from the definitions above, that there may be a full superintendency, where neither of the latter kinds of inspiration (of elevation or suggestion) take place: But I think we must necessarily allow, that an inspiration of suggestion, so far as it goes, must also imply a full superintendency in recording the history of what has been seen or heard in any prophetic vision, when it is necessary to make a report of it. For as it would, on the one hand, be impious to imagine, that the blessed God would dictate a falsehood to any of his creatures; so neither can we suppose it consistent with the divine wisdom, to suffer the prophet, through<sup>h</sup>

infirmity, to err in delivering a message with which he had expressly charged him; and which would be given in vain, so far as there was a failure in the exact delivery of it.

Besides the last book of the New Testament, I mean the Revelation, which I have already mentioned in this view, it seems evident to me that some other parts of it were given by such a suggestion; seeing there are so many predictions interspersed, and so many mysteries revealed, which lay entirely beyond the ken of any human, or perhaps angelic mind. But that this is applicable to all the history of it, or to all things contained in its epistolary parts, I choose not to assert. For as it cannot be necessary to its entire credibility, (which nothing can more effectually secure than a full superintendency,) it would subject us to many difficulties, which have been so forcibly urged by others, that it is not necessary for me here to repeat them. But I am well assured, that the apparent insufficiency of the answers which have been returned to these objections, by some very sincere, but I think in this instance, less judicious defenders of scripture, has led some people to conclude, that the scripture was not inspired at all; as if it had been on both sides agreed, that an universal suggestion was the only kind of inspiration worth contending about. The consequence of this hath been, that such as are dissatisfied with the arguments which these defenders of the divine authority of the scripture insist upon, read the scriptures, (if they read them at all,) not to learn their authentic dictates, but to try the sentiments contained in them by the touch-stone of their own reason, and to separate what that shall allow to be right from what it presumptuously concludes to be wrong. And this boasted standard has been so very defective, that on this mistaken notion they have not only rejected many of the most vital truths of Christianity, but even some essential principles of natural religion. And thus they have in effect annihilated the Christian revelation, at the very same time that they have acknowledged the historical truth of the facts on which it is built. This is the body of men, that have affected to call themselves cautious believers; but their character is so admirably well described under that of Agrippa, by my honoured friend Dr. Watts, in his little treatise called the Redeemer and Sanctifier, that it may be sufficient here to have hinted it thus briefly; as the reason, why out of regard to them as well as others, I have resumed the subject of inspiration, and endeavoured to place it in what I do in my conscience apprehend to be both a safe and a rational light.

That I may remedy, so far as God shall enable me to do it, the great and destructive evil I have just been mentioning, and may establish in the minds of Christians a due regard to the sacred oracles of eternal truth, I shall now proceed to the second part of this discourse: In which,

II. I am to shew, how evidently the full *inspiration* of the New Testament, in the sense stated above, follows from the acknowledged truth of the history which it contains, in all its leading and most important facts.

But before I proceed to the discussion of the matter, I must beg leave to observe, that though this is what I apprehend to be the grand argument, and that which may most properly be connected with an exposition of the historical books, I am very far from slighting those other arguments which fall not so directly in my way here.

I greatly revere the testimony of the primitive Christian writers, not only to the real existence of the sacred books in those early ages, but also to their divine original: Their persuasion of which most evidently appears from the veneration with which they speak of them, even while miraculous gifts remained in the church; and consequently, an exact attendance to a written rule might seem less absolutely necessary, and the authority of inferior teachers might approach nearer to that of the apostles. I believe every candid reader will acknowledge, that nothing can be objected to many strong passages in Clemens Romanus, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Ireneus, Theophilus Antiochenus, Clemens Alexandrinus, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, and some other ancient writers he has mentioned that are now lost. It is needless to produce them here, after those valuable specimens of them which Dr. Whitby and Mons. du Pin have given; and especially considering what my learned friend Dr. Lardner has with so much industry and accuracy of judgment collected on this head in the second part of his *Credibility of the Gospel History*. I shall therefore content myself with observing here, that several of the most learned and considerable of these ancients, speak of this veneration for the sacred writings of the New Testament, not as the result of their own private judgment, but as that in which all the churches were unanimously agreed.\*

\* Thus Origen says, (Philocal. cap. xii. p. 41.) Δὸ σὺ, — ὡς πρὸς τὴν παραδίξασθαι, ἢ ἁποκρίσασθαι ἡμῶν. "That, if a man would not confess himself to be an infidel, he must admit the *inspiration* of the *scriptures*;" And he elsewhere places the gospels in the number of writings, "which were received as divine by all the churches of God, and were the elements, or first principles, of the church's faith;" Ἐν πάσαις ἐκκλησίαις; οὗτοι περιεγραμμένοι ἄνθρωποι. — Ἐταῦτα μὲν τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς. — Tertullian also lays it down as a fundamental principle in disputing with heretics, "That the truth of doctrines is to be determined by scripture;" for the question has evidently the force of a strong negation; *Aliunde vellet loqui posset de verbis fidei, nisi ex litteris fidei?* (de Præscript. Hæret. cap. xv. —) And Eusebius quotes a much more ancient writer than himself, (Euseb. Eccles. Hist. lib. v. cap. 28.) who calls the scripture, *πίστις ἀρχαίων χρόνων*, "The rule of ancient faith;" and who afterwards speaking of heretics, declares, "That, if they denied the scriptures to be divinely inspired, they were infidels." The expression is remarkable; but, being transcribed in Vol. I. p. 37, note 1, I shall not insert it here.

The internal characters of divine inspiration, with which every page of the New Testament abounds, do also deserve our attentive notice: and render the book itself, if considered as detached from all external evidence whatsoever, a compendious demonstration of its own sacred original, and consequently of the certainty of that religion which it teaches. The excellency of its doctrines, the spirituality and elevation of its design, the majesty and simplicity of its style, the agreement of its parts in the most unsuspecting manner, with its more than human efficacy on the hearts and consciences of men, do all concur to give us a very high idea of the New Testament: And I am persuaded, that the wiser and better any man is, and the more familiarly he converses with these unequalled books, the more will he be struck with this evidence. But these things in the general are better felt than expressed, and several of the arguments arise not from particular passages, but from the general tenor of the books; and consequently they cannot be judged of but by a serious and attentive perusal.

Dismissing therefore these topics, not with neglect but with the sincerest expressions of just and high veneration, I now proceed to that grand proof of the inspiration of the New Testament, which is derived from the credibility of its leading facts; which having so fully illustrated in the sermons referred to above, I think I have a just title to assume as the foundation of what farther reasonings may occur.

Admitting this great principle, it is undeniably certain,—That Jesus of Nazareth was a most extraordinary person:—That after having been foretold by many prophets in distant periods of time, he was at length, agreeably to the repeated declaration of an angel, first to a priest ministering at the golden altar in the temple, and then to his mother, conceived by a virgin of David's family:—That his birth was proclaimed by a choir of angels, who celebrated it in celestial anthems as the foundation of peace on earth, and the most glorious display of divine benevolence to men:—That before his public appearance, a person greater than any of the prophets, and whose birth had also been foretold by an angel, was sent to prepare his way:—That, on his being baptized, he was anointed with a wonderful effusion of the Spirit, poured down upon him by a visible symbol; and that the efficacy of this sacred agent, continually residing in him, was apparent throughout the whole course of his ministry, not only in the unspotted sanctity of his life, amidst a thousand most violent temptations, and in the bright assemblage of virtues and graces which shone in it, with a lustre before unknown, and since absolutely unparalleled; but also in a multitude of various works of wonder and mercy, which he miraculously wrought on those whose diseases were of the most desperate and incur-

able nature, and even on the dead, whom that almighty voice of his, which had driven out the fiercest infernal spirits, and calmed the rage of tempests, did with serene majesty awaken into life, as from a slumber.—It is also on the same foundation certain, That this illustrious person, having by the malice of his enemies been most unjustly and cruelly put to death, did on the third day arise from the dead:—And that, after having given to his disciples the most abundant proofs of that important fact, he at length ascended to heaven gradually in their sight; angels appearing to assure them, he should as visibly descend from thence to the universal judgment, the administration of which he had declared to be committed to him.

I must freely declare, that had I been an entire stranger to the sacred story, and proceeded no farther in it than this, (supposing me firmly to have believed all these wonderful things, though delivered in the shortest abstract that could have been made of them,) I should readily have concluded, that this extraordinary person, being sent (as it plainly appears from the history that he was) with a divine revelation for the benefit of all nations and of all ages, had taken care to leave some authentic records of the doctrine which he taught. And if I had farther found, that he had left no such records written by himself, I should naturally have concluded, that he took effectual care that some of his followers should be enabled to deliver down to posterity the system of religion which he taught in the most accurate manner; with all such extraordinary assistance from God as the nature of the subject required, in order to rendering their accounts exact. And I believe every reasonable man would draw this inference; because it is very apparent that the great end of this vast and astonishing apparatus, (for vast and astonishing it would appear, if what relates to Jesus alone were taken into the survey,) must in the nature of things be frustrated, if no such records were provided; it being morally impossible that unwritten tradition should convey a system of religion pure and uncorrupted, even to the next generation; and much more, that it should so convey it to the end of time. And it would seem, so far as we can judge, by no means worthy the divine wisdom to suffer the good effects of such a great and noble plan to be lost for want of so easy an expedient; especially since men of the age and country in which these things happened, were not only blessed with the use of letters, but were remarkable for their application to them, and for great proficiency in various branches of learning. And if I should not only have an abstract of this history of Jesus, which I judged credible, but should also be so happy as to have the Four Gospels in my hand, with convincing evidences of their being genuine, (which we here suppose,) I should on these principles assuredly argue, That not only the leading facts, but likewise the system of doctrines and discourses delivered in them, might entirely

be depended upon: Nor could I conceive the truth of such doctrines and discourses to be separable from the general truth of the leading facts referred to above; having (as I here suppose) proper evidences to convince me, that the penmen of these books were the persons by whom the memory of these events was to be delivered down to posterity; which is a farther principle that none of common sense and modesty can pretend to contest: none appearing as their competitors whose pretensions are worthy to be named.

But my apprehension of the full authenticity and credibility of these writers would, on the supposition I am here making, greatly increase, as I proceeded to that excellent and useful book which the good providence of God has now given me an opportunity of illustrating; the Acts of the holy Apostles; since I learn from thence, that, in a very few days after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, the Spirit of God was, according to his promise, poured out upon his apostles in an abundant manner, attended with the visible appearance of a lambent celestial flame; and that, in consequence of this amazing unction, the poor fishermen of Galilee, and their companions, were in a moment enabled to speak, with the greatest readiness and propriety, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Coptic, Persian, and a variety of other languages, the first rudiments of which they had never learnt, and also to perform all kinds of miracles, equal to those of their Master, and in some circumstances superior to them. My veneration for the writings of these men (and I here suppose, I know those of the New Testament to be so,) must be unparalleled, when I think who and what they were; and I am so struck with this plain, but divinely powerful argument, that I must entreat my reader to review with me, a little more particularly, some of the actions and circumstances of these holy men, to whose writings I am labouring to conciliate his unreserved regard.

Let them all be considered, as preaching the gospel in that extraordinary manner on the day of Pentecost, and a few days after, when some of their companions had been seized and threatened by the Sanhedrim, as anointed again with such an effusion of the Spirit, as shook the very house in which they were, and inspired them all at once with the same sublime hymn of praise. Let them be considered, as afterwards led out of prison by an angel, and commanded by him to go and preach the gospel in the temple, under the remarkable phraseology of the words of this life, as if the whole life and happiness of the human race depended on their knowing and receiving it. Nor let us here forget that extraordinary power, common to all the apostles, of communicating the miraculous gifts of the Spirit by the imposition of their hands. Had we nothing particular to say of any one, more than these grand things which we hear of them all, it

must surely command our reverence to their writings, and set them at a vast distance from any of merely human original.

But through the singular providence of God it hath so happened, that we have the most particular history of the lives of those apostles, to whose writings we are generally most indebted; I mean, John, Peter, and Paul.

With respect to John we know, that, besides the concern he had in the cure of the lame man, he was favoured with the visions of God in the isle of Patmos, where our Lord, after an abode of more than half a century on the throne of his glory at his Father's right hand; did him the unequalled honour to use him as his amanuensis or secretary, expressly dictating to him the letters he was pleased to send to the seven churches in Asia. How easily then may we suppose him so to have presided over his other writings, as to have secured him from mistakes in them!

Consider Peter, as striking Ananias and Sapphira dead with a word; as curing, by the like powerful word, one cripple at Jerusalem, and another at Lydda, and calling back Dorcas even from the dead. Let us view him in that grand circumstance, of being marked out so particularly by an angel to Cornelius, and sent to him as the oracle of God himself, from whom that worthy and honourable person was to hear words, by which he and all his house should be saved; and after this let us view him, as once more delivered out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews, by an angel, who struck off his chains, and opened the doors of his prison the very night before he was to have been executed. And let any one, with these particulars in his eye, added to the foregoing in which he shared with all his brethren, say, what more could be necessary to prove the divine inspiration of what he taught, so far as inspiration was requisite to render it entirely authentic; or let any one farther say, upon what imaginable pretence the authority of his writings can be denied, if that of his preaching be granted.

And to mention no more, let Paul, that great scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven, to whose pen we owe so many invaluable epistles be considered in the same view; and let us endeavour to impress our minds with the various scenes through which we know he passed, and the distinguished favours with which his Master honoured him, that we may judge, how we are to receive the instructions of his pen. Let us therefore think of him, as so miraculously called by the voice of Christ to the profession of his gospel, when he was persecuting it even to the death; as receiving a full and distinct revelation of that glorious, but to him quite unknown gospel, by the immediate inspiration of its divine author, which is a fact he expressly witnesses, and in which he could not possibly be mistaken. Think of the lustre of those astonishing works which shone round him wherever he went, and of those wrought in his favour, which shewed him so emi-



nently the care of Heaven: daemons ejected; distempers cured, sometimes with a touch, and sometimes without, by a garment sent from him to the patient; his motions guided from place to place by a divine oracle; Elymas struck blind for opposing him; his hands loosed by an earthquake; his strength and vigour instantaneously restored, when the rage of the mutable and barbarous populace at Lystra had stoned him and left him for dead; and to add no more, his safety in a shipwreck, with that of near three hundred more in the same vessel for his sake, promised by an angel, and accomplished without the loss of a single person, when they had expected nothing but an universal ruin. Let us, I say, think of Paul in these circumstances; and with these facts full in our view, let us judge, whether it is at all probable, yea whether it be morally possible, that a man, sent out and attended with such credentials as these, should be so left of God, amidst all these tokens of his constant care, as to mingle error with sound doctrine, and his own fancies with the divine revelations, which we are sure he received; or whether, if he were not left to such effects of human frailty in his preaching, but might have been regarded by his hearers with entire credit, he would be left to them in those writings by which he was (as it were) to preach to all future generations of men from one end of the world to the other, and by which, being dead, he yet speaketh, in all languages, and to all Christian assemblies.

I cannot forbear thinking this plain argument, so well adapted to popular use, abundantly sufficient to carry conviction to every candid mind, in proportion to the degree of its attention and penetration. And I am almost afraid, that some should think I have bestowed an unnecessary labour, thus particularly to state a matter, which hath such a flood of light poured in upon it, from almost every page of the sacred story. But I have been obliged, in the course of this exposition, to meditate much on these facts; and under the deep impression I could not but speak, as out of the fulness of my heart.

Yet after all I have already said, I should be very unjust to this argument, if I did not endeavour to represent to my reader, how much it is strengthened on the one hand by the express and comprehensive promises which our Redeemer made to his apostles, and on the other by the peculiar language in which the apostles themselves speak of their preaching and writings, and the high regard they challenge to each; a regard, which nothing could justify them in demanding, but a consciousness that they were indeed under a full inspiration.

The promises of our Lord Jesus Christ must undoubtedly have a very great weight with all that have reflected on that indisputable testimony, which God himself bore to him in numberless

instances. And therefore, though they are so very well known, I must beg leave not only to refer to them, but to recite the chief of them at large; and I entreat the reader to consider, how he can reconcile them with an apprehension, that our Lord Jesus Christ did at the same time intend to leave the persons to whom he made such promises, liable to mistake both in facts and doctrines, and being deceived themselves, to mislead such as should depend upon their testimony, where they professed themselves to be thoroughly informed.

In that copious and excellent discourse, which our Lord addressed to the apostles, just before he quitted the guest chamber to go to the garden of Gethsemane, (that is, but a few hours before his death,) the grand consolation he urges to his sorrowful disciples is this, that he would send his spirit upon them. The donation of which Spirit is represented, as the first fruits of Christ's intercession, when after so long an absence, and such terrible sufferings, he should be restored to his Father's embraces. This is spoken of as the first petition preferred by him, and the first favour granted to his church for his sake: (John xiv. 16.) I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. Yea, Christ declares, (and he could not be mistaken in it,) that the agency of this spirit should so abundantly counter-balance all the advantages they received from his bodily presence, that, strong as their affection to him was, they would in that view have reason to rejoice in his leaving them: (John xvi. 7.) I tell you the truth, that is, I say what may be depended upon as a most important certainty, (and very important indeed such a representation was;) it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. Now from these expressions, were they alone, I think we might probably infer, that the apostles, after having received the Spirit, would be in no more danger of erring in their writings, than they would have been, if Jesus himself had been always near them, to inform them concerning any fact or doctrine, of which they might have occasion to speak.

This is farther confirmed by the title which is given him no less than thrice in this discourse, the Spirit of truth, almost in a breath with these great and weighty circumstances, that he should abide with them for ever; (John xiv. 16, 17.) that he should guide them into all truth; that he should teach them all things, yea, and shew them things to come; (John xvi. 13.) which must surely secure them from any danger of erring in relating things that were past. But, lest any should be perverse enough to dispute the consequence, our Lord particularly mentions one effect of the Spirit's operation, that they should thereby be fitted to bear a testimony to him, as those who had long been conversant with him, and whose memories were miraculously assisted

in recollecting those discourses which they had heard from him: (John xv. 26, 27.) When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also (being so assisted) shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. And again, (John xiv. 26.) The holy Ghost shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, what-soever I have said unto you.

Soon after this, our Lord, on the very day in which he rose from the dead, in a dependence on the aids of this promised Spirit, gives them a commission, which nothing but its plenary inspiration could have answered, or have qualified them to fulfil; for coming to them, he declares, (John xx. 21.) As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you: And upon this he breathed upon them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted: and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained: which, whether it signifies a power of inflicting and removing miraculous punishments, or of authoritatively declaring that sins were in particular instances forgiven or retained, must either way suppose such a constant presence of Christ with them, as it is hard, or rather impossible, to reconcile with supposing them to err in what they wrote for the instruction of the church in succeeding ages.

These are the grand passages, on which I rest this part of the argument; yet I think, I ought not to omit those, in which Christ promises them such extraordinary assistance of the Spirit, while defending his cause in the presence of magistrates; and it is the more proper to mention them, as the language in which they are made is so remarkable. On this occasion then he tells them, (Mat. x. 19, 20.) When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. May we not therefore on the same principles conclude, that, when they were to write for the use of all future generations of Christians, it was not so much they who wrote, as the Spirit of the Father, who in effect wrote by them, and as it were dictated to them? For the occasion will surely appear as important in one instance as in the other; or rather much more important in the latter than in the former, as an error in their writings would have a much more extensive and lasting influence, than a slip of their tongues in a transient pleading before a magistrate. Nay, to give this argument the greatest possible weight, we find that the same promise was made, almost in the very same words, (Luke xii. 11, 12,) to persons in the dignity of their office inferior to the apostles; I mean, to the seventy; which might have entitled their writings to such a regard, as I am now labouring to engage to those of their superiors.

I shall only farther remind the reader, that our Lord, when

just ascending to heaven, refers to that effusion of the Spirit which was quickly after to happen, even before they departed from Jerusalem, as the æra, from whence the grand accomplishment of the promises relating to the aids of the Spirit was to be dated. (See Luke xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4, 5.) And, as all the apostolical writings which now remain were written several years after that event, it plainly proves, they lie within the period in which they were to expect all the assistance which these promises import.

The most plausible objection, which can be urged against the application of these promises to the matter now before us, is this; "That these promises only refer to the supernatural assistance, granted to the apostles on great and pressing occasions; but that they might easily, without such assistance, have written a true account of the life and preaching of Christ, and of such other facts as they record, and consequently, that their historical writings at least, how credible soever we suppose them, might be drawn up without any inspiration at all."

To this I might reply, that if it be allowed that the apostles, in the books which we have been endeavouring to explain, wrote the exact truth, and that in their epistles they have made a right and unerring representation of the revelation with which they were charged, so that we may safely make their writings a rule both of faith and practice, the remaining question would only be about the propriety of using the word inspiration when speaking of them, and therefore would, on the principles I have laid down above, be comparatively of small importance. Yet I think it easy, in that view of the question, to prove that these writings could not have been entirely credible, if they had not been written under such a full inspiration of superintendency, as is stated in the first part of this discourse.

I do indeed allow, and no candid man can dispute it, that the penmen of the New Testament, supposing them able to write at all, might merely by the natural exercise of their memory, under the direction of the common sense and reason of men, have given us a plain, faithful, and very useful account of many extraordinary scenes, to which they had been witnesses during the time they conversed with Jesus on earth, and in which they were active after his ascension. And I cannot forbear saying, that supposing the truth of the grand leading facts, (as, that Jesus of Nazareth taught a doctrine confirmed by miracles, and was himself raised from the dead,) I should have esteemed such writings, supposing them merely an honest account of what such men must have known, to be beyond all comparison the most valuable records of antiquity. But, when these writings came to be perused, it is evident to me from the particular contents of them, that honest and worthy men would never have pretended

to have written in such a manner, if they had not been conscious of superior direction, and extraordinary divine influence.

For the historians of whom we speak do not merely give us a very circumstantial account of actions, as what journies Christ made, what miracles he performed, in what manner he was received, where and how he died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven; but they do also, as we may reasonably expect they should, give us an account of the doctrine he taught; and indeed, if they had not done this, the knowledge of his story, amazing as it is, would have been but an unprofitable amusement to us. Nor do they content themselves with giving us a short summary of his doctrine, or a view of the religion he intended to introduce, as the general result of their having attended so long on his instructions; but they presume to tell us his very words. And here, they do not merely relate some short sayings, the remarkable poignancy of which, or their propriety to the circumstances in which they were spoken, might have struck the memory with a peculiar force; but they insert long discourses, which he made on public occasions, though they do not pretend, that he left any copies of them, or that they themselves took them from any written memoirs whatsoever; and it is worth our notice, that (besides the many shorter sayings and replies with which the history is interspersed,) near one half of the four gospels is taken up with the insertion of these discourses.\*

Now it was highly necessary, that, if these speeches of our Lord were recorded at all, they should be recorded with great exactness; for many of them relate to the system of doctrines which he came to teach, and others of them are predictions of future events, referring to a great variety of curious circumstances, where a small mistake might greatly have affected the credit of the prediction, and with it the cause of Christianity in general: so that common prudence would have taught the apostles to wave them, rather than pretend to deliver them to posterity, if they had not been sure they could have done it exactly.

But how could they have expected to have done this, merely by the natural strength of their own memories, unless we imagine each of them to be a prodigy in that respect, to which no one of them makes the least shadow of a pretence? It is well known, that several of those speeches of Christ which Matthew and John give us, (not now to mention the other evangelists,) contain several pages, and some of them cannot be deliberately and decently read over in less than a quarter of an hour. Now I believe, if my reader would make the experiment on any thing of that length which he read or heard yesterday, or even on one of those

\* If my computation does not deceive me, 93 of our 903 sections are taken up thus; and some of them are long sections too; and the number of verses, contained in these discourses, to that of the whole, is as about 1700 to 3779, which is the number of verses in the four gospels.

discourses of Christ, though perhaps he has read or heard it an hundred times, he would find, on a careful examination, many things would probably be omitted; many transposed; many expressed in a different manner; and were he to write a copy of such a discourse from his memory, and then critically to compare it with the original, he would find the sense, in many particulars where there was some general resemblance, more different than he could perhaps have imagined; and variations, which at first seemed but inconsiderable, would appear greatly to affect the sense, when they came to be more nicely reviewed. If this would so probably be the case with ninety-nine out of a hundred of mankind, (and I certainly speak within compass,) when a discourse to be repeated had been delivered but a day or an hour before, what could be expected from the apostles with an interval of so many years, and especially from John, who has, in proportion to the length of his gospel, recorded more speeches than any of the rest, and wrote them (if we may credit the most authentic tradition,) more than half a century after our Lord's ascension?

This argument would have great weight, with relation to a man whose life was ever so peaceful, and his affairs contracted in the narrowest sphere: But it will be greatly strengthened, when we come to consider the multitude and variety of scenes, and those too the most interesting that can be imagined, through which the apostles passed. When we consider all their labours, and their cares; the journies they were continually taking; the novelty of objects perpetually surrounding them; and, above all, the persecutions and dangers to which they were daily exposed; and the strong manner in which the mind is struck, and the memory of past circumstances erased, by such occurrences; I cannot conceive that any reader will be so unreasonable, as to imagine these things could have been written with any exactness by the apostles, if they had not been miraculously assisted in recording them. And what is particularly mentioned by the last of these writers, of the promised agency of the Spirit to bring to their remembrance all things they had heard from Christ himself, (John xiv. 26.) must I think incontestibly prove that this was one purpose for which the Spirit was given; and therefore, we may be sure that it was a purpose for which it was needed.

I hope I have by this time convinced my reader, that it is agreeable to the other circumstances of the apostles' story, and to the promises which our Lord so largely and so frequently made to them, (and the frequent repetition of the promise strongly intimates the importance of it,) to suppose that they were indeed favoured with a full inspiration in their writings.

But, to complete the argument, it must be observed, That these holy men (for such the history plainly shews them to have been) assume to themselves such an authority, and speak of their

own discourses and writings in such peculiar language, as nothing but a consciousness of such inspiration could warrant, or even excuse.

To make us duly sensible of the force of this argument, let us hear Paul, Peter, and John, and we shall find the remark applicable to them all; though, as St. Paul wrote much more than either of the latter, we may naturally expect to find the most frequent instances of it in his writings.

When the apostle Paul had taken notice to the Corinthians, that the subject of his preaching was the wisdom of God in a mystery, and related to things which transcended the sense and imagination of men, he adds, (1 Cor. ii. 10,) But God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God; And again, (ver. 12.) We have received, not the Spirit of the world, so as to act in that artful way which a regard to secular advantage dictates; but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are freely given us of God. Now, it is natural to conclude from hence, that this knowledge being given them, not merely or chiefly for themselves, but for the church, (in which view they spake of themselves and their office as the gift of God to the church; compare Eph. iv. 11, 12; and 1 Cor. iii. 21—23.) they should be assisted to communicate it in a proper manner; since otherwise the end of God in giving it to them would be frustrated. But the apostle does not content himself with barely suggesting this, but he asserts it in the most express terms; (1 Cor. ii. 13.) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, that is, not with a vain ostentation of human eloquence, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual, or, as some would render and paraphrase it, adapting spiritual expressions to spiritual things.\* And in the close of the chapter, when with a noble freedom, in a consciousness of the distinguished character he bore, he puts the question to the whole world besides; Who hath known the mind of the Lord? he adds, But we have the mind of Christ. Which last clause plainly determines the sense in which we are to take those words at the close of chap. vii. And I think also that I have the Spirit of God;† that is, “I certainly appear to have it;” or, “it is evident and apparent, that my pretences to it are not a vain boast.” For, after having so expressly asserted it just above, none can imagine, he meant here to insinuate, that he was uncertain whether he had it or not. He appeals therefore to those whose gifts were most eminent, to dispute it if they could: (1 Cor. xiv. 37.) If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, that is, if he have ever so good evidence that he really is so, (for it cannot be thought he meant

\* Πνευματικαῖς πνευματικῶν συγκρινοῦντες.  
† Δεδοκῆκα δὲ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχειν.

to appeal only to those who falsely pretended to these endowments) let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.—In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (chap. ii. 10,) he speaks of forgiving offenders in the person of Christ; and amidst the humblest acknowledgments of his own insufficiency, boasts a sufficiency of God who had made him an able minister of the New Testament. (2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.) Of which he was so thoroughly sensible, that in the first epistle which he ever wrote (so far as scripture informs us) to any of the churches, I mean, his First Epistle to the Thesalonians, he ventures to say, (chap. iv. 8,) he that despiseth, that is, (as the context plainly implies,) he that despiseth or rejecteth what I now write, despiseth not man, only or chiefly, but God, who hath given us his Holy Spirit: Which manifestly intimates, that what he wrote was under supernatural divine guidance and influence; as in the second verse of that chapter he had spoken of commandments which he had given them by the Lord Jesus Christ, just as he afterwards declared to the Corinthians, (2 Cor. xiii. 3,) how well he was able to give proofs of Christ's speaking in him.—In his epistle to the Galatians, the apostle solemnly assures them (Gal. i. 11, 12,) that the gospel which he had preached among them was not after man, that is, not of any human original; and he gives this substantial proof of it, that he was himself taught it, no otherwise than by the immediate revelation of Jesus Christ. Agreeably to which assertion, when he gives the Corinthians an account of the institution and design of the Lord's supper, he says in so many words, (1 Cor. xi. 23,) that he had received of the Lord what he delivered unto them; that is, that he had his notion of that sacrament, and of the actions and words of Christ on which it was founded, by an immediate inspiration from him, or in the language we have used above, by suggestion. And he speaks of his brethren, as well as of himself, in these terms, (Eph. iii. 3, 5,) that the mystery of Christ which was before unknown, that is, the right of the Gentiles, on believing the gospel, to full communion with the Christian church, was made known to the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, and not merely by the natural recollection of what they had heard Christ say, or by their own reasoning upon it.

Most agreeable to this is the strain of Peter, who in one epistle joins the commandment of the apostles with the words of the holy prophets: (2 Pet. iii. 2;) and mentions the epistles of Paul with other scriptures, (ver. 15, 16,) no doubt in allusion to the sacred oracles of the Old Testament, which so generally went by that name. And in his other epistle he insists strenuously upon it, that the gospel was preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, in exact conformity to the prophetic oracles of former ages, not understood by those who uttered them; a circumstance, in this connection, highly worthy of our remark:



And he seems strongly to intimate, that the angels themselves did by these apostolical preachings learn some things which, with all their superior faculties, they did not before so fully know; Which things, says he, the angels desire to look into. (1 Pet. i. 12.) As Paul had also said, that to the principalities and powers in heavenly places was made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. Eph. iii. 10.

To conclude this argument, St. John, remarkable as he was for his singular modesty and ingenuity of temper, does not only tell us, that Jesus Christ shewed him the revelation, (Rev. i. 1.) but speaks in his epistle of an unction poured out from the Holy One, by which they knew all things. (1 John ii. 20.) And in another passage, he in effect asserts, that he had, in concurrence with his brethren, given such abundant proof of his being under a divine influence and direction in his teaching, whether by word or letter, that an agreement or disagreement with his doctrine was to be made the standard by which they might judge of truth or error, and obedience or disobedience to his injunctions the test of a good or a bad man; which is considerably more than merely asserting the fullest inspiration. (1 John iv. 6.) We are of God: He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us; hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

I might here add, if it were necessary, the several passages of the New Testament in which the gospel preached by the apostles is called the gospel of God; (such as 2 Cor. xi. 7; 1 Tim. i. 11, and the like;) But I omit them, as the stress of the controversy does undoubtedly rest on these I have mentioned; and the importance of the question must be my defence, for so large an enumeration of texts which are so well known.

I shall only remind my reader, in a few words, of those many passages in which the gospel, as preached by the apostles, is so evidently equalled with, yea, and preferred to, the law given by Moses, and the messages brought to the Jews by the succeeding prophets. These afford a further illustration of this argument, which will appear with very considerable weight, when we reflect on the high opinion they had of the Old Testament, and the honourable terms in which they speak of it, as the word and oracles of God, (Rom. iii. 2.) as given by his inspiration, (2 Tim. iii. 16.) and as that which holy men spake, as they were moved, or borne on [*πνευματικῶς*] by the Holy Ghost. (2 Pet. i. 21.) None can fail of observing, that they quote its authority on all occasions as decisive; yea, our Lord himself strongly intimates, not only the strict truth of the whole, but (which is much more) that it were intolerable to suppose it chargeable with any impropriety of expression: for this must be the sense of those remarkable words, (John x. 35.) that the scripture cannot be broken; and the whole force of our Lord's argument depends upon interpreting them thus. I might argue at large the improbability, and indeed the

great absurdity of supposing, that such assistances were given to Moses and the prophets, as to make their writings an infallible rule of faith and practice, and that the subjects of God's only begotten Son, and the grand minister in his kingdom, should be left destitute of equal assistance in their work and writings. I think the argument would be unanswerable, if considered apart: But I now mention it in another view, as illustrating the persuasion the apostles had of their own inspiration, when they speak of their teachings and decisions as equally authentic with those of the illustrious prophets, for whom they had so great and so just a regard.

I am fully satisfied that this last argument, from the manner in which the apostles speak of themselves in their writings will strike the reader in proportion to the degree in which he reflects upon the true character of these excellent men, and especially upon that modesty and humility in which they bore so bright and so lovely a resemblance of their divine Master. Let him ask himself, what he would think of any minister of Christ now, supposing him ever so eminent for learning, wisdom, and piety, that should assume to himself such an authority? Suppose such a man, under the influence of no miraculous guidance, to say, not with reference to what he might quote from others, but with regard to his own dictates, "The things which I write unto you, are the commandments of the Lord: He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God: We have the mind of Christ; and he that beareth not us, that receiveth not our dictates in religion, is not of God:" Suppose I say, such language as this to be used publicly by any Christian minister now on earth, and you must necessarily suppose his character from that very hour overthrown. The whole world would immediately join in loudly demanding miraculous proofs to verify such assertions; or in condemning, with just indignation, such a claim unsupported by them, as an unpardonable lording it over men's faith and conscience, and thrusting themselves into their Master's throne. Let us not then charge the holy apostles with a conduct, of which we should not suspect any wise and good man now upon the face of the earth; and which if we saw in any of our friends, our charity and respect for them would incline us to inquire after some marks of lunacy in them, as its best excuse.

I have now given an easy and popular view of the principal arguments for the inspiration of the New Testament,\* on which my own faith in that important doctrine rests; and such an one as I hope by the divine blessing may be useful to others. I shall not enter into a particular consideration of the several objec-

\* I was desired by a friend, for whose piety and good sense I have a very great regard, to add a note here on the inspiration of the Old Testament; but, as it would require a large one, and might perhaps interrupt the reader, I choose to throw it into a Postscript at the end of this Dissertation.

tions against it, which chiefly arise from texts of scripture, in which some pretend to find, that the apostles were actually mistaken. I have considered most of these objections already, in my notes on the texts from whence they are taken: For almost all of them relate to passages in the historical books, and I don't know that I have omitted any of them; but have every where given (though as briefly as I could) such solutions as appeared to me in conscience satisfactory, though I have not stood formally to discuss them as objections against the inspiration of those books.

The reader will observe, that very few instances have occurred, in which I have judged it necessary to allow an error in our present copies: But as in those few instances the supposed change of a word or two makes the matter perfectly easy, I think it most respectful to the sacred writings to account for the seeming difficulty thus, and to impute it to the transcribers; (though it is certain some of these mistakes, supposing them such, did happen very early;) because, as Mr. Seed very properly expresses it in his excellent sermon on this subject,\* (which, since I wrote the former part of this dissertation, fell into my hands,) “a partial  
“inspiration is to all intents and purposes no inspiration at all:  
“For,” as he justly argues against the supposition of any mixture of error in these sacred writings, “mankind would be as  
“much embarrassed to know what was inspired, and what was  
“not, as they could be to collect a religion for themselves; the  
“consequence of which would be, that we are left just where  
“we were, and that God put himself to a great expence of miracles to effect nothing at all: A consequence highly derogatory  
“and injurious to his honour.”

The arguments brought from a few passages in the epistles, to prove that the apostles did not think themselves inspired, weak as they are, will be considered if God permit, in their proper places. At present I shall content myself with referring the reader to Dr. Whitby, who I think has given a satisfactory solution to them all

There are other objections of a quite different class, with which I have no concern; because they affect only such a degree of inspiration as I think it not prudent, and am sure it is not necessary, to assert. I leave them therefore to be answered by those, if any such there be, who imagine that Paul would need an immediate revelation from heaven, and a miraculous dictate of the Holy Ghost, to remind Timothy of the cloak and writings which he left at Troas, or to advise him to mingle a little wine with his water.

Waving therefore the farther discussion of these topics, on which it would be more easy than profitable to enlarge, I shall conclude this dissertation with a reflection or two of a practical

\* See Mr. Seed's Sermon, Vol. II. p. 322.

nature, into which I earnestly intreat the reader to enter with a becoming attention.

Let me engage him seriously to pause and consider, what sort of an impression it ought to make upon us, to think that we have such a book; a book written by a full divine inspiration: That amidst all the uncertain variety of human reasonings and conjectures, we have a celestial guide through the labyrinth: That God hath condescended to take care, that we should have a most authentic and unerring account of certain important, though very distant facts, many of which were wrought with his own hand; and, with these facts, should have a system of most weighty and interesting doctrines, to the truth of which he makes himself a witness. Such a book must, to every considerate person, appear an inestimable treasure; and it certainly calls for our most affectionate acknowledgment, that God should confer such a favour on any of his creatures, and much more on those who, by abusing in too many instances their natural light, had made themselves so utterly unworthy of supernatural.

From this view of the inspiration of scripture we may also infer, our obligation to study it with the greatest attention and care; to read it in our closets and our families; and to search in the most diligent and impartial manner into its genuine sense, design, and tendency; which is in the main so evident, that no upright heart can fail of understanding it, and every truly good heart must delight to comply with it. This is indeed a most important inference, and that without which all our convictions of its divine authority will only condemn us before God and our own consciences. Let us therefore always remember, that in consequence of all these important premises we are indispensably obliged to receive, with calm and reverend submission, all the dictates of scripture; to make it our oracle; and, in this respect, to set it at a due distance from all other writings whatsoever: as it is certain there is no other book in the world that can pretend to equal authority, and produce equal or comparable proofs to support such a pretension. Let us measure the truth of our own sentiments, or those of others, in the great things which scripture teaches, by their conformity to it. And O that the powerful charm of this blessed book might prevail to draw all that do sincerely regard it into this centre of unity! That dropping those unscriptural forms which have so lamentably divided the church, we might more generally content ourselves with the simplicity of divine truths as they are here taught, and agree to put the mildest and kindest interpretation we can, upon the language and sentiments of each other. This is what I cannot forbear inculcating again and again, from a firm persuasion that it is agreeable to the Spirit of the gospel, and pleasing to its great author: And I inculcate it in this place, and at this time,

with peculiar affection, as the providence of God around us calls us loudly to do all we can with a safe conscience to promote a union among Protestants. And I heartily pray, that our mutual jealousies and prejudices, which some are so unseasonably labouring to exasperate, may not provoke God to drive us together by a storm of persecution; if peradventure the bond of suffering together may be strong enough, to bind those whom the endearments of the same Christian profession, the same rule of faith, of manners, and of hope, have not yet been able to unite.

On the whole, let me most affectionately invite and entreat every reader, whatsoever his rank in life, or his proficiency in learning may be, seriously to consider the practical design of these sacred oracles, the sense and authority of which I have been endeavouring to explain and assert. It is indeed a mystery in divine Providence, that there should still remain so much difficulty in them, as that, in many points of doctrine, thoughtful, serious, and, I trust, upright men should form such different opinions concerning the interpretation of so many passages, and the justice of consequences drawn from them on the one side, and on the other. But of this there can be no controversy. "That the great design of the New Testament (in delightful harmony with the Old,) is to call off our minds from the present world, to establish us in the belief of a future state, and to form us to a serious preparation for it by bringing us to a lively faith in Christ, and, as the genuine effect of that to a filial love to God, and a fraternal affection for each other;" or in one word, (and a weightier and more comprehensive sentence was never written,) to teach us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Tit. ii. 12, 13.) To his almighty hand may our souls be committed by a faith productive of these glorious fruits, and under the sanctifying, quickening, and supporting influences of his Spirit, may we wait for his mercy unto eternal life! Then shall no terror of suffering, no allurements of pleasure, no sophistry of error, be able to seduce us; but, guided by that light and truth which shines forth in the sacred pages, we shall march on to that holy hill, where, having happily escaped all the dangers of that dark path which we now tread, we shall greet the dawning of an everlasting day, the arising of a day-star which shall go down no more. Amen!

## POSTSCRIPT.

*A Sketch of the arguments, by which the inspiration of the Old Testament may be proved in the easiest method, and by the most solid and convincing evidence.*

**I**F the proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament be deduced in its full compass from its first principles, we must have recourse to a method, very nearly resembling that which is taken in the three Sermons referred to above, for proving the authority of the New; that is, we must first prove, That the books are genuine, and then, That the history which they contain is credible; from which premises the inspiration of the Old Testament may easily be inferred by a train of arguments, similar to that which we have pursued in the Dissertation above.

For proving the genuineness of the books, I should think it proper briefly to shew, (what I think hardly any will be so ignorant and confident as to deny,) that the Jewish religion is of considerable antiquity, and was founded by Moses about fifteen hundred years before Christ's time; and farther,——that the Jews, before and at the time of Christ, had books among them bearing the titles of those which make up what we Protestants, call the canonical books of the Old Testament;——and that these books, then received in the Jewish church, were the genuine works of the persons to whom they were respectively ascribed.——From hence it is easy farther to shew, that they have not suffered, and (considering what a guard the Jews and Christians were upon each other,) could not suffer any material alteration since; and consequently, that the Old Testament, as now extant in the Hebrew and Chaldee languages, is genuine, and in the main such as it originally was.

In order to prove its credibility from this established medium, we may prepare the way by shewing, that many material facts, which are there recorded, are also mentioned by very ancient heathen writers.——And it is yet more important to shew, as we very easily may, that there is room to go over the same leading thoughts, with those insisted upon in the second of the three Sermons mentioned above, and to argue the credibility of the story from the certain opportunities, which the writers had of informing themselves as to the certain truth of the grand facts which they assert, as having themselves been personally concerned

in them, and from those many marks of integrity and piety to be found in their writings, which may do as much as any thing of that kind can do, to obviate any suspicion of an intention to deceive.—We may here also advance farther, and demonstrate beyond all contradiction, that the facts asserted were of such a nature, as could not possibly have gained credit, had they been false; yet that they did gain most assured credit, of which the persons receiving these books gave the most substantial evidence that can be imagined, by receiving on the authority of these facts, a system of laws, which, though considered as to be divinely supported they were admirably wise, yet were of such a nature, that, without such an extraordinary Providence as nothing but an assurance of such an original could have warranted them to expect, they must necessarily have proved ruinous to the state they were intended to regulate and establish.\*

A farther and very noble evidence of the truth of the grand facts attested in the Old Testament, and of the inspiration of a considerable part of it, may be drawn from the consideration of those numerous and various predictions to be found in it, which refer to a multitude of events, several of them before utterly unexampled, which no human sagacity could possibly have foreseen, and which nevertheless happened exactly according to those predictions.†

Having advanced thus far, we may take up a set of arguments correspondent to those insisted on above, to prove from its genuineness and credibility, now supposed to be evinced, that the Old Testament was written by a superintendent inspiration: And this we may argue, not merely or chiefly from the tradition to this purpose, so generally and so early prevailing in the Jewish church, though that is considerable, nor even from those very signal and glorious internal evidences of various kinds, which every competent judge may easily see and feel, but from surveying the character and circumstances of the persons by whom the several books were written, in comparison with the genius of that dispensation under which they lived and wrote. This may, in all the branches of the argument, be proved in this way, with the greatest ease and strength concerning Moses and his writings: And, when the authority of the Pentateuch is established, that of the most material succeeding books stands in so easy and natural a connection with it, that I think few have been found, at least since the controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans, who have in good earnest allowed Moses to have been

\* The reader will easily imagine, I here refer especially to the laws, relating to letting all the land lie fallow together once in seven years, and two years together at every Jubilee, the desertion of their borders at the three great feasts, when all the males went up to the tabernacle or temple, and the disuse of cavalry; to omit some others.

† See Dr. Sykes's Connection.

a messenger from heaven, and denied the inspiration of the prophets, and of the books which we receive as written by them.

But it is obvious, that the illustration of all these propositions would be the work of a large volume, rather than of such a post-script to a dissertation, itself of so moderate a length. I have discussed them all with the most material objections which have been advanced against them, in that course of theological lectures, which I mentioned in the preface to the first volume, and which it is my continual care to render worthy the acceptance of the public in due time, by such alterations and additions as frequent reviews, in conjunction with what occurs to me in reading, conversation, or meditation, may suggest.

I shall conclude these hints with the mention of one argument for the inspiration of the Old Testament, entirely independent on all the former, which a few words may set in a convincing light, and which must be satisfactory to all who see the reasonableness of acquiescing in what I have urged above; I mean,—That the inspiration, and consequently the genuineness and credibility of the Old Testament, may be certainly inferred from that of the New,\* because our Lord and his apostles were so far from charging the scribes and Pharisees, (who on all proper occasions are censured so freely,) with having introduced into the sacred volume any merely human compositions, that, on the contrary, they not only recommend a diligent and constant perusal of these scriptures, as of the greatest importance to men's eternal happiness, but speak of them as divine oracles, and as written by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of the authors.

I desire that the following list of scriptures may be attentively consulted and reflected on in this view. I might have added a great many more, indeed several hundreds, in which the sacred writers of the New Testament argue from those of the Old in such a manner, as nothing could have justified but a firm persuasion that they were divinely inspired. Now as the Jews always

\* It may be objected to this, that the authority of the New Testament, as stated in the sermons referred to, and in most other defences of Christianity, is in part proved from the prophecies of the Old; so that the argument here urged would be circular. To which I would answer, (1.) That, if we were to take this medium alone, we must indeed abstract from the proof of Christianity all that branch of its evidence which grows from prophecies in the Old Testament; and then, all that arises from miracles, internal arguments, and the wonderful events, which have followed its first promulgation, would stand in their full force, first to demonstrate (I think, to high satisfaction) the divine original of the New Testament, and then to prove the authority of the Old; (2.) That most of the enemies of the Mosaic and Christian Revelations do nevertheless own those which we call the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament to be more ancient than the New; and on this foundation alone, without first taking for granted, that they are either inspired or genuine, we derive an argument for Christianity from their mere existence, and then may argue backward, that they were divinely inspired, and therefore genuine; and so, by a farther consequence, may infer from them the divine authority of the Mosaic religion, which they so evidently attest; which is an argument something distinct from the testimony of the authors of the New Testament, but important enough to deserve a mention.



allowed "that the testimony of an approved prophet was sufficient to confirm the mission of one who was supported by it," so I think every reasonable man will readily conclude, that no inspired person can erroneously attest another to be inspired; and indeed the very definition of plenary inspiration, as stated above, absolutely excludes any room for cavilling on so plain a head. I throw the particular passages, which I choose to mention, into the margin below;\* and he must be a very indolent inquirer into a question of so much importance, who does not think it worth his while to turn carefully to them, unless he has already such a conviction of the argument, that it should need no farther to be illustrated or confirmed.

\* John v. 39; Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10; Mark xii. 24; Luke x. 26, 27; Matt. v. 17, 18; xxi. 42; xxii. 29, 31, 43; xxiv. 15; xxvi. 54, 56; Luke i. 67, 69, 70; xvi. 31; xxiv. 25, 27; John x. 35; Acts ii. 10, 25; iii. 22, 24; iv. 25; xvii. 11; xviii. 24, 28; xxviii. 25; Rom. iii. 2, 10; ix. 25, 27, 29; x. 5, 11, 16; xv. 4; xvi. 26; 1 Cor. xi. 11; 2 Cor. iv. 13; vi. 16, 17; Gal. iii. 8; 1 Tim. v. 18; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16; Heb. i. 1, 5—13; iii. 7; Jam. ii. 8; iv. 5, 6; 1 Pet. i. 10—12; 2 Pet. i. 19—21.

## Numb. III.

*Advertisement relating to the following Table.*

AS I thought it would be acceptable to my readers, to have the contents of the several sections of this work (which must contain an abridgment of the evangelical history,) exhibited in one connected view as concisely as possible, I chose, for many obvious reasons, to dispose it into a Chronological Table.

So far as the harmony of the four evangelists, and the order of the facts mentioned in them, is in question, I have given my reasons for the present disposition in my notes on the several sections, whose connection is liable to the greatest disputes. But it would be a work of great additional labour, to enter into a discussion of the correspondence between the sacred chronology in this part of it, and the profane. Had I leisure and ability to canvass all that learned men have said in support of the different schemes they have advanced upon this head, I should think this Appendix to a Family Expositor a very improper place to attempt it, as such an inquiry must take up a great deal of room, and as it is an affair in which it is impossible that common readers should judge, and in which after all, I think, they have very little concern. And indeed, to say the truth, I much question whether on the most accurate inquiry it is possible absolutely to fix it, since if the very day of Herod's death could be determined, (which after all, I think, it cannot be,) there would still be room to debate, how long before that time Jesus was born, as also what distance of time there was between the first appearance of John the Baptist, and Christ's entering on his public ministry. One conjecture may seem more probable than another: but beyond conjecture, I think, none has attained; and the Chronology must vary with the diversity of that conjecture on these particulars.

The learned reader will immediately perceive, that, amidst the various hypothesis which would offer themselves here, I have taken the middle way, not only as in obscure cases I think that generally the safest, nor merely that his Table might in the main agree with those of our illustrious Chronologers, Bp. Pearson and Dr. Prideaux, to whose judgment on such questions I pay a very great deference; but chiefly as on the most exact and impartial examination I could form of the reasons and foundations, on which other critics proceed, in placing the chief events a few years higher or lower, (and it is well known, that but very few years can be in question,) I found them by no means satisfactory, and the former class much less so, than I imagined when I

began the first volume of this work, and before I had so carefully searched into some of the authorities.

I once thought of adding a few notes to this Table; but I found that, if I attempted any thing important, they must be so large as greatly to swell the bulk, and therefore I have waved it; and content myself with saying, That though I am not without my doubts as to several articles, I know not any scheme, which has on the whole stronger supports, and is liable to fewer objections.

There might have been several columns added to the Table, expressing the years of other celebrated æras corresponding with those here mentioned; but any one may easily supply these to himself when he recollects, that the first year of the common æra of Christ's birth, from which we reckon this the 1760th, was (according to the computation here received) the 4004th from the creation of the world, the 753d from the building of Rome, and the 4714th of the Julian period.

It may not be improper to repeat what I have observed elsewhere, that, according to Sir Isaac Newton's computation, the Jewish Passover happened A. D. 30, on Saturday, March 25.—A. D. 31, on Wednesday, March 28.—A. D. 32, on Monday, April 14.—A. D. 33, on Friday, April 3.—and A. D. 34, on Friday, April 23.

To this I shall only add, that Augustus, in whose days Christ was born, reigned after the defeat of Mark Antony at Actium 44 years.—Tiberius, after he had been colleague with Augustus in the empire about three years, became sole emperor on the death of Augustus, August 19, A. D. 14.—Caligula succeeded on the death of Tiberius, March 16, A. D. 37.—Claudius succeeded on the death of Caligula, Jan. 24, A. D. 41.—And Nero on the death of Claudius, October 13, A. D. 54, whose reign continued to June 9, A. D. 68, beyond the limits of this history.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

OF THE

*Several Events recorded in the History of the Evangelists, and Acts of the Apostles; containing also the Contents of the several Sections of this Work.*

|             |                                          | CONTENTS OF THE FIRST VOLUME. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|             | Before the common Era of Christ's birth. |                               | After Luke's preface, sect. 1, and John's account of the divinity of our blessed Redeemer, sect. 2; the historical facts follow in the order here represented.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| J. P. 4708. | 25 Augustus.                             | 6                             | The angel Gabriel appears to Zacharias, to give him notice of the approaching conception and birth of his son John the Baptist, § 3.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| J. P. 4709. | 26 Augustus.                             | 5                             | Six months after, he informs the Virgin Mary of the conception of Christ to be born of her, § 4.<br>Mary visits Elizabeth, and breaks out into a song of praise, § 5.<br>John the Baptist is born and circumcised, § 6; and Zacharias utters an inspired song of praise, § 7.<br>The suspicion of Joseph, occasioned by Mary's pregnancy, removed by the appearance of an angel, § 8.<br>The genealogy of Jesus Christ, § 9. |
| J. P. 4710. | 27                                       | 4                             | Jesus is born at Bethlehem, and his birth revealed to the shepherds: He is circumcised the eighth day, § 10.<br>The purification of Mary, the song of Simeon, and testimony of Anna, § 11.<br>The inquiry, worship, and return of the Magi, § 12; after which Jesus is carried into Egypt, and the infants at Bethlehem are massacred, § 13—                                                                                 |
| J. P. 4711. | 28                                       | 3                             | Herod dying, the holy family returns, and settles at Nazareth, § —13                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|                    |                                         |    |                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Augustus           | After the common Era of Christ's Birth. | 8  | Jesus at twelve years old goes up with his parents to the passover at Jerusalem, discourses with the doctors in the Temple, and returns to Nazareth, § 14. | J. P.<br>4721.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                    |                                         | 15 | 26                                                                                                                                                         | John the Baptist opens his ministry, and multitudes come to receive his baptism, § 15; to whom he addresses suitable admonitions, proclaims the approach of the Messiah, § 16, and gives a public testimony to the dignity of his person, § 17.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Tiberius with Aug. | Tiberius alone.                         | 29 | Jesus comes from Nazareth, and is baptized by John; the Spirit descends upon him, and a voice from heaven declares him to be the Son of God, § 18.         | J. P.<br>4742.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|                    |                                         | 16 | 30                                                                                                                                                         | <p>Jesus is led into the wilderness, where he fasts forty days, and is tempted by the devil, § 19.</p> <p>John is examined by the Jews, and declares he is not the Messiah, referring them to one incomparably superior to himself, § 20: Sees Jesus coming towards him, and bears a repeated testimony to him as the Lamb of God: upon which two of his disciples follow Jesus, and Andrew brings Peter to him, § 21.</p> <p>Jesus goes into Galilee, where he calls Philip and Nathaniel, § 22.</p> <p>Attends a marriage there at Cana, where he performs the miracle of turning water into wine, § 23.</p> <p>Makes a short visit to Capernaum, and from thence goes up to Jerusalem to the first Passover after his entrance on his ministry and drives the traders there out of the temple, § 24.</p> <p>His conference with Nicodemus, § 25, 26.</p> <p>Goes from Jerusalem into the land of Judea, and there baptizes, by his disciples: John hears of it, and rejoicing in it, gives his last public testimony to Jesus, § 27.</p> <p>John is cast into prison for his faithfulness in reproving Herod, § 28.</p> <p>Jesus, near the winter solstice, returns into Galilee through Samaria, confers with a woman, of Sichar, and spends two days there, § 29, 30.</p> <p>Comes into Galilee, and preaches there; and while at Cana, cures a nobleman's son who was dying at Capernaum, § 31.</p> |

Tiberius alone, 16,

Anno Dom. 30.

Preaches at Nazareth; but being rejected there, goes to settle for a while at Capernaum, § 32.

Preaches with great acceptance at Capernaum, and calls Peter, Andrew, James, and John, to a more stated attendance upon him, § 33, 34.

Casts out a devil in the synagogue at Capernaum, and cures Peter's mother-in-law, § 35.

The next morning, after retirement, he sets out on a circuit to the other cities of Galilee, and is followed by multitudes from various parts, § 36.

Preaches his celebrated sermon on the mount, § 37—43,

Descending from the mount, he cleanses a leper, and then withdraws into the wilderness to pray, § 44.

Returns to Capernaum, where he cures a man disabled by the palsy, and calls Mathew, § 45.

J. P.  
4744.

17

31

Goes up to his Second Passover at Jerusalem, where he cures the lame man at the pool of Bethesda on the sabbath, and vindicates that action before the Sanhedrim ist 46—48.

Returning into Galilee, he vindicates his disciples for rubbing out the ears of corn on the sabbath day, § 49; and on another sabbath cures a man with a withered hand, and justifies his healing on that day, § 50.

Multitudes follow him to the shore on his withdrawing to the sea of Galilee, whom he heals of all their diseases, and charges those that were possessed not to discover who he was, § 51.

Having spent the night in prayer on a mountain, he chooses the twelve apostles; and then comes down into the plain, where he works many miracles before the multitude, § 52; and repeats several passages which he had delivered in his sermon on the mount, § 53, 54.

Returns to Capernaum, and cures at a distance the centurion's servant who was sick of a palsy, § 55.

Going the next day to Nain, he raises the widow's son from the dead, § 56.

Answers the disciples of John, who came to ask him whether he was the Messiah, § 57; discourses to the multitude concerning John, § 58; and laments over the impenitent cities of Galilee, § 59.

Dines at a Pharisee's house, and vindicates the woman who anointed his feet there, § 60.

Makes a progress through every city in those parts

Tiberius 17.

Anno Dom. 31.

attended by the twelve, and certain pious women; answers the blasphemous Pharisees, who charged his miracles on a compact with Satan, cautions them against the unpardonable sin, and warns them of the danger of their sinful words, § 61, 62.

Upbraids the perverseness of the Pharisees, in demanding a sign from heaven; and delivers the parable of the relapsing dæmoniac, § 63.

Declares his resolution of persisting in his work, and his endeared affection to his obedient disciples, § 64.

Goes to the sea-side, and there delivers to the multitude the parable of the sower, § 65; which he explains to his disciples, § 66; delivers and explains the parable of the tares, § 67; and then adds those of the springing seed, the mustard seed, the leaven, the hid treasure, the pearl, and the net, § 68.

Having answered some that seemed disposed to follow him, he crosses the sea and stills a tempest, § 69.

Arriving at the country of the Gadarenes, he dispossesses two dæmoniacs; and permitting the dæmons to enter into a herd of swine, he is desired by the Gadarenes to depart, and crosses over to Capernaum, § 70.

Being entertained at Matthew's house, he justifies his conversing with publicans and sinners, and vindicates his disciples in omitting some austerities that were practised by others, § 71.

Having cured a woman of a flux of blood, he raises from the dead the daughter of Jairus, and performs some other miracles, § 72.

Goes from Capernaum to Nazareth, and being again rejected there, begins another circuit, § 73.

Sends out his twelve apostles with proper instructions to prepare his way; and, after this, they go and preach in different parts, § 74—76.

Herod hears of his fame, and suspects him to be John the Baptist risen from the dead, whom he had lately beheaded in prison, § 77.

18

32

The apostles meet him again, a little before another passover, and he retires with them to the desert of Bethsaida by sea: Multitudes flock to hear him, and he miraculously feeds five thousand: They would have made him king, but he obliges his disciples to take ship, and having dismissed the multitude retires to pray, § 78.

J. P.  
4745.

Tiberius 18.

Anno Dom. 32.

The disciples crossing the sea, are overtaken by a storm: Jesus comes to them walking on the sea, and stills the tempest; and landing near Capernaum, many are brought that were diseased, and he cures all that touch him, § 79.

Being followed by the multitude to Capernaum, he tells them of their worldly views in seeking him, declares himself to be the bread of life, and urges the necessity and benefit of feeding on him, § 80, 81.

The people murmur at his doctrine, and many of his hearers leave him: The apostles assure him of their continued fidelity, but he foretells the treachery of Judas, § 82.

The Pharisees blaming his disciples for eating with unwashed hands, he vindicates their neglect of human traditions, condemns the Pharisees for preferring them to the law of God, and inculcates the necessity of inward purity, § 83, 84.

About the time of this Third Passover, Jesus withdraws to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, where he casts out a demon from the daughter of a Syrophenician woman; and returning through the coasts of Decapolis to the sea of Galilee, cures a man deaf and dumb, § 85.

After many other amazing miracles, he feeds four thousand: and then takes ship with his disciples, and goes to Dalmanutha, in the coasts of Magdala, § 86.

Upbraids the Pharisees again for asking a sign from heaven, and cautions his disciples against their leaven and that of the Sadducees, § 87.

Heals a blind man at Bethsaida; and going from thence to Caesarea Philippi, acknowledges to his disciples that he is the Messiah, and commends Peter's confession of him under that character, § 88.

Foretells his approaching sufferings, rebukes Peter for being offended at the mention of them, and exhorts his followers to self-denial and a readiness for martyrdom, § 89.

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CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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Christ is transfigured, and discourses with his disciples concerning the expectation the Jews had of Elijah, § 90.



Tiberius 18.

Anno Dom. 32.

Descending from the mountain where he was transfigured, he casts out an obstinate dæmon, that had withstood the attempts of his disciples, § 91.

Continuing his progress through Galilee, he again warns his disciples of his approaching sufferings, at which they are offended, § 92—

Comes to Capernaum, and makes provision by a miracle to pay the tribute, §—92

Perceiving his disciples were contending who should be greatest, he recommends humility and mortification to them, § 93; advises how to deal with an offending brother, § 94, and urges forgiveness by the parable of the unmerciful servant, § 95.

Reproves John for rebuking one who cast out dæmons in his name, because not of their company, § 96.

Chooses the seventy, and sends them out to preach with large instructions, like those he had given to the twelve apostles, § 97.

Discourses with his brethren about his going up to the feast of tabernacles, and tarries some days after them in Galilee, § 98; Then goes up to Jerusalem about the middle of the feast, (which was in September,) and preaches in the temple, vindicating his own conduct, and asserting his divine mission, § 99.

The sanhedrim, alarmed at the regard the people shewed him, send officers to seize him; but he declares, they should not execute their purposes as yet, § 100; The officers admire his preaching, and return without him; which occasions a debate in the Sanhedrim between Nicodemus and his brethren, § 101.

Having spent the night in retirement, he returns in the morning to the temple, where he declines giving judgment in the case of the adulteress, § 102; Speaking of himself as the light of the world, he warns his hearers of the danger of infidelity, § 103; shews the vanity of depending on a descent from Abraham, § 104, and declares his own existence to be prior to that of Abraham; at which the Jews are so offended as to go about to stone him, but he miraculously escapes out of their hands, § 105.

Before he sets out on his last circuit through Galilee, the seventy return with joy, and report the success of their embassy, § 106.

Tiberius 18.

Anno Dom. 32.

Jesus answers the scribe, who inquired the way to life, and delivers the parable of the good Samaritan, § 107.

Leaving Jerusalem he comes to Bethany, where he commends Mary's attention to his word, as better than Martha's care to entertain him, § 108.

Being returned to Galilee, he gives his disciples several instructions relating to prayer, § 109.

Dining with a Pharisee, he admonishes him and his brethren of their guilt and danger, § 110; and afterwards cautions his disciples against hypocrisy, and the fear of man, § 111; declines to decide a case of property, and delivers the parable of the rich fool, § 112; repeating the cautions against covetousness which he had formerly given in the sermon on the mount, § 113; and urging them to watchfulness, in expectation of his second coming and of their last account, § 114.

Declares his desire of accomplishing his work, and warns his hearers of the danger of neglecting his message, § 115; urges the necessity of repentance, and delivers the parable of the barren fig-tree, § 117; then cures a crooked woman on the sabbath day, § 117; and continues his journey toward Jerusalem, not intimidated by the fear of Herod from pursuing his plan, § 118.

Being invited to dine with a Pharisee, he cures a man who had a dropsy, and vindicates his healing on the sabbath day, § 119; foretels in the parable of the great supper, the rejection of the Jews, and calling of the Gentiles, § 120; and urges the necessity of deliberate resolution in religion, § 121.

The publicans and sinners flocking to hear him, he delivers the parables of the lost sheep, and piece of money, § 122; that of the prodigal son, § 123, the unjust steward, § 124; the rich glutton and Lazarus, § 125; and concludes with exhorting his disciples to simplicity, forgiveness, and humility, § 126.

Passing through Samaria, as he was going up to the feast of dedication, he rebukes the intemperate zeal of James and John, and heals ten lepers, § 127.

As he was near Jerusalem, he warns the Jews against expecting a pompous appearance of the Messiah's kingdom, and foretels their approaching destruction, § 128; presses his disciples to perseverance in prayer by the parable of the importunate widow, and

Tiberius 18.

Anno Dom. 32.

recommends humility by that of the Pharisee and Publican, § 129.

Being come to Jerusalem at the feast of dedication in December, he opens the eyes of a man born blind, § 130; the man is examined by the Sanhedrim, and excommunicated; Jesus meets him, and declares himself to be the Son God, § 131.

Having admonished the Pharisees of their danger, he represents himself, first as the door of the sheepfold, § 132, then as the good shepherd of the flock, § 133; and discourses of his union with the Father, upon which the Jews attempt to seize him, and he retires beyond Jordan, § 134.

19

33

Jesus declares against divorces, § 135; blesses the little children, § 136; answers the young ruler, who applied so respectfully to him; discourses of the danger of riches, § 137; and warns the Jews not to envy the Gentiles being called to equal privileges with themselves, by the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, § 138.

Hearing of the sickness of Lazarus, he determines to return into Judea, § 139, where he raises Lazarus from the dead, § 140.

The Sanhedrim agreeing Jesus should be put to death, and publishing a proclamation against him, he retires to Ephraim, § 141.

Setting out on his last journey to Jerusalem, he tells his disciples what he should suffer there, rebukes the ambition of Zebedee's sons, and exhorts to humility, § 142.

Passing through Jericho, he cures the two blind men, and converts Zaccheus the publican, § 143: After which he delivers the parable of the ten pounds, and represents the vengeance he would take on his enemies, § 144.

He is entertained at Bethany, and his feet anointed by Mary: Many flock thither to see Lazarus, whom also the chief priests conspire to kill, § 145.

Christ rides in triumph to Jerusalem on the first day of the week, § 146. When he came near the city, he weeps over it, and at his entrance goes into the temple, which he vindicates a second time from the profanation of the traders, and performs several miracles there, § 147.

J. P.  
4746.

Tiberius 19.

Anno Dom. 33.

Discourses with some Greeks who came up to the Passover, and retires in the evening to Bethany, § 148.

Christ returns to Jerusalem the next morning, (that is, on Monday in the Passion week,) and by the way curses the barren fig-tree, § 149; visits the temple, and again reforms the abuses of the traders; the priests are exasperated, and he retires in the evening, § 150.

Returning to Jerusalem on Tuesday morning, the fig-tree is found withered away: Coming again into the temple, he confounds the members of the Sanhedrim who questioned his authority; utters the parable of the complaisant but disobedient son, § 151, and then that of the vineyard let out to husbandmen, § 152, and of the wedding feast and garment, § 153.

Confounds the attempt to ensnare him in the question about paying tribute, § 154; proves the resurrection against the Sadducees, § 155; answers the question as to the first commandment of the law, § 156; and repeats his charges and denunciations against the Pharisees, § 157, 158.

Going out of the temple, he applauds the liberality of a poor widow, § 159; foretells the destruction of Jerusalem, acquainting his disciples with the signs of its approach, and of his second coming, § 160—162; and urges the suddenness of his appearance, as an engagement to watchfulness, § 163; which he enforces by the parable of the ten virgins, § 164; and of the talents, § 165; concluding his discourse with a most affecting description of the last judgment, § 166.

The rulers contrive how they may seize Jesus: Judas makes an infamous contract to betray him: He retires at night to the mount of Olives, § 167.

Christ returns again on Wednesday to teach in the temple as before; but the particulars are not recorded, *ibid.*

On Thursday morning, he directs two of his disciples to go and prepare the Passover, which was his fourth and last Passover: He comes in the evening, and sits down with his apostles to that feast, § 168.

At the antepast, he rebukes their ambition, and washes their feet, § 169. At supper, he intimates who should betray him, and Judas upon this retires.

T'iberius 19.

Anno Dom 33.

§ 170. He exhorts them to mutual love, foretels Peter's fall, § 171. and then institutes the eucharist, § 172.

After this he addresses his disciples with a large consolatory discourse, § 173—178, which he closes with a solemn prayer, § 179, 180. Then retires from the guest-chamber to the garden of Gethsemane, renewing his caution to Peter and his brethren, § 181.

Christ falls into an agony: His disciples sleep, § 182. Judas betrays him: He yields himself up, and they forsake him, § 183. He is conducted to the palace of Caiaphas, where Peter denies him, § 184.

He is examined and condemned on Friday morning by the Sanhedrim, § 185: Then is brought before Pilate, and examined by him, § 186; is sent to Herod, who returns him to Pilate, § 187, who having in vain attempted his release, declaring to the Jews he found no fault in him, at length yields to their importunity, and gives judgment against him, § 188.

Being delivered up by Pilate, after various abuses, he is led forth to Calvary, and nailed to the cross, § 189. His garments are divided; and while he is himself outrageously insulted, he shews mercy to the penitent robber, § 190; and having commended his mother to the care of John, expires: Amazing prodigies attend his death, and alarm the spectators, § 191.

Christ's body is pierced on the cross; then begged, and buried, by Joseph of Arimathea, § 192.

Judas confesses his guilt on Christ's being condemned, and hangs himself in despair, § 193—

. On the morrow after the crucifixion, (which was the Jewish Sabbath, or Saturday,) the Jews desire to have the sepulchre secured, and procure a guard to watch it. §—193.

Christ rises from the dead early on the Lord's day morning: Mary Magdalene, finding the sepulchre open, calls Peter and John, who enter into it and return, while Christ makes his first appearance to her, § 194.

The other women, coming to the sepulchre, are informed of his resurrection by angels, who bid them go and tell his disciples: He appears to them as they

Tiberius 19.

Anno Dom. 33.

return, and they report it to his incredulous disciples, § 195.

The guards who had fled away make their report of what had passed to the chief priests, and are hired to disguise the truth. Christ appears to Peter, § 196, and then to the disciples on their way to Emmaus, § 197, who return and report it; and while they are together, Christ appears to all the company the same evening, § 198.

On that day seven-night he appears again to the eleven, Thomas being with them, and offers to be examined by his touch, § 199.

He discovers himself to Peter, and other disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, while they were fishing, § 200; and, after a remarkable discourse with that apostle foretels his martyrdom, § 201.

Christ appears to the whole body of the disciples in Galilee, and afterwards meets the apostles several times at Jerusalem, discoursing with them of the affairs of his kingdom, § 202.

He leads them out of the city, and, having blessed them, ascends to heaven in their sight: They return joyful to Jerusalem, § 203: with which the history of the evangelists concludes.

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CONTENTS of the THIRD VOLUME, that is, of the History of the Acts of the Apostles.

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Christ (as was said before) ascends to heaven from the mount of Olives in the view of his apostles, forty days after his resurrection. § 1.

The apostles return to Jerusalem, and being assembled with the rest of the disciples, Matthias is chosen in the room of Judas, § 2.

The Holy Spirit descends upon the apostles on the day of Pentecost, and people of all nations hear them speak in their own language: Peter declares, that this was what the prophet Joel had foretold, § 3, and shews, that Jesus whom they crucified was risen from the dead, and was the true Messiah, § 4. Great numbers are converted and baptized; and converts are daily added to the church, § 5.

Tiberius 19.

Anno Dom 35.

Peter and John cure a man who had been lame from his birth at the gate of the temple, § 6. Peter makes an affectionate discourse to the people assembled on that occasion, § 7.

The two apostles are seized by order of the Sanhedrim, and, being examined by that court, courageously declare their resolution of persisting to preach in the name of Jesus: They are severely threatened, and dismissed, § 8.

Returning to their company, they all unite in an inspired prayer, which is attended with a new effusion of the Spirit. The number and zeal of the converts increase. Many estates are sold, and the price distributed, § 9.

Ananias and Sapphira are struck dead for their fraudulent dealing: The church increases, and extraordinary miracles are wrought, § 10.

The twelve are apprehended and imprisoned, and, after a miraculous deliverance, are brought before the Sanhedrim, and scourged, but, by Gamahel's prudent advice, are discharged without farther severities, § 11.

20

31

The seven deacons are chosen: The number of disciples multiplies, and many of the priests believe, § 12—

Stephen, disputing strenuously with the Jews, is seized and brought before the Sanhedrim, §—12. Being accused of blasphemy, he makes a long defence, but is interrupted in it, and tumultuously stoned to death. Saul heartily concurring in the execution, § 13—15.

A great persecution is raised at Jerusalem, where Saul makes havock of the church, who, being all dispersed but the apostles, go into other parts and preach the word, § 16—

Philip the deacon preaches Christ at Samaria, and many believe; which also Simon Magus professes to do, and is baptized, §—16. Peter and John, being sent by the apostles, communicate the Spirit by the imposition of their hands; and Simon offering money for the like power, Peter detects and censures his hypocrisy. The two apostles return to Jerusalem, preaching the word in many villages of the Samaritans, § 17.

Philip is ordered by an angel into the desert in the

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| Tiberius 20. | Anno Dom. 34. | <p>way to Gaza, where he instructs an Ethiopian eunuch in the faith of Christ; and, having baptized him, the Spirit takes him to Azotus, from whence, when he had preached in all the cities of the neighbouring coast, he comes to Cæsarea, § 18.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 21           | 35            | <p>Saul, setting out for Damascus with an intent to persecute the church there, is miraculously converted by Christ's appearing to him on the way, who bids him go to Damascus, where he should hear what he must do. The light that shone around him strikes him blind, and being led to Damascus, he continues three days fasting, § 19.</p> <p>Ananias by divine direction, comes and restores his sight, declaring that the Lord had chosen him to be his witness unto all of what he had seen and heard; and, having baptized him, he receives the Holy Spirit, § 20.</p> <p>Immediately he preaches Christ at Damascus, and confounds the Jews, proving that Jesus is the true Messiah, <i>ibid.</i></p> <p>Then goes into Arabia, and preaches there: from whence he returns to Damascus, where the Jews seek to kill him, but he makes his escape in the night, <i>ibid.</i></p> |
| Caligula.    | 38            | <p>Three years after his conversion, Saul returns to Jerusalem, and is introduced by Barnabas to Peter and James; but, preaching boldly there, he is again in danger from the Jews; on which the brethren conduct him to Cæsarea, and send him away to Tarsus, <i>ibid.</i></p> <p>The persecution ceases, and the churches are multiplied, <i>ibid.</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 3            | 39            | <p>Peter, making a progress through the neighbouring parts, cures Æneas of a palsy at Lydda, and raises Dorcas from the dead at Joppa, § 21.</p> <p>Cornelius, a devout centurion, is divinely admonished to send to Joppa for Peter, who, in obedience to the divine command, comes with his messengers to Cæsarea, preaches the gospel to him and his friends though Gentiles, and receives them into the church by baptism, § 22, 23.</p> <p>Peter returning to Jerusalem, is questioned by the</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |



Caligula 3.

Anno Dom. 39.

brethren of the circumcision for his conversing with such as were uncircumcised; but, on his giving an account of the matter, they acquiesce, and bless God for his grace to the Gentiles, § 24.

4

The gospel is preached at Antioch, and a great number of the Greeks believe. Barnabas is sent from the church at Jerusalem to confirm the disciples at Antioch, who are first called Christians there, § 25.

Claudius.

2

Barnabas goes to Tarsus for Saul, and bringing him to Antioch, they spend a year together there, *ibid.*

3

Agabus comes thither from Jerusalem, and foretells an approaching famine: A collection is resolved upon for the poor brethren in Judea, which is sent to Jerusalem by the hands of Barnabas and Saul, *ibid.*

4

Herod Agrippa puts James to death at Jerusalem, and imprisons Peter, who is delivered by an angel, § 26.

Herod extravagantly applauded at Casarea, dies miserably by the stroke of an angel, § 27.

Barnabas and Saul having executed their commission, and carried to Jerusalem what was collected for the poor brethren, return to Antioch, and bring with them John surnamed Mark, § 28.

5

The Holy Spirit orders Barnabas and Saul to be set apart to preach to the Gentiles: They go to Seleucia attended by John, and from thence sail to Cyprus: Having preached at Salamis, they go through the island to Paphos, where Elymas opposing them is struck blind by Saul, (hereafter called Paul,) and Sergius Paulus the proconsul is converted, *ibid.*

From hence they sail to Perga in Pamphylia, where John, departing from them, returns to Jerusalem, § 29.

6

Paul and Barnabas go on to Antioch in Pisidia, where Paul makes a long discourse in the synagogue, and the Gentiles desire to hear him again, *ibid.* The Jews rejecting the word, they turn to the Gentiles; and as many as are determined for eternal life believe, § 30.

A persecution being raised against them, by the Jews, they are driven away, and go to Iconium, *ibid.* Many converts are made there both of the Jews and Greeks. The unbelieving Jews stir up the multitude

|                 |                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| C<br>laudius 6. | Anno<br>Dom. 46. | against them, and they depart to Lystra, where they cure a lame man; on which the people take them to be gods, and are hardly restrained from sacrificing to them, § 31. But being followed thither by the Jews, the people are persuaded to stone Paul, who being left for dead recovers, and goes with Barnabas to Derbe, from whence they return through Pisidia and Pamphylia, constituting presbyters in every church, and sailing from Attalia, came back to Antioch in Syria, where having called the church together, they report the wonderful success of their ministry among the Gentiles, § 32— |
| 8               | 48               | Paul and Barnabas continue a long time with the disciples at Antioch, § —32.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                 |                  | The Jewish converts urge the necessity of circumcision: Debates arise at Antioch; and Paul and Barnabas are sent, with some others, to consult the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, § 33—                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 9               | 49               | Having passed through Phœnicia and Samaria in their way, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles to the great joy of all the brethren, they come to Jerusalem, where the matter is debated in a full assembly; in which after Peter and James had spoken for their liberty, the celebrated decree is made in favour of the Gentile converts, § 33, 34.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                 |                  | They send back messengers with Paul and Barnabas, who arrive at Antioch with the decree; and having made some stay there, Judas returns to the apostles, but Silas chooses to continue longer there, § 35—                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 10              | 50               | Peter comes down to Antioch, and is publicly reproved by Paul for dissimulation in his conduct, <i>ib.</i> <sup>a</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                 |                  | Paul with Silas, and Barnabas with John surnamed Mark, set out different ways, to visit the churches they had lately planted, § —35.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                 |                  | Paul and Silas travel through Syria and Cilicia, and several provinces of the Lesser Asia, and come to Derbe and Lystra, where having associated Timothy with them, they go on to Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia, and from thence come to Troas, where they are called to Macedonia, § 36—                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 11              | 51               | Being joined by Luke at Troas, they sail from thence and cross the sea to Europe, passing by Sa-                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

Clausius 11.

Anno Dom. 51.

mothracia to Neapolis, where they land, and go to Philippi, §—36.

Having preached at Philippi, Lydia is converted, and receives them into her house: But a tumult arising on Paul's dispossessing the Pythoness, he and Silas are scourged, and thrown into prison: The jailor is miraculously awakened and converted, § 37. On pleading they were Romans, the magistrates come and dismiss them; and having visited the brethren, they depart from Philippi, § 38.

Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they come to Thessalonica, where Paul having preached in the synagogue, and planted a Christian church, the unbelieving Jews stir up the mob against them, and oblige them to depart, § 39.

12 52 Being come to Beræa, they are received more candidly by the Jews there, many of whom, and of the Greeks, believe; but being followed thither by the Jews of Thessalonica, Paul goes away to Athens, appointing Silas and Timothy to follow him, § 39—

Paul, greatly moved at the idolatry which prevailed at Athens, makes an excellent discourse to the philosophers there; who most of them make light of what he says, but some believe, § 40.

Paul departs from Athens to Corinth, where he finds Aquila, and Priscilla, and, lodging at their house, works as a tent-maker, but preaches every sabbath-day to the Jews and Greeks, § 41—

13 53 Silas and Timothy come to him here: and Paul, rejected by the Jews, turns to the Gentiles, many of whom believe and are baptized, *ib.*

Being encouraged in his work by a vision of Christ; Paul continues at Corinth a year and six months, and is rescued by Gallio from the rage of the Jews, §—41.

From hence he writes his first and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians, and that to the Galatians, *ib.*

14 54 Paul departs from Corinth to Cenchrea, where in performance of a vow which he had made, he shaves his head: From thence he sails to Ephesus, where he leaves Aquila and Priscilla, whom he had brought with him from Corinth; and spending but one sabbath there, as he was hastening to the Passover, pursues his voyage to Casarea, where he lands, and goes up to Jerusalem. There he salutes the church, and having kept the feast, returns to Antioch in Syria, § 42.

Claudius 14.

Anno Dom. 51

Having continued there some time, Paul sets out on another progress, (which was the third that began from thence since his conversion;) in which he visits the Asian churches, and particularly those of Galatia and Phrygia, *ib.*

Apollos, in the mean time, preaches at Ephesus; and being farther instructed in the Christian doctrine by Aquila and Priscilla, goes over to Achaia, and preaches at Corinth and other places in that province, §—42.

Nero. 1

55

While Apollos was watering what Paul had planted at Corinth, Paul comes to Ephesus, where some of John's disciples being instructed by him, are baptized, and receive the Spirit, § 43—

Having taught there in the synagogue three months, meeting with opposition from the Jews, he separates the disciples, and discourses daily for two years in the school of Tyrannus: performing extraordinary miracles, while the exorcist Jews are beaten by a demoniac they would have dispossessed; and preaching the word with such success, that many believe and burn their magical books, §—43.

3

57

About this time he writes his First Epistle to the Corinthians, § 44.<sup>a</sup>

Paul thinks of setting out for Macedonia and Achaia, from whence he would go to Jerusalem, and afterwards to Rome; but sending Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia, he alters his design, and carries some time longer in that part of Asia, § 44.

Demetrius the silver-smith raising a tumult against him, the mob is enraged, and cries out for Diana: Paul is advised not to venture among them: The chancellor comes and appeases the tumult, §—44.

Paul leaving Timothy, who was now returned to him, at Ephesus, departs from thence; and having passed through Troas in his way, crosses the sea to Macedonia, where he visits the several churches, gathering a contribution, as he passed, for the poor brethren in Judea, § 45—

4

58

In this journey he writes his Second Epistle to the Corinthians; as also probably, his First to Timothy, *ib.* <sup>b, c.</sup>

From Macedonia, he goes on to Greece, where he visits the churches at Corinth, and in the neighbouring parts of Achaia: and having finished his collection, after three months abode there, being now ready to embark for Syria, to avoid the Jews he chooses to return by Macedonia, §—45—

Nero 4.

Anno Dom. 58.

From Corinth in this journey the apostle writes his Epistle to the Romans, *ib.* c.

Timothy being returned from Ephesus, accompanies Paul in his journey, with Luke and several others, who sail from Philippi after the passover-week to Troas, where, on the first day of the week, Paul celebrates the eucharist, and having preached till midnight, raises Eutychus to life, who was killed by a fall as he slept, after which he proceeds on his voyage, and comes to Miletus, designing, if possible, to be at Jerusalem by Pentecost, § 45.

At Miletus he sends for the elders of the Ephesian church, and takes his leave of them in an affectionate discourse, § 46.

Paul and his company pursue their voyage, and having sailed by divers places come to Cæsarea, where they are entertained at Philip's house; and notwithstanding the repeated warnings that were given him by inspired persons of what the Jews would do to him, he resolutely goes up to Jerusalem, § 47.

Upon his coming to Jerusalem, after an interview with James and the elders of the church there, Paul being advised to join with some that had a vow, to obviate the prejudices of the Jews, begins his purification; but is assaulted in the temple by some Jews from Asia, who so incense the people, that they would have killed him, if Lysias the Roman Tribune had not come and prevented it, who orders his soldiers to bind him and take him into the castle, § 48.

As they were carrying him away, Paul obtains leave to speak to the people, and gives them an account of his conversion, and of the call he had to preach the gospel, sect. 49: But upon mentioning his being sent unto the Gentiles, the Jews are enraged and will hear him no farther: The Tribune orders that he should be scourged, which Paul escapes by pleading he is a Roman, § 50.

Paul being brought before the Sanhedrim, occasions a division in the council; and a tumult arising, the Tribune takes him away. Christ appears in a vision to Paul, and tells him he should testify concerning him at Rome. The Jews conspire to assassinate him, which being made known to Paul, the Tribune is informed of their design, § 51.

Lysias sends away Paul under a guard, who bring him by night to Antipatris, and conduct him thence to Felix the Roman governor at Cæsarea,

|         |               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nero 4. | Anno Dom. 58. | who orders him into custody till his accusers came, § 52—                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|         |               | He is soon followed thither by the high-priest and elders of the Jews; and Tertullus accusing him, the Jews affirm that what he said was true, § —52. But Paul having made his defence, Felix adjourns the cause till Lysias should come down, and only orders him to be kept under a gentle confinement, with liberty for his friends to come to him, § 53.                                                                                                                            |
|         | 59            | On hearing Paul discourse before him and his wife Drusilla, Felix trembles, and puts him off to another opportunity; but though he frequently sent for him afterwards, it was only with a view of getting money from him to release him, § 54—                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|         | 60            | When Paul had been in custody two years, Felix, on quitting his government, to gratify the Jews, leaves Paul a prisoner, <i>ib.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|         |               | Festus succeeding Felix is applied to by the Jews who renew their complaints against Paul. He makes his defence before Festus, and to avoid his sending him to Jerusalem, appeals to Cæsar, § —54.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|         |               | King Agrippa and Berenice coming to visit the new governor. Festus acquaints them with the case of Paul; and, at the King's request, Paul is produced before him in a large assembly, § 55. Being permitted to speak for himself, Paul makes an excellent defence, and gives such an account of himself and his doctrine, that Agrippa is almost persuaded to be a Christian; and the assembly rising, he declares Paul might be set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Cæsar, § 56. |
|         |               | Paul is shipped for Italy, with some other prisoners in custody of a centurion, and is attended in his voyage by Luke and Aristarchus: Having suffered great extremity in a storm, Paul is assured by an angel, that none of them should perish, which he declares for their encouragement to those that sailed with him, § 57. The storm continues many days, and they at length are shipwrecked on the coast of Malta, but all get safe to land, § 58.                                |
|         |               | The inhabitants of Malta treat them with great kindness. A viper fastens upon Paul, and he receives no harm: Publius's father and others are miraculously cured: and after three months' stay there, they depart for Rome, § 59.—                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

Nero. 7.

Anno Dom. 61.

Having touched at Syracuse in Sicily, they sail to Rhegium in Italy, and from thence to Puteoli; from whence they go by land to Rome, being met by several Christian brethren on the way. § 59.

When they were come to Rome, Paul is allowed to dwell in his own hired house, while the rest of the prisoners are delivered to the captain of the Guard. § 59.

Soon after his arrival, Paul has an audience of the Jews, and gives them an account of the Christian faith; but most of them being hardened in their unbelief, he declares the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles. § 60.

9 63 He spends two years confined to his own hired house there, preaching the things concerning CHRIST to all that came to him. § 60.

During this time of his abode at Rome he writes several Epistles; particularly, those to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians; as also that to Philemon; and not long after, that to the Hebrews.—His Epistle to Titus, and the Second to Timothy, seem to be of a later date. *ibid.* (\*)

CONCLUSION OF THE HISTORY OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT.

## NUMBER IV.

*An Additional Note, relating to the particular Time, in which the several Historical Books of the New Testament were written.*

SINCE the preceding parts of this work were finished, it has been suggested to me by a much esteemed friend, that it might be proper to say something concerning the Time of writing each of these Sacred Books on which I have commented. I confess it might justly be expected I should touch on this article; and I heartily wish I were capable of doing it in a more satisfactory manner.

In general, it must be allowed, their being so universally received among those who were most capable of judging, and who were certainly obliged by the highest interest to be accurate in their inquiries, as written by Holy Men, who were contemporary with CHRIST himself, and personally concerned in the grand facts they record, plainly shews they must have been of very early date, and secures the point which is most important to our faith and edification as Christians.

But as to the particular year, in which either of the Four Gospels, or the Acts, were published, I am of opinion, on the most careful inquiry I have had a capacity and opportunity of making, that we have no certain foundation to go upon in determining it.

It is but very little we can learn from the Books themselves, with regard to this circumstance.—Matthew does not continue his history so low as the Ascension of CHRIST.—Mark indeed goes much farther, and speaks of the Apostles going out and preaching every where; which implies, that the gospel had made a considerable progress before his history was concluded. Luke carries down the Acts, which book was written after his Gospel, to the end of the second year of Paul's imprisonment; which shows it could not be written till about thirty years after CHRIST's Ascension, but does not certainly prove, it was written quite so soon: And as for the argument from 2 Cor. viii. 18. to prove that his Gospel was dispersed throughout all the churches with applause, before Paul wrote his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, (that is, before the year 57,) I think it very precarious.—John plainly appears to have intended his gospel as a supplement to the other three, and consequently it must have been the last of the four: But as he mentions nothing which



happened after the ascension, though he so certainly wrote after Christianity had been widely propagated, as appears from what has been said of Mark's conclusion,) it will shew that no conjecture can be formed as to the date of one of these books merely from the last article recorded in it.

Tradition does indeed say something on this subject, but not in so determinate, or always in so consistent a manner, as we might have been ready to expect. Irenæus, Eusebius, Jerom, and Augustine, are mentioned by almost all critics and commentators that write upon this head.—They all agree in telling us, what is extremely probable, that Matthew's Gospel was first written: (Compare Iren. adv. Har. lib. iii. cap. 1. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. Lib. vi. cap. 1. Hieron. Catal. Script. Eccles. and Aug. de Consen. Evan. lib. i. cap. 1.) But in the account of the year of publication they differ. Eusebius, (in his Chronicon,) and Theophylact, whom most of the moderns follow, place it but eight or nine years after the ascension; and Calmet tells us, that almost all the old Greek manuscripts have it thus at the end of his Gospel. The Alexandrian Chronicle brings it seven years lower; and Irenæus in the fore-cited place, on the authority of a tradition from Papias, (which in itself seems not very probable,) sets it as late as the preaching of Peter and Paul at Rome; which must have been (if they ever preached together there,) more than fifteen years after that.—The same author says, that Mark wrote two years after Matthew: And hardly any other accounts, (so far as I can recollect,) say any thing determinate about it; though several of them speak of Mark's writing his Gospel at the request of St. Peter. (See Clem. Alex. apud Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 15. & lib. vi. cap. 14. Hieron. Catal. Vir. illustr. in Marc. and Epiphan. Har. 51.)—I cannot certainly affirm, that Luke had seen both these, though Mr. L'Enfant thinks he strongly intimates it: And I find little in the Fathers about the time of his writing, more than what Irenæus says, that he digested into writing what Paul preached among the Gentiles; thereby seeming to intimate, that it was after that apostle had dispatched some considerable part of his ministry. (See Iren. lib. iii. cap. 1.)—Eusebius, (Eccl. Hist. lib. iii. cap. 24. & lib. vi. cap. 14.) Jerom. (Catal. in. Joan.) and Irenæus, (lib. iii. cap. 11.) say, that John wrote his Gospel in an extreme old age, and very near the conclusion of the first century. And this is the substance of what I can learn concerning the light that antiquity throws on this question.

On the whole, it will appear certain concerning two of the Gospels, those of Mark and John, and probable concerning the third, I mean that of Luke, (whatever we may conjecture concerning Matthew's,) that they were not written till some considerable time after our Lord's resurrection. Perhaps this may afford a probable argument, that Matthew's was written sooner;

since we can hardly suppose, (as Mr. Le Clerc observes, *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 414.) that the church should be left so long without any authentic account in writing of facts so highly important to its edification and its very being.\*

As for the later Evangelists it might perhaps be urged, that they, who wrote not altogether from their own knowledge, but from the testimony of others, would have opportunity of making fuller inquiries from a greater variety of persons, in consequence of the deliberation they used before the publication of their works. Yet on the other hand, it would on the part of the original witnesses, so much increase the probability of some slip of memory, that on the whole it might something derogate from the full credibility of what they have written, were it not for what had been proved above of the divine superintendency and inspiration with which they were favoured: But when this is allowed, the objection immediately falls to the ground; for, in regard to this, we may as entirely credit Moses, when relating facts which happened two thousand years before he was born, as Luke, when giving an account of the shipwreck he himself suffered at Malta.

I shall close this note with observing, that the longer Christianity had been settled in any place before these books were written, the stronger is the argument which may be drawn from the universal reception they met with, to prove their credibility. Because it plainly shews, they were perfectly agreeable to what the churches in one place and another had been taught by the lips of the apostles; otherwise their inconsistency with those originally received accounts would, no doubt, have been esteemed an invincible reason for rejecting them. And when a due weight is allowed to this thought, it will perhaps appear, that if we should bring the date of each book as low as any of the Ecclesiastical Writers do, (for which I can see no sufficient reason) yet the cause of Christianity would not, on the whole, lose any thing material by such a concession.

\* See Mr. Le Clerc's Dissertation on the Four Evangelists, prefixed to his Harmony, in which he has as good things as I have any where met with, in favour of the earliest dates which any have assigned to Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.





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