THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH,
THE TRUE KEY
TO THE RIGHT UNDERSTANDING
OF THE
Most difficult Passages in the New Testament,
AND PARTICULARLY
IN THE EVANGELISTS.
OR,
A most interesting View of some
IMPORTANT INTERNAL EVIDENCES
OF THE
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY,
Drawn from Historical Facts.
IN
ANSWER TO SOME OBJECTIONS
OF THE HISTORIAN OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF
THE ROMAN EMPIRE,
And of the learned Dr. THOMAS EDWARDS.

By N. NISBETT, M. A.

Printed for the Author, and sold by W. Bristow, Canterbury; by
Messrs. Rivingtons, St. Paul's Church-yard; and
Mr. Dilly, in the Poultry, London.
[Price Six Shillings.]
Entered at Stationers' Hall.

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Preface to the Reader.

The calamitous state of the times—the extreme indifference to disquisitions of a religious nature, so manifestly prevalent in the present age—and the necessity the Author of the following work has been under of differing in opinion from the first literary characters, it is possible may operate much to its prejudice; but the subject, in the Author's estimation, is of sufficient importance to run some risque. As the best interests of society are deeply concerned in the cordial reception of Christianity, any attempt to clear it of what is allowed on all hands to be
be the most serious difficulties, and to render it more worthy of the attention of mankind, will not, it is hoped, want encouragement from the discerning and the virtuous part of mankind.

The Author's attention to the subject of the ensuing pages originated in a private conversation with a much respected Clergyman with whom he has the honor to be acquainted, as far back as the year 1786, and in the year following he published his first work entitled An Attempt to Illustrate various important Passages of Scripture, &c. and in the year 1789 he again published An Illustration of various important Passages in the Epistles, &c. which attracted the attention of Dr. Thomas Edwards, in a Sermon delivered from the University pulpit at Cambridge, which again induced the
the Author to review the subject, and to publish his Scripture Doctrine concerning the Coming of Christ, in which the objections of the Historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and of the learned University Preacher, are considered; but not with that fulness and perspicuity which, on farther consideration, was satisfactory to the Author's own mind.

It was not the Author's intention to have troubled the public with any thing more upon the subject, till, in the early part of the last year, he was animated to a reconsideration of the subject, by the information that his first work was so well received in Germany, as to be translated into the language of that country, by the learned Mr. Dillinger, first Minister of Nuremberg. To this learned German, therefore, the public
public is indebted, if it should be found worthy of their attention, for the present work, which is presented to the Reader as the great outline of the Scripture Doctrine of the Coming of Christ, which may the more easily be filled up by future Enquirers, if that outline shall be found to be accurate!

It was the Author's intention to have availed himself of the large notes of his learned Translator, in his present publication---but he was unable to procure a copy of it till it was very forward in the press, and subsequent disappointments have obliged him to deny himself and the public that gratification. Should the Work be favorably received, and another edition be called for, he will gladly discharge to his unknown friend, the pleasing tribute of gratitude which is due to him.

Having
Having thus stated to the Reader the origin of the present Publication, the Author begs leave, with all deference and respect, to say a few words upon the desultory mode, too commonly adopted, of treating the Sacred Writings, and to point out what appears to him to be the most effectual method of studying them to advantage. It is greatly to be regretted, that Writers of all descriptions have been too little solicitous to ascertain, with precision, the true meaning of those passages of Scripture which they have had occasion to quote, in defence of the opinions which they have espoused; which, if investigated with a close attention to their connection, would frequently be found to have no relation to the subject which they were intended to support. In compositions which are purely practical, if any
any such there be, some licence may *perhaps* be allowed; but where passages of Scripture are quoted for the express purpose of proving any doctrine, or opinion, supposed to be contained in the Scriptures, too much care most certainly cannot be taken, in ascertaining their precise meaning, otherwise they not only cease to be of any authority, but must have an unfriendly influence upon the interests of Christianity. Such loose quotations have undoubtedly been the chief source of error, and of the slow progress of truth!

But how, it will be asked, is the true sense of Scripture to be ascertained, and such a loose quotation of Scripture to be avoided? The present state of the Christian world affords a demonstrable, and, indeed, a melancholy evidence of the vast importance of these questions; and, until
until they shall be decided, with some degree of accuracy, religious controversies, upon subjects as wide from each other as the poles, will continue to subsist, and will have little better influence upon the discerning part of mankind, than to fatigue and disgust them, and, what is still worse, to perpetuate those animosities and party disputes which are, and must be, so far as they prevail, the bane of all Religion.

It is fully admitted, by all denominations of Protestants, that there is no common judge of controversy, to whom an appeal can be made to distinguish Truth from Error. The Bible—the Bible, one and all, with the great Chillingworth, will say, is the Religion of Protestants; but in their appeals to that Bible, how various and how multiplied are the opinions, not of the
PREFACE.

the Enthusiast, or of the visionary only—but of the most sensible and the most enlightened part of mankind. Is this owing to a defect of clearness and perspicuity in the Sacred Writings, or to a wrong method of studying them?

If there is any one subject in the New Testament of greater difficulty than another, it is the Doctrine of the Coming of Christ, which is the subject of the ensuing pages, and which has hitherto baffled the greatest skill, satisfactorily to explain. But, if what has been here advanced upon the subject, shall be found upon examination to be just and accurate; it will be evident to a demonstration that a defect of clearness and perspicuity is not justly to be charged to the sacred writers—but to an unaccountable inattention to them as Historians. The advantages which the
the Author has experienced in obviating the objections of the Historian of the Decline and fall of the Roman Empire, upon this subject—in ascertaining with precision, the meaning of many other passages in the Evangelists—and particularly the xxivth of St. Matthew and the parallel chapters of Mark and Luke, by considering them in this light, and by giving the closest attention to the prejudices and sentiments of the persons who are the subjects of those histories, strongly incline him to think that a like undeviating attention to them as Historians would lay a solid foundation for removing obscurities, and for obtaining a more accurate knowledge of the genuine and unadulterated principles of Christianity. Happy will the Author think himself if his present work shall, in any degree con-
contribute to so desirable an end; for he knows of no employment so worthy of a rational being as that of showing it to the world, as worthy of all acceptance!

The Author cannot conclude without returning his sincere thanks to those few subscribers who have honoured his work with their patronage, without which he could not have thought himself justified in offering it to the public.

*An* Nov. 10, 1799,

ERRATA.

p. 8, line 1, dele biberto.
p. 12, note, line 9, after circumstance of add his.
pp. 17, 18, 37, and 152, for rise read deline.
p. 87, supply a before candlestick.
p. 216, line 24, for Pbrisins read Pbarifes.
p. 220, note, for vol. ii. read vol. iii.
p. 272, line 2, dele a.

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When Christianity was first made known to the world, its divine Author delivered his Doctrines, and exhibited the proofs of his Mission, with unaffected simplicity. Satisfied of the intrinsic excellence of the one, and of the clearness and evidence of the other; he left them to produce their own effects upon the minds of his hearers, without attempting to illustrate that excellence, or to shew that those proofs were proper and conclusive. The very intelligent and ingenious Dr. Gerard has, with great propriety, termed this, Our Lord's original manner; from which it does not appear that he ever deviated, but when Opposition made it necessary. When, however, Objections were formed against his Religion, he did not think it beneath the dignity of his Character to engage in its defence, and
to employ the powers of reasoning, with
a view to expose the weakness of those
Objections, and the unreasonableableness of an
opposition to him: nor did he, in any one
instance, express the least displeasure at an
inquisitive turn of mind, when under the
direction of a regard to truth. It was only
when an insidious and captious Spirit were
too strongly marked in their behaviour, to
be mistaken, that such a conduct fell under
his reprehension. So far indeed was Our
Lord from requiring an implicit faith in
his followers, that he directed them to
search the Scriptures, and to examine for
themselves, whether his doctrines were
founded in truth, or were the fictions of
Imposition. The same liberality of Mind
evidently actuated his Apostles in general,
and particularly the Apostle Peter, when
he directed the Christian Converts among
the Gentiles to give a reason for the hope that
was in them, and in the Spirit of meekness, in
opposition to a dogmatical and tyrannical
spirit, to instruct those who opposed the Chris-
tian faith. As therefore a candid statement
of any Objections to Christianity, most evi-
dently, was not offensive to Our Saviour
himself, or to his more immediate Disciples
and
and Apostles, it ought not to be displeasing to any of its friends who come after them, from whatever quarter it may arise. It will from hence follow, that even the teachers of Christianity, whose profession leads them to consider it, in every possible point of view in which it may be placed, may, without violating the duties of their profession, sometimes think it proper, and even necessary, to communicate their difficulties to the public, with a view to a more accurate and impartial investigation.

Had Unbelievers confined their Attacks upon Christianity within these just and reasonable limits, the Authority and Example of its founder, and of his Apostles, would not only have justified the treating their Conscientious scruples, with all possible deference and respect; but have laid its friends under an indispensible Obligation of using their endeavours to solve their difficulties (for difficulties there are in all Sciences) with all the accuracy of which they were capable. But the smallest acquaintance with the mystical Writers will shew, but too plainly, that they have often had other objects in view than the satisfying of conscientious scruples, or the removal of dif-
difficulties. Under the mask of friendship for the cause of Christianity, they have, not unfrequently, shewn their disposition to undermine and to destroy its credit, and they have imperiously demanded concessions which they well knew, if granted, would effectually ruin its Interests, in the opinion of the discerning part of Mankind.

There is no Writer of this, or perhaps of any Age, who stands more remarkably distinguished for this line of conduct, than Mr. Gibbon, the very celebrated Author of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. His great abilities—his extensive knowledge, and his elegant pen, have eminently qualified him for becoming the Champion of Infidelity. And if he really believed Christianity to be an Imposture, his taking a decided part against it, so far from injuring his Character as a Man, would, upon his own principles, have been perfectly justifiable and praise worthy—nay, a sacred duty which he owed to Truth and to the world. But to shelter himself under a profession of Christianity, and, at the same time to do all in his power to convict it of falsehood and imposture, is, to say the least, a conduct which is utterly un-
unworthy of the grave Historian, or the
ingenuous search after Truth!

It were much to be wished that, consistently with a regard to truth, the learned Author of a Series of Discourses, preached before the University of Cambridge, could have been exempted from this censure. His plan of pointing out, to the deliberate attention of the learned and judicious, such Articles as appeared to him, of sufficient importance to require a more accurate discussion than they have hitherto obtained, could not, if executed with impartiality, but have met with the approbation of the serious and rational Christian, as well as that of the sober infidel. A judicious statement of the points in debate, between the Historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and his Antagonists, and an accurate discrimination of the defects of the Advocates of the Christian cause, could not but have had the best effects in promoting its most essential interests. Such a statement, before a learned body who were professedly engaged in disquisitions of this nature, would have been made with singular propriety. But, it may surely be asked—Was it necessary to the execution of this plan,
plan, to involve in one general and indiscriminate censure, the Advocates of Christianity—to degrade, as low as possible, both them and their cause, and to represent the Historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, as insulting and triumphing over his vanquished enemies? Was it consistent with the fairness and impartiality of a sincere enquirer after truth to assert, that we ought not to entertain any sanguine hopes of success in obviating one of his principle Objections, because the Advocates of Christianity had hitherto failed in giving full satisfaction upon the subject? Was it, in fine, becoming the Character of the learned University Preacher, to advise an acquiescence, in the solution of a difficulty which he himself is forced to acknowledge, may be treated with profane derision, by the licentious Scoffer—or opposed with Argument, by the Sturdy Polemic; while he adds, with something extremely like a sneer, that it will be devoutly admitted by every pious Christian, as proceeding from the Authority of an inspired Apostle, and the beloved Disciple of Jesus? If Christianity is to be believed on such grounds, well may Infidels triumph—well may
may they make it the subject of their profane derision! No one who thinks with the freedom of a Man, will hesitate to say, that if it becomes a question whether the Interests of Christianity would be more effectually promoted, by such means, there will be any difficulty in forming a judgment concerning its nature. Whatever Ideas the learned University Preacher may have entertained upon the subject of the truth or falsehood of Christianity—the inference will naturally and necessarily follow, from such premises, whether he admits it, or not, that Christianity is, what its Adversaries would have us to believe it is, an imposture.

But whatever imperfections or defects there may be in the manner of stating objections against the truth of Christianity, yet still it is incumbent on its Advocates, if they would evince themselves to be its genuine friends, to give the closest attention to those objections, whenever they appear to have any real weight, and to examine them, with all the fairness and impartiality which truth demands. It is not meant, by this Observation, to insinuate a want, either of zeal or of ability, in the friends of Christianity, who have hitherto espoused its
its cause, or who have hitherto opposed the attacks of Infidelity. The numerous and able defences of our holy Religion, which adorn the English language, are, perhaps, unparalleled in any other Country! Yet in so extensive a field of Controversy, it will not be surprising if some topics have been less perfectly considered, than they may have deserved. A watchful Adversary, most assuredly, will not fail to point them out, and as the cause of Christianity owes much of its present luster to the objections of former Writers on the side of Infidelity; so by the same means, it may reasonably be presumed, it will still continue to gain additional credit, in the eyes of the discerning and impartial part of Mankind.

Among other subjects which the learned University Preacher has singled out, the Scripture Doctrine concerning the coming of Christ has, very properly, been brought forward for public discussion! It has, on all hands, been allowed to be a subject of great difficulty, and, if a judgment of its importance may be formed, either from the severe and pointed insinuations of its Adversaries, or from the manner in which it has hitherto been understood, by the most able
able Divines—no subject ever claimed a more serious, or a more attentive consideration; for nothing less than the most essential Interests of Christianity are involved in the disquisition! It may, perhaps, very properly be added, that in the present state of the world, an additional importance is attached to such an enquiry, and an additional motive for undertaking it. One of the most populous and extensive Countries in Europe, has openly abjured Christianity, as an Imposture. The seeds of Infidelity have, with incredible diligence, been sown, in Germany, in Italy, in the Low Countries, and even in our own land; which promise a plentiful harvest, to the utter extinction of what yet remains that is valuable among us. If any thing can save us from the desolating judgments which are abroad in the Earth, it must be Religion—but a Religion which will affect the hearts, and influence the manners of a people, must first convince the Understanding, and every effort to produce that conviction, and to remove objections, which are brought against it, must have a salutary tendency to counteract the baneful influence of Superstition and Enthusiasm, on the one hand, and the poison of
of Infidelity on the other. The Objections of Infidels must be sifted to the bottom—the very suspicion of fraud, or falsehood, either in Christ or his Apostles, must be done away—or Christianity will naturally, and necessarily lose its influence, and rapidly meet that fate which it has so unhappily experienced, in a neighbouring Country, and bring on calamities, similar to their's; which, barely to think of, must make the feeling mind shrink with horror! No employment therefore can be more important, or more conducive to the general welfare of mankind, than a fair and full examination of the Objections of Men, whose erudition and acknowledged abilities cannot fail to command attention.*

* At a period when the strictest scrutiny into the grounds and reasons of the truth of Christianity is so essentially necessary, any attempts to discourage the use of reason and sound argument, especially by the teachers of it, cannot but be very unfavorable to its interests.

Dr. Vicefimus Knox has expressed himself very severely of those whom he terms the most logical defenders of Christianity, and the general tendency of his book, entitled Christian Philosophy, is to discourage the use of reason and argument, and to substitute in their stead, internal feelings and internal operations of the Spirit, as paramount to all other evidence. He seems particularly displeased with Dr. Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity, and insinuates, that it is unanimated by a Spirit of Piety, and that he examines the truth
The Objection of the Historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, upon the subject of the coming of Christ, when

truth of the doctrine with calm indifference, as if he were a dull Virtuoso, discussing the genuineness of a Medal, or the Authenticity of a Manuscript, valuable only as an amusing curiosity! Never surely were insinuations more improperly applied, than these to Dr. Paley's View of the Evidences of Christianity!

But what seems more particularly to have offended Dr. Knox, is Dr. Paley's having called Jesus Christ, a Peasant, and a Peasant of Galilee. There is, says he, something peculiarly disgusting in hearing dignified Ecclesiastics, living in splendor, entirely in consequence of the Religion of Christ, speaking of him, in their defences of his Religion, as a Peasant, as a person compared to themselves, vile and despicable—and he asks—Is it the most likely means to overcome the prejudices of Unbelievers, who are commonly Men of the World, and teach them to bow the knee to Jesus, thus to lower his personal dignity?

It might naturally be imagined from hence, that Dr. Paley had really spoken of Jesus Christ as a person in comparison of himself, vile and despicable, and if he had, there would have been just cause, not only of offence, but of indignation, at such a comparison. But this is very far from being the case.—His object, on the contrary, is to shew, that tho' Jesus was in the most humble station in life, he changed the Religion of the world, and that, as he himself speaks, without force, without power, without support, without one natural source or circumstance of attraction, influence, or success, and that consequently he had a divine Commission from above. This circumstance alone, independent of every other consideration, if true, conferred a dignity upon Jesus, to which no Ecclesiastic, however eminent his Station, can pretend to have any claim! But in Dr. Knox's estimation, the fact of Jesus being represented as a Peasant, is so offensive to unbelievers, that he wishes it
when he enumerates what he terms the secondary causes of the rapid progress of Christianity, is thus stated. "In the primitive to be concealed. There was, says he, no occasion thus to lower his personal Dignity.

Dr. Knox seems not, however, to have recollected that this was no fiction of Dr. Paley's; for the Gospel Historians themselves, when speaking of Jesus Christ, describe him, if not as a Peasant, as the Son of a Carpenter, and he says himself, that he had not where to lay his head. The Apostle Paul scruples not to describe him, as in the form of a servant, and he glories in the circumstance of having been Crucified, regardless of the effect it might have on unthinking worldlings, and malignant Unbelievers. In censuring Dr. Paley therefore, for calling Jesus a Peasant, does not Dr. Knox, indirectly, at least, censure the Writers of the New Testament; for tho' the word Peasant is not strictly scriptural; yet the shades of difference between a Servant and a Peasant are not very perceptible!

Dr. Knox has asserted, alas! but too truly, that Infidelity is increasing, and he thinks it will continue to increase, so long as Divines decline the means of Conversion and persuasion, which the Scriptures declare to be the only effectual means—so long as they have recourse to human reason, and human learning only. But who, it may be asked, are those Divines who use these means only? Not surely Dr. Paley! His known regard to the Scriptures, and his able Vindication of them, ought to have exempted him from such a charge. Besides, it ought to be considered, that the Spirit's influence, of which so large an account has been given in the New Testament, was bestowed, not prior, but subsequent to Conversion. Dr. Knox would therefore do well to consider, whether he is promoting or injuring the Christian cause, by decrying human reason and human argument, and extolling a principle as paramount to all other evidence; which, if a man possesses, is and can be known only to himself. At any rate, the sound doctrine of the Spirit's Energy, for
"tive Church, the influence of Truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion which, however it may deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity, has not been found agreeable to experience. It was universally believed, that the end of the world and the kingdom of heaven were at hand. The near approach of this wonderful Event, had been predicted by the Apostles: the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood, in their literal sense, the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man, in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished, which had beheld his humble condition upon Earth." "Yet," adds he, "the Revolution of seventeen Centuries has instructed us, not to press too closely, the mysterious language of Prophecy and Revelation."* for which some Preachers in the Metropolis, whom he takes as his Models, are, in his opinion famed, is awkwardly enough combined with Theatrical trick, hypocritical extravagance, and ignorant effrontery. Dr. Knox, indeed, pretends to separate the Chaff from the Wheat, but it will be difficult to make a sober thinking Man to believe, that the Spirit's Energy is ever so combined!

The learned University Preacher, treading in the steps of the Historian of the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, mentions Our Lord as expressly foretelling that the Generation then existing should not be totally extinguished, till it had witnessed his second and glorious appearance in the clouds of heaven. "Yet," says he also, "the records of History do not authorize us to believe that this prediction was accomplished at the destruction of Jerusalem." And, what is particularly remarkable, after a professed examination of the various passages of Scripture which relate to this subject, he concludes his enquiry with saying, that "it becomes the Antagonist of our Historian, most earnestly to consider, whether the real Interests of Christianity would not be more essentially promoted by conceding the Objection to his Adversary, than by vainly attempting to remove it."*

It would be doing the greatest injustice to the learned University Preacher, not to admit, that his sentiments upon this subject have but too much countenance from

* See Dr. Edwards's Sermon entitled The Predictions of the Apostles concerning the end of the world. p. 35.
some Christian Divines, of the most considerable eminence in the literary world—nor can it be denied, that he has represented their opinions with the utmost fairness and impartiality.

"It may not," says he, "be thought wonderful that Baronius and other Romanists, to avoid the application of the Man of Sin, should earnestly contend that the speedy appearance of Christ was expected by the Apostles. (See Mede's Works, p. 665.)—But it is somewhat remarkable, that the Orthodox Father of the celebrated Prelate who translated Isaiah, in a treatise designed to confute a supposed Latitudinarian, should assent to the validity of our Historian's objection, by confessing, without reserve, that the Apostles were mistaken. (See Lowth's Vindication, &c. p. 52.) Grotius infinuates that, for wise purposes, the pious deception was permitted to take place. (Gibbon, vol. ii. p. 301. See Grotius de Veritate, lib. ii. § 6. Clerie. ad I. Theff. v. 10.) And an ingenious professor of our own University, does not appear extremely solicitous to relieve the Apostles from
"from the Accusation of Error. See Dr. Watfons Apology, p. 62."*

The embarrassments which these, and many other Writers who might have been mentioned, have discovered, do, indeed, abundantly sanction the bringing forward the subject for farther and more accurate discussion. But doth it necessarily follow that these Authors have done the subject all the justice it deserves? Have any of them entered into so minute and critical an enquiry into the merits of this Controversy, as to preclude all farther discussion, and to warrant the conclusion, that the records of History do not authorize us to believe that the prediction was accomplished at the destruction of Jerusalem? If not, why damp the Spirit of enquiry by an intimation that it would be better to concede the Objection to the Adversary, than by vainly endeavouring to remove it? Why give up the strong holds of Christianity, into the possession of the enemy, before it is discovered whether they are tenable or not? It must surely require far less sagacity than that of the learned University Preacher, to perceive that

* See Edwards's Sermon, pp. 12, 13.
such a concession as is here demanded, must, if granted, have the most malignant influence on the real Interests of Christianity; for a Religion which is founded in falsehood, can never have the God of Truth for its Author—can never be worthy of the reception of rational Beings! To say, as the Historian of the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire very gravely does, "that the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion which has not been found agreeable to experience," is to pronounce as gross a libel upon Christianity, as language can possibly convey. Opinions founded on falsehood, can deserve no respect, nor can they be proved to be calculated for usefulness. On the contrary, they must have the most pernicious tendency, even when they possess the plea of Antiquity; for no length of time can render that venerable which is, in itself, odious and detestable! If therefore the Author of our Religion, or his Apostles, made use of such base Arts in the propagation of it, no reason can possibly be assigned for the rejection of Mahometism, which will not, with equal force, apply to the rejection of Christianity!
The object of the present enquiry therefore is, (and a more important one cannot possibly be imagined) what foundation there is for the assertion of the Historian of the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, that the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion which has not been found agreeable to experience. Or, in other words, whether the predictions of Our Lord, concerning his coming in that generation, and while some who heard them were still living, were, or were not, accomplished within the time limited by him?

It is doubtless discouraging enough, that on the verge of the Nineteenth Century of the Christian Æra, such unfavorable sentiments have been entertained, by the ablest Divines, upon this interesting subject—but the following presumptive arguments will probably contribute not a little to relieve the anxiety of the friend of Christianity, as to the issue of the controversy, and excite him to give the closest attention to the evidences of the true nature of the coming of Christ—that he came at the time appointed by him, and that his Apostles were thoroughly satisfied of his coming.

The
The first presumptive evidence of the truth of Our Saviour's prediction is, that it was not accidentally drawn from him, but was, on the contrary, repeatedly and deliberately made, and that upon various occasions, throughout his whole Ministry—that, in fact, it formed the very basis of his system, declaring its completion, *in that Generation*, in terms as strong as language could admit. Upon his entrance on his Ministry, Our Lord declared that *the kingdom of Heaven was at hand*, and he fixed the time of its coming in these very expressive and emphatical terms. *Verily I say unto you*—*Ye shall not have gone over the Cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come*. With the like emphasis and decision, he again limits the time of his coming, in the following terms. *Verily I say unto you*—*there be some standing here, who shall not taste of Death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom*. *Verily I say unto you*—*this Generation shall not pass, till all these things (of which his coming in his kingdom was the principal) be fulfilled*. And to add, if possible, to the force of his declaration—to give all imaginable strength to the impression which he wished his prediction to make upon the minds of his hearers,
hearers, he subjoins this farther most solemn declaration—Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass way! What now, it may be asked, could have tempted Our Lord to have brought this Prophecy so fully into view, and to have expressed himself so strongly upon it, as to render it impossible to fail of making the deepest impression upon those who heard it, but the firm persuasion that it would be accomplished within the time limited by him?

But whether this prediction was, or was not accomplished, it is obvious, both from the very peremptory manner in which it was delivered, and from the frequent repetition of it, that he put the credit of his character at stake upon the issue of it. This cannot possibly be denied by any who pretend to have any degree of consistency in their principles. Now, it must be allowed, by the most strenuous Advocates of Infidelity, that the Author of our Religion possessed a large share of judgment and penetration. And the history of his life, as delineated by the Evangelists, demonstrates that his prudence and caution were at least equal to his abilities. In all that vast variety of circumstances and situations in which he
is exhibited to our view, by the Evangelical Historians, (many of which no human sagacity could possibly have foreseen) there is not a single deviation from the strict line of prudence and discretion. To the Innocence of the Dove, he constantly joined the Wisdom of the Serpent. All the machinations of his enemies, many of which were certainly well designed for the purpose for which they were intended, were foiled by the wonderfully sagacious and unpremeditated answers which their questions drew from him. The History of the most enlightened Ages, and of the most celebrated Philosophers, will, in this respect, bear no comparison with that of Our Saviour. The instances of the woman taken in adultery, and of the tribute money, not to mention any others, are fine specimens of the wisdom which directed his conduct!

But if Our Lord really prophesied of an event which was to happen in his own age, and at a given period of that age, which did not happen, and which in that case he must have known would not happen—where, it may be asked, was the wisdom of such a declaration—or, to speak more properly, what could have exceeded the folly of
of it? It would have required but little penetration to have foreseen, that the failure of the accomplishment of such a prediction would, in all human probability, effectually blast his expectations of becoming the founder of a Religion, which in process of time was to overspread the whole earth, and fold within its embraces every human Being. A wise man therefore, it would naturally have been imagined, would either have declined the character of a Prophet altogether, or he would have predicted an event which was not to have happened, but at some very distant and remote period. Had our Lord contented himself with predicting his coming at the end of the world, or at any other very distant and remote period —his wisdom would have remained unimpeached, even upon the supposition of his having been an Impostor; for by his prediction of so remote an event, he would probably have attained all the purposes which his utmost ambition could have wished for. But nothing less than a consciousness of his being a Prophet of God, and that he spoke the words of God, could have justified a wise man in declaring, in such confident and decisive terms, and in terms
terms so frequently repeated, that he should come in that generation, and while some who were then with him were still living; for the detection of the Imposture, if there was one, must, at such an early period at least, and before his Religion had taken a firm possession of the minds of men, have been inevitable, and the consequences fatal to the progress of his cause. It must appear wonderful, in the extreme, that modern sagacity should have discovered the falsity of a prediction, which no one, in the age in which it was made, had the least suspicion of, though they were confessedly taught to expect its accomplishment!

A second presumptive evidence of the truth of our Saviour's prediction, may be drawn from the consideration of the superior excellence of his morality, and of his perfect conformity to it, in his own conduct. The first qualification which he announced, of the first necessity to the admission of men to be the subjects of his kingdom, was REPENTANCE, or a change of mind from Vice to Virtue. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand: plainly intimating hereby, that a superior purity of character, to what they possessed, was necessary.
cessary to their admission into his kingdom. It was one of the principal objects of his mission, to correct and purify the vitiated morality, which was then too prevalent among his countrymen. *Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* This was the great object, in his excellent Sermon upon the Mount, and it is particularly worthy of remark, that the morality which he taught, was extended, not to the external conduct only, but to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart. Whoever takes a candid and impartial survey of the morality of the Gospel, will see in it a purity and perfection which is nowhere else to be found. It is a very just observation of the learned University Preacher, "that to the excellence of the Christian Morality every impartial judge must cheerfully bear testimony." Some cavils indeed have been raised against a few of its precepts, but they have proceeded from an ignorance of the extent of their application, and from an inattention to the circumstances under which they were delivered. Yet though the Christian Morality is excellent, it is
"at the same time severe. It enters into no truce with the indulgence of irregular propensities, or with the undue gratification of the passions; the former it commands us entirely to extirpate—the latter to maintain under due subordination."

This testimony to the Morality of the Gospel is the more valuable, as it comes from one who is eminently distinguished for his knowledge of the wisest and best Moralists in the heathen world, and who is perfectly acquainted with their comparative excellencies!

Nor was Jesus barely a teacher of Morality. Whatever excellence the Morality of the Gospel posses, was, if the expression may be admitted, personified in him. He was an exemplary pattern of every virtue which can adorn the human heart; of every thing that is amiable or admirable in character! Even the enemies of Christianity have done justice, not only to the superior merit of the Christian Morality, but to the unparalleled excellence of Christ's moral character. He therefore who could have

* See Dr. Edward's Sermon preached at St. Peter's in Thanet.
said, and whose whole life was in perfect
unison with the declaration, that it was his
meat and his drink, his primary object, to do
the will of God, could not, it may fairly be
presumed, have imposed a falsehood upon
his disciples, under the character of a Pro-
phecy which, in a short space of time, was
to determine whether he was a true Prophet
or not. Such a conduct, it may confidently
be affirmed, is too shocking to be enter-
tained—is perhaps, all the circumstances
of his character considered, unparalleled in
the history of mankind, and is most certainly
utterly incompatible with that uniform de-
testation of vice of every kind, which so
strongly marked his character, as delineated
by his Historians.

If it be said, that in order the more
effectually to gain his purpose of becoming
the founder of a new Religion, and of draw-
ing mankind the more readily to embrace
it, he only assumed the garb of Virtue, with-
out possessing it in reality, it must be al-
lowed, that the Impostor who expects suc-
cess in his schemes of spiritual ambition,
must observe some caution, and lay some
restraint upon his conduct, to induce the
world
world to respect his pretensions. But with all his caution, it is scarcely possible for an Impostor to be always upon his guard against detection; such a person having a part to act which is not natural to him, and consequently the more difficult to be performed. Some indiscreet moments therefore will occasionally occur, when he will expose himself to observation—when he will appear in his true character, and the disguise, however artfully assumed, will be removed. In vain, however, will the most sedulous enquirer look for any such unguarded moments in the life and conduct of Jesus. In all that prodigious variety of circumstances and situations in which he appeared to the keen and penetrating eyes of the most inveterate and the most watchful enemies that ever man had to encounter, he appears to have preserved an uniformity of Virtue which is altogether unexampled in the history of human nature. The presumption therefore is, that the prediction in question, so unequivocally and so repeatedly made, was dictated by the same regard to integrity and uprightness, which directed the rest of his conduct, and by a perfect confidence in its truth and in its accom-
accomplishment, within the time limited by him!*

A third presumptive evidence of the truth of the Prophecy in question is, its close connection with another Prophecy, which was of a nature at least equally remarkable, equally notorious, and, at the time it was uttered, equally improbable, as to its completion. This was no less than the total overthrow of a state which had subsisted for

* A French Philosopher, of the name of Lequinio, represents Jesus Christ, "as the wisest and best man that ever lived—one who was actuated by the most sincere good will to all the human race; teaching the great principles of moral equality, and the purest patriotism; braving all dangers—opposing the great—despising alike, glory and fortune—equally temperate with respect to himself—he beneficent to others, and sympathizing with all—hated by the powerful, whom he provoked—persecuted by the intriguing, whose artifices he exposed, and put to death by a blind and deceived multitude, for whom he had always lived. This generous Philanthropist, who wholly sacrificed himself to the public good—who gave his whole existence to the unhappy, and even to his persecutors, never lied but to teach virtue."*

The Reader who has any taste for excellence of character, cannot, it is presumed, withhold his admiration of that which is here portrayed; especially when drawn by such a hand—nor his indignation at seeing this same character held up to the world as an Impostor! Happy however would it have been for mankind, if the Philosophers of France had made this great character the model of their conduct! Had virtue been their sole object, as it was his, the world would not, at this moment, have had to lament the calamitous events which have happened since the Revolution!

* See Préjugés detruits, p. 236.
ages, and at a period too, when the whole Jewish nation, (the Disciples of Jesus himself not excepted) instead of forming any expectations of so dreadful a catastrophe, were entertaining the most sanguine hopes, under the auspices of their Messiah, of being rescued from the dominion which they were then under to the Romans, and of gaining the empire of the world.

It cannot but strike the judicious and attentive reader, that the conduct of an Impostor, under similar circumstances, would have been the very reverse of that of Jesus! Instead of foretelling an event so terrible and so extremely ungrateful to them, he would have availed himself of the prevailing opinion, which was peculiarly favorable to one of an ambitious turn of mind—he would have prophesied smooth things, and foretold, in glowing colours, the future splendor and dignity of the Jewish nation, under his direction! Nor is it difficult to imagine what would have been the effect of such an artful conduct! Jerusalem and all Judea, and the whole region round about Jordan, would have flocked to his standard, as in the case of John the Baptist, when he spoke of the approach of the Messiah's kingdom, and for the same
same reason, and would have become the willing instruments of an ambition so exactly suited to their own! The conduct of Jesus, on the contrary, seems wholly unaccountable, but upon the supposition of the integrity of his character. Nothing but the interest of truth, and the faithful discharge of the duties of his mission, could have induced him to predict an event so extremely unpalatable to his countrymen, and so directly opposed to all their deep rooted prejudices, as the destruction of their City and Temple, and the total overthrow and dispersion of their whole nation! At the prediction of an event so awful, even his own disciples could not forbear expressing the utmost anxiety! When shall these things be? and if they must be, for that is plainly the ellipsis to be supplied—what sign shall there be when these things shall come to pass? How are our expectations of the accomplishment of the great purposes of thy Messiahship to be realized, if these events are to take place in the present generation? We are utterly unable to reconcile these things together! If such was the conduct of the Disciples of Jesus, much more might it be expected that such a prediction would be offensive to the Jewish
Jewish Rulers, and prove, as it actually did, an insuperable bar to their becoming his followers!

These observations, in favor of the integrity of the character of Jesus, may not perhaps be unworthy of notice, in a separate view—but it is more immediately to the purpose of this presumptive argument to remark, that the records of History afford the fullest evidence which can be required, of the accomplishment of our Saviour’s prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem—such, indeed, as no one who is at all acquainted with the History of those times, will venture to dispute! Or if he is ignorant of the History of this awful prediction being fulfilled, the present state of the Jewish nation is a stubborn proof of the fact. "The dispersion of the Jews," says Mr. Henry Kett, "independent of Prophecy, is one of the most singular events in the History of mankind; but when we consider it as the completion of Prophecy—when we consider this people, dispersed and wandering among all the nations upon earth—without temples, without laws, without government—connected with none; but distinct from all, as
as if preserved to complete future prophecies—the whole together, I think, forms an argument of sufficient force to weigh against all the cavils of infidelity.

If therefore the evidence is complete, that this prediction of our Lord was accomplished, it is surely a presumptive evidence of the highest kind, that, in some sense or other, his prediction of his coming, in that generation, had likewise its completion!

Another, and perhaps as strong a presumptive argument of the truth of our Lord's Prophecy of his coming, as either of the preceding is, that it was expressed, in the very language, which à priori, it might have been expected he would have adopted. The History of the Old Testament is, in the highest degree, valuable as an history of the various predictions of the coming of the Messiah. Upon these predictions, it is allowed on all hands, the expectations of the Jews, which were general at that time, were founded, and the language in which they were expressed, was perfectly familiar to them. No Jew, without forfeiting the character of a Jew, could be unacquainted

* See Kett's History, the Interpreter of Prophecy, pp. 340-1. vol. i.
with it, and for our Lord to have expressed himself in any other language, would have excited no attention, nor have gained him any followers. He claimed that high character, adopting the language of one of the most distinguished of the prophets, to which he adhered with the utmost exactness and precision, declaring that the kingdom of heaven was at hand—that those to whom he addressed himself would see the kingdom of God come with power—that some among them should not taste of death till they saw the Son of Man coming in his kingdom—that, in a word, it should come in that generation, and that with great power and glory.

Whatever prejudices the Jews might have entertained concerning the true nature of the Messiah's kingdom, it was utterly impossible for them to understand our Lord, in any other sense, than as asserting the approaching completion of the antient prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, and that they did, in fact, so understand this language, when John the Baptist first declared that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, is abundantly evident, from their flocking to him in such vast multitudes. Then, says the Historian, went
out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan. St. Luke says, that as the people were in expectation, i.e. of the coming of the Messiah, all men mused in their hearts whether he were the Messiah, or not. It is equally clear, from the whole tenor of the Gospel History, not only that our Lord constantly used this language, but that, whenever he did use it, it never failed to excite the same expectations, and the same inquisitiveness about the time when he would declare himself under that character! Can there then, it may surely, with the utmost propriety be asked, be a clue to his meaning, in his declarations that the kingdom of heaven was at hand—that they should see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, and that they should see the kingdom of God come with power and great glory, more natural than what these Prophecies afford? Or, can there be a stronger presumption that this is his true meaning, in those declarations? If there is any thing in the world which may be called evidence, or which approaches to what may be termed demonstration, surely this has a just title to it; especially if it be recollected, that the whole Evangelical History, till the very close
close of the Life of Jesus, and even after his Resurrection, represents the Jewish nation in general, and his own Disciples in particular, as not satisfied that the Messiah was yet come, in the sense in which they expected him to come! The propriety therefore of the use of this language to the last, by our Lord, and even the necessity of it, under such circumstances, cannot possibly be doubted by any one who thinks impartially upon the subject! On the other hand—It may again be asked, whether it is not, in the highest degree improbable that our Lord should, in using this language, predict a coming—a visible appearance, after his removal from the world, and in that generation too, when his claiming the character of the Messiah sufficiently accounts, not only for the use, but for the true meaning of that language!

If it be said that an Impostor, as well as the true Messiah, would have taken advantage of the language made use of by the Antient Prophets—that he would have availed himself of the prejudices of the Jews, in claiming the character of the Messiah, and that therefore no conclusion can fairly be drawn from hence that Jesus was the true Messiah.
Messian—this certainly cannot be controverted. The use of this language certainly was not, of itself, a proof that Jesus was the Messiah, but it will not, it may be presumed, be denied, that any person expecting to be attended to, under that character, could have used any other language, or could indeed have avoided the use of that which he did adopt, while the sentiments of those with whom he conversed, concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, remained unchanged; which is all that is here contended for, and all that is necessary to the success of the argument, as a presumptive evidence of the truth of our Lord's prediction!

Again—If the character and conduct of the Apostles, and of the earliest disciples of Jesus, is considered, they will furnish the attentive reader of the Gospel History, with still farther presumptive evidence of the completion of our Lord's prophecy of his coming. They, it is plain beyond all reasonable doubt, in common with the rest of their countrymen, cherished the idea of the coming of the Messiah, with the utmost ardor of expectation. With a hope that Jesus was the Messiah, they joined him very early after
after his public appearance, and from the knowledge which an intimate acquaintance with him produced, they entertained very sanguine expectations that he was the person. Nay, at one time, and that pretty early in our Lord's ministry, they declared, in express terms, that they believed he was the Messiah, for when Jesus asked them who they thought him to be, Peter, in the name of himself and his fellow Apostles, said explicitly and without hesitation—Thou art the Christ, or the Messiah—the Son of the living God.

With this persuasion upon their minds, they evidently appear to have been extremely anxious to know when Jesus would declare himself as the Messiah—at one time asking him what would be the sign of his coming, and at another when he would restore the kingdom to Israel? These questions were perfectly natural to men in their situation, and under the influence of such expectations of the Messiah's establishing an earthly kingdom, and such as they could not have avoided expressing their anxiety to have resolved. The Historian of the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire indeed has said, that the Revolution of seventeen Centuries has
instructed us not to press too closely the language of Prophecy and Revelation.—
And, after him, the learned University Preacher affirms, that the records of History do not authorize us to believe this prediction was accomplished at the destruction of Jerusalem, and both of them more than insinuate, that it remains to this day unaccomplished. But if these insinuations are true, by what rules of probability can the silence of the Apostles be accounted for? If they viewed the predictions of our Lord, in the light here contended for, by these Writers, it may fairly be asked—Were there none to be found among them, or their numerous followers, honest enough to acknowledge they had been deceived—none, who in the midst of the severest persecutions, availed themselves of this fair and honorable opportunity of deserting a cause which exposed them to such cruel hardships? It was not thus when Jesus was crucified! The language of some of them then was—We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel. Their hopes that he was the Messiah, received, in consequence of his Crucifixion, a very severe check; but still, hope was not totally extinguished.
They now recollected, what before they could not at all comprehend, namely; what the rising from the dead, which he had again and again predicted, might possibly mean, namely, that he himself might be the subject of that prediction, and they clung to it as their last resource, their only remaining hope that they had not been deceived! Besides all this, said they, this is the third day, the day in which he said he should rise again! How extremely natural was all this? How perfectly agreeable to what must have been the state of their minds, at such a crisis! But now, it should seem, from the representations of our antagonists, not a voice was heard to own the truth, nor a complaint made, that the word of Prophecy remained unaccomplished! On the contrary, those of the Apostles and their companions, who survived the destruction of their country, continued, with the greatest firmness and success, to preach the Religion of Jesus—to suffer for his name, and earnestly to exhort their converts to invincible stedfastness in the faith which they had embraced!

When the numbers which, at that period, had embraced Christianity, are considered,
those who are best versed in the history of Imposture, may safely be challenged to produce a single instance like this. "There "have," says an ingenious writer, "been "instances of persons dying in support of "false opinions, which they held to be true; "but who ever gave up his life to attest "the truth of a fact which he knew or be- "lieved to be false, or of which he was "even doubtful? Even Enthusiasts have "never proceeded to such a degree of ins- "anity, as to resign life itself in attestation "of what they knew to be false, which "must indeed be imposture. Several of the "Apostles, and multitudes of the primitive "disciples of Christ, however, did volun- "tarily suffer death itself, in its most "horrid forms, to witness the truth of "the Gospel," i.e. that Jesus was a true Prophet of God, and no Impostor.*

But, to do full justice to this presumptive evidence of the truth of our Lord's pre-
diction of his coming, it must be added, that the Apostles not only gave no hint of any failure of its accomplishment, but they actually, and in the most positive and ex-

* See Thoughts, &c. on the Christian Religion, by J. Simpson, p. 89.
press terms, repeatedly declared their firm belief, that it was actually accomplished. After the Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of their Master, and more especially after the descent of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, the ideas of the Apostles, concerning the true nature of the Messiah's kingdom, were completely corrected, and their worldly and ambitions views subsided! In this change of their sentiments, what was their conduct? Why they asserted, and that, in the most public manner, before the Jewish Rulers, that God had made that same Jesus, whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ, i.e. both Prince and Ruler, or the Messiah. St. Paul says, that by his Resurrection he was declared to be the Son of God, i.e. the Messiah, with power.* St. John asserts, that every Spirit, i.e. every person, who confesseth that Jesus Christ, or the Messiah, is come in the flesh, is of God. And every Spirit

* It hath already been observed, how much the Disciples of Jesus were affected at the prediction of the Death of their beloved Master. It was very natural that they should be so, and it was equally natural that his Resurrection should impress their minds with the strongest conviction that he was the Messiah; especially when they connected it with his prediction that thus it should be! With great propriety therefore did the Apostle say, that by his Resurrection he was declared to be the Son of God with power! that
that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. Indeed it is needless to multiply instances of the conviction of the Apostles, that the Messiah was come, and that Jesus himself was the person; for the whole conduct of the Apostles, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, was founded in the firm belief that the prediction of their Master's coming was fully verified! Prior to the Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus, they did not, and they could not believe, that he was come, in the sense which they affixed to his coming. On the contrary, their minds were constantly upon the stretch, to observe those signs of his being the Messiah, which they looked upon to be essential to his character. Hence their question to him—when he would restore the kingdom to Israel; and their demand, what should be the sign of his coming? Hence too, our Lord's declarations, so repeatedly made, that they should not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man came, that some among them should not taste of death, till they saw the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, and that he should come in that generation, or while some who were then present were still living: all which expressions are evidently
evidently descriptive of one and the same event; and that they relate solely to the coming of the Messiah, will appear, more fully, when the subject comes under a critical and minute examination. In the mean time, it may be asserted, as most evident and undeniable, from the whole of the subsequent conduct of the Apostles and of the primitive Christians, that they were thoroughly satisfied of the completion of these predictions, and of their own expectations, founded upon them, being fully answered!

The presumptive evidences of the truth of our Lord's prediction of his coming, might be greatly enlarged; but there is one more which is so exceedingly strong, that it would be absolutely inexusable not to mention it. If the friends of Christianity could have so far forgotten what was due to truth and to their own characters, as men of uprightness and integrity— if a sense of shame for having been deceived, or any other principle which can possibly be supposed to operate upon the human mind, could, in such circumstances, have imposed silence upon them; yet it would still remain to be accounted for, how silence could have been im-
imposed upon the enemies of Christianity, who were sufficiently numerous, sufficiently acute, and sufficiently forward, upon all occasions, to testify their hatred to the Christian cause. It cannot be alleged that they were unacquainted with these predictions of our Lord—for they were so repeatedly uttered, and so exposed to general observation, that scarcely any one, whether friend or foe, who was at all acquainted with the History of the transactions of our Lord, could be ignorant of them. If then, these predictions were not accomplished, in the strict sense in which they were spoken, within the time limited by him, what a glorious occasion for triumph was here, to the adversaries of the Christian cause? What an opportunity to display their just enmity to this rising, and, to them, most odious Religion—an opportunity which it is almost, if not altogether, impossible to suppose, their invincible hatred to it being considered, that they should not have availed themselves of—an opportunity which could not but have proved, circumstanced as Christianity then was, fatal to its progress: Yet, wonderful to tell, here was, according to the representation of unbelievers, a Prophecy un-
accomplished, though expressly limited to a determinate period for its completion, yet Christianity gained ground—it surmounted obstacles which no other Religion ever had to encounter, and that, to use the words of Dr. Paley, "without force, without power, "without support, without one natural "source or circumstance of attraction, in-"fluence or success." "When a Roman "Emperor," says the ingenious writer already quoted, "in the plenitude of his "power, demanded religious worship to his "own statue in common with the other "Gods, and the Empire was obsequious to "his mandate, how could a few despised "men, unaided by learning, authority or ar-
"tifice, engage a depraved and superstitious "multitude to refuse the homage, when by "that they resigned their lives,"* and that in favour of a Religion which, upon the supposition of the prediction not being fulfilled, was an Imposture? While there was a single individual who could come forward and say—The Author of this Religion predicted his coming at a given period, and that period has past without his prediction being fulfilled, this must have

* See Thoughts, &c. on the Christian Religion, pp. 84-5. proved
proved an insuperable bar to the progress of his Religion. The fact, therefore, that Christianity flourished, and that in times and countries the most enlightened, is not to be accounted for, by human sagacity, but upon the presumption that the Prophecy was accomplished, and that the enemies of Christianity were unable to deny its fulfilment!

Such are the presumptive evidences of the truth of our Lord's prediction of his coming, in the generation in which he lived, notwithstanding it has been so roundly asserted, and if not admitted, at least not fully disproved,* by the ablest Christian writers,

* Among others, the present very learned and very respectable Bishop of Landaff appears to have failed essentially, in his proof that the objection of the Historian of the Roman Empire is not valid. Nay, he says himself, addressing Mr. G. "If, notwithstanding what has been said, (alluding " to his own reply to this objection,) you should still be of " opinion, that the Apostles expected Christ would come in " their time, it will not follow, that this their error ought " in any wise to diminish their authority as preachers of the " Gospel." See Watson's Apology, pp. 60-1.

But the worthy Prelate seems not to have been sufficiently aware, that not the Apostles only, but Christ himself, is directly involved in the charge by the Historian of the Roman Empire; for his objection is principally founded upon the language of Christ himself, from which the Apostles are naturally enough supposed to have borrowed their's. The error therefore of the Apostles, if there was one,
writers, "that the Revolution of seventeen "Centuries has instructed us, not to press "too closely the language of Prophecy and "Revelation." They are, indeed, only pre-"sumptive evidences, but they are surely such "as hold forth the strongest encouragement "to a minute and close investigation of the "subject. They present the most animating "prospect, that the mysterious language of "Prophecy and Revelation, as it is termed, "cannot be pressed too closely; but that the "more closely it is pressed, the more it will "rebound to the credit of the Divine Author "of the Christian Religion!

It seems to be a striking mark of superior "wisdom, that a Religion, the evidences of "the truth of which, were to determine the "judgment of all future ages, should be "communicated in the historic form; for no "other form could possibly have been so fa-"vourable to truth—so unfavourable to Im-"

one, was, in Mr. Gibbon's estimation, the error of Christ. "Those," says he, "who understood in their literal sense, "the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect "the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the "clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished." It is a remark of the Author of Pursuits of Literature, that Bishop Watson should often write, but with the utmost cau-"tion and accuracy and consideration, because his works will "always be read, p. 226.

posture.
No other form could have been so well suited to prevent corruption. Inadvertent mistakes of transcribers, or wilful interpolations, to serve the detestable purposes of a party, are sooner noticed and corrected in an History, than in any other way of writing, by their inconsistency with some circumstances in the same narrative, or in different relations of other persons. No one, in fact, will deny that History, when it carries in it those internal Characters of Truth which genuine History never fails to possess, is, in the highest degree, satisfactory to the human mind. No lapse of time can lessen its evidence, or render the facts contained in it less certain, or less worthy of attention.* As Christianity there-

* "The historic method," says the very ingenious writer again and again mentioned, "is evidently best suited to give right notions of religion to the generality of mankind. It is the only one that is equally adapted to persons of all ages and situations. It gives proper impressions and ideas to the mind, at the first opening of its faculties, before it is capable of deep thought, and to persons of the lowest degree of understanding. It is peculiarly adapted to children and to illiterate persons, to whom our Lord proffes to preach his Gospel. Not any thing, but living example, fixes more closely the attention of a young mind, to what is right and proper in behaviour, or gives him better ideas of it, than little stories and artless descriptions of the manner in which others
therefore is conveyed down to us in the form of an History; the only legitimate method of studying it, by those who wish to attain its genuine meaning, seems to be as an History. When it is considered in this light, it will be found to exhibit internal Characters of Truth, equal to those of any History, either in antient or modern times, and upon the subject of the coming of Christ, it will afford to the judicious and attentive Reader, criteria sufficient to determine the true meaning of the Prophecy in question—sufficient to vindicate the character of our Lord and his Apostles—sufficient, in a word, to prove, to the satisfaction of every impartial enquirer, that the objection of the Historian of the Roman Empire, and of the learned University Preacher, has no

"others have acted. The same fondness for narrative prevails in the youthful breast, and is increased and heightened by the more eager passions which prevail in that stage of life. Persons arrived even to the maturity of their powers, read biographical relations with as much avidity as they ever did before, and derive from them more distinct ideas of proper conduct, than from the best descriptions of virtue. And in the decline of life, sentiments and impressions which are raised and revived by accounts of the actions of others, are stronger and more just than those which any other way of writing can convey." See "An Essay to show that Christianity is best conveyed in the historic form." pp. 75-6-7. by J. Simpson.

solid
solid foundation in truth, but that it was, not figuratively and metaphorically, but fairly and literally accomplished! In short, it will appear abundantly evident, that if Christianity had been carefully and impartially attended to, as an History, this objection, which it is the principal object of this enquiry to obviate, could never have existed! Or if it had ever existed, would have disappeared, upon the moment of a fair investigation!

The foundation upon which the Gospel History is built, is the declaration of John the Baptist and of Jesus, upon their entrance on their respective offices, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; and it is deserving of particular attention, that Matthew, Mark and Luke, adopt the same language upon the subject. When John began his ministry, the Historian says, Matt. iii. 1. 2. In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying—Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. When Jesus entered upon his important office, it is to be observed that he used precisely the same language. Mat. iv. 17. From that time, i. e. from the time that John was cast into prison, Jesus began to preach
preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And when afterwards he commissioned his Apostles and the seventy Disciples to preach in his name, his instructions were, strictly to adhere to this declaration of its approach. Say to them, *i.e.* to the Jews—*The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.* Their public instructions are likewise stiled *preaching the kingdom of God.* Thus Jesus is said to go into Galilee *preaching the kingdom of God.* And, in another passage, it is said, Matt. ix. 35. that *Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the Gospel,* or good news, *of the kingdom, *i.e.* of the kingdom of heaven, which he at first announced, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* So Luke, viii. 1. *And Jesus went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.* And, as this was our Lord's original language, so he adhered to it, with the most scrupulous exactness, till the very close of his life, telling his Disciples that *they should not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man,* that is the Messiah, as will hereafter fully appear, *be come—that there were some standing there, who*
should not taste of death till they saw the Son of
Man coming in his kingdom. And but a very
few days before his Crucifixion, when fore-
telling the destruction of Jerusalem, he said,
Luke xxii. 31. When ye see these things come to
pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh
at hand.

This historical fact, of the approach of
the Messiah's kingdom, which had been
predicted from the earliest times, and which
the Prophet Daniel had foretold, in the very
language which was made use of, both by
John the Baptist and by Jesus, lies, as hath
already been observed, at the very foun-
dation of Christianity, and the Evangelical
Historian has not failed to point out, in
very strong language, the effect which such
a declaration produced upon his country-
men; for immediately upon John's making
use of it, he says, Jerusalem and all Judea,
and all the region round about Jordan, went
out to him, and were baptized by him. In like
manner, when Jesus went about all Galilee,
teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching
the Gospel, or good news, of the kingdom, it is
said, there followed him great multitudes of peo-
ple, from Galilee, from Decapolis, from Jeru-
salem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

Dr.
Dr. Sykes has well observed, that "the Jews were so well acquainted with this language, and were so well apprized of a kingdom which God had resolved, in due time, to set up, that as often as Jesus talked of the kingdom of heaven, or of God, neither the people nor their Rulers ever offered to ask him the meaning of that phrase; which yet we cannot suppose them not to have done, if he had talked with and to them in a language they were unacquainted with." See his Essay upon the Truth of the Christian Religion, p. 29. Ch. iii.

Bishop Chandler says, "the expectation of the Messiah, intimated in the use of this language, was not the opinion of a few devout people only, who are said to wait for the consolation of Israel, at the time of our Saviour's birth, or of the meaner sort, who thought the kingdom of God (a phrase for the kingdom of the Messiah) should immediately appear; but it was the settled judgment of the chief Priests, the Scribes, and the learned in their law. They who made the study of the Scriptures their chief business, were unanimous in this belief—the expectation was national."

Dr. Paley, in his View of the Evidences of Christianity, says, "The Jews, with or without reason, had worked themselves into a persuasion that some signal and greatly advantageous change was to be effected in the condition of their country, by the agency of a long promised messenger from heaven. The Rulers of the Jews, their leading sect, their Priesthood had been the authors of this persuasion to the common people. So that it was not merely the conjecture of theoretical divines, or the secret expectation of a few recluse devotees; but it was become the popular hope and passion, and, like all popular opinions, undoubting and impatient of contradiction. They clung to this hope under every misfortune of their country, and with more tenacity as their dangers or calamities increased."

vol. i. pp. 22-3.

Nor is the evidence that this was the general opinion of the Jews confined to the Christian Scriptures, or to Christian writers only. The celebrated Josephus, who was a distinguished General in the early part of the
the last Jewish war, which terminated in
the destruction of their country, bears ample
testimony to the truth of this fact.

"That," says he, "which chiefly excited
the Jews to the war was, an ambiguous*
Prophecy, which was also found in their
sacred books, that, at that time, some one
within their country should arise, that
should obtain the empire of the whole
world." Tacitus likewise, the Roman
Annalist, mentions the same persuasion as
existing at that period, and particularly
that it was found antquis sacerdotum libris,
in the ancient books of the Priests." And
most remarkable, to the same purpose are
the words of Suetonius. "It was," says he,
"an ancient and constant or uninterrupted
opinion throughout the East, esse in fatis
ut eo tempore, Iudei profoetii rerum potiren-
tur, that it was foretold in the prophecies,
antquis sacerdotum literis contineri, that at
that time the people of Judea should be

* It cannot be surprising, that Josephus should term this
Prophecy ambiguous; for he had the same expectations of a
temporal Messiah with the rest of his countrymen, and when
those expectations were disappointed, he applied the Pro-
phhecy to Vespasian. Afterwards, however, in his An-
tiquities, he fairly hints there, as do the rest of his nation,
that Daniel's Messiah was yet to come, and subdue the
Romans. See Bishop Chandler's Defence, p. 30.
"Lords of all." Nor is it unworthy of remark, that even Mr. Volney, who with unparalleled effrontery, denies there is any evidence worth notice of the very existence of Jesus Christ,* is nevertheless forced to own

* The Infidelity of the French Philosophers, as they are fond of calling themselves, is truly wonderful; for to disbelieve the existence of Jesus Christ, is to render Historical evidence useless; for as has been very justly observed, there is not a hundredth part of the evidence for the existence of Julius Cæsar, that there is for that of Jesus Christ; and the man who has the hardiness to deny such evidence, is not fit to be reasoned with!

The Author of the Pursuits of Literature, speaking of Mr. Volney's Ruins, says, it is written with some spirit, and not without eloquence in some parts, and abounds with what is now called Philosophy. The intent of this book is to attack every principle of Religion in the heart, even the principles of the Religion now termed natural. Mr. Volney wishes to convince mankind that every pretence to Revelation, in every age and in every country, is equally false and equally unfounded, and by a jargon of language and antiquity, and mythology, and philosophy, he labours to confound and blend them all in uncertain tradition, and astronomical allusions. The real ignorance of this man on the subject of true Religion, is as conspicuous as the puny literature which appears to support his strange doctrines and foolish opinions. Upon the subject of what he calls the filiations of Religions, (for the French must have their new jargon of words in every subject) he says, "We acknowledge in one word, that all the Theological Doctrines on the origin of the world, on the nature of God, on the Revelation of his Laws, and the appearance of his person, are nothing more than recitals of astronomical facts, and figurative emblematical stories of the play of the Constellations, (du Jeu des Constellations) p. 167."
own the general expectation of a Deliverer, who was to establish the Jewish nation in its antient glory. "From the time," says he, "that the Assyrians had destroyed the kingdom of Samaria, some sagacious Spirits foresaw, announced, and predicted the same fate to Jerusalem, and all their predictions were stamped by this particularity, that they always concluded with prayers for a happy re-establishment on the subject of Christianity is the strangest of all; for he declares that Christianity consists in the allegorical worship of the Sun, in the cabalistical names of Christen, or Yesus, or Jesus. And this is a formidable opponent! This is one of the guides to whom we are to give up our prejudices! Read any one of the four Evangelists, and give your own answer! The impudence of Mr. Volney is at least equal to any other power he possesses; for he requires of his Readers only the surrender of his common sense, and the common principles of any knowledge—yet he demands the admission of all his allegories and mystical meanings; of which, in the true French style, no doubt is to be entertained, and then the world is to be emancipated and delivered! From what? From credulity and superstition! Q. E. D. Upon this, Mr. Volney observes, the Priests murmur. I think the Laity will at least do as much, at the words of this Apostle of Non sense, blasphemy, folly, and the rights of man; which the French never fail to introduce, when they have laid them all prostrate, civil, moral, and mental. This is but a specimen of such writers whom we are to obey as the deliverers of mankind from superstition, and the directors of our minds in the way of truth. Professing themselves wise, they are become fools. Compare this note with that in p. 28.
and regeneration, which were, in like manner, spoken of in the way of Prophecies. The enthusiasm of the Hierophants had figured a Royal deliverer, who was to re-establish the nation in its antient glory: The Hebrews were again to become a powerful conquering people, and Jerusalem the capital of an Empire that was to extend over the whole world. Events having realized the first part of those predictions, the ruin of Jerusalem; the people clung to the second with a firmness of belief proportioned to their misfortunes; and the afflicted Jews waited with the impatience of want and desire, for that victorious king and deliverer that was to come, in order to save the nation of Moses, and restore the throne of David." See Volney's Ruins, 3d edit. English Translation, pp. 285-6.

With respect to the time in which the Messiah was expected, the Prophet Daniel, as Josephus has observed, not only predicted things to come, which was common to him with other Prophets, but also a certain fixed time when they were to take place, and that he did so, in the case of the coming
coming of the Messiah, will be distinctly seen in the note below.* The general expectation of the Jews, at the appearance of Jesus, plainly shews that that time was about to expire. And Mr. Kett, in his History, the Interpreter of Prophecy, very justly says, "It is a very striking fact in proof of the general belief of the Jewish nation respecting the time of the Messiah's appear-

* Mr. Kett says very justly, "That in one point Daniel differs from all other Prophets, and becomes an object of attention peculiarly interesting to us; for to him was communicated the exact time when the Messiah would appear."

Having quoted Daniel's Prophecy, he adds as follows.—"The leading circumstances to be considered in examining the accomplishment of this prediction are—the completion of the time specified, and the events connected with it. All agree that these seventy weeks are weeks of years, that is, every day in the week is reckoned as a year, which makes the whole number amount to four hundred and ninety years. This computation is not unexampled in profane Authors, and is used elsewhere in Scripture. It is used in reckoning the years of Jubilee, the time of sojourning in the wilderness, and in the Prophecy of Ezekiel. These seventy weeks commence in the Jewish month Nisan, or March, in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, King of Persia, in the year of the world 3547, as is clearly shown by many accurate Chronologists, and proved at large by the learned Prideaux, in his connection of the History of the Old and New Testament with profane History. This was the distinguished year and month in which Ezra, the Leader of the Jews, obtained a commission to return to Jerusalem, in order to restore the Government of that City, and the service
appearance, that from the death of Herod the Great, when Judas of Galilee and Simon first assumed the title of Kings and Deliverers of the Jews, to the destruction of the Temple, the Jewish History is filled with the names and actions of false Christs and false Prophets, who deceived both the Jews and the Samaritans. None appeared before this period, and not service of the Temple. And the seventy weeks were completed in the month Nisan, in the year of the world 4037. This was the ever memorable year and month when Jesus Christ, the Messiah, closed his divine mission, and suffered death upon the cross.

Three different periods of time are included within the seventy weeks, and each of them is connected with an important event—The seven weeks to restore and rebuild Jerusalem—the three score and two weeks in addition to these seven weeks, after which the Messiah was to be cut off—and the midst of the week in which he should cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. The first series of seven weeks, being forty-nine years, relates to the restoration of the Jews, and the rebuilding Jerusalem, began by Ezra, and completed by Nehemiah. The opposition which the Jews, when returned from captivity, met with from the Samaritans, prolonged this sacred work exactly for that period of time, and the obstructions with which they had to contend, fully confirmed the words of the Prophet, that the wall should be built in troubled times. The three score and two weeks that succeeded, added to the foregoing seven, or in other words four hundred and eighty-three years, bring the calculation of time down to the year 4739 of the Julian period, which was the exact year in which the Gospel began to be announced to the world." See Kett's History, the Interpreter of Prophecy, p. 199, &c. vol. i.

more
"more than one for five or six Centuries after it." See Kett's History, the Interpreter of Prophecy, vol. i. p. 210.

With this general expectation of the appearance of a person, under the character of the Messiah, at the time when Jesus announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; it might naturally have been imagined, that the whole Jewish nation would have become the willing subjects of it, and that nothing could possibly have been more favorable to his reception, under that character, than such an expectation. The fact, however is, as ingenuously acknowledged by the Evangelical Historians themselves, that very few, comparatively, of the Jewish nation owned Jesus to be the Messiah. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. John i. 11. The Jews, in general, considered him as an Imposter, in assuming that character, and as such they put him to an ignominious and cruel death. And even of those who did adhere to him, from a belief that he might be the Messiah, whom they so earnestly expected; it is related, upon various occasions, that they expressed the utmost anxiety to have those proofs of his Messiah-
ship exhibited to them, which they had affixed to that character!

It is of the utmost importance that this general rejection of Jesus, as the Messiah, by the great body of the Jews, and the earnestness of his followers to be convinced that he sustained that character, should be satisfactorily accounted for; not only because the truth of his claims to the Messiahship is concerned in it, but because the whole doctrine concerning the coming of Christ, which has been the ground of so much offence to unbelievers, and of difficulty, even to Christians, is particularly connected with it. If the Jews had just and accurate ideas of the nature of the Messiah's character, and Jesus did not exhibit those marks of it, which they had a just right to expect, their conduct was perfectly justifiable, upon the principles of the Mosaic Government, in putting him to death as an Impostor. But if, on the contrary, they totally mistook the nature of the Messiah's character, it will from hence evidently follow, that it was the first duty of his office to give them just ideas of its nature, and to remove the prejudices or errors which they had imbibed concerning it.
In all enquiries concerning the History and conduct of nations, it is absolutely necessary to know something of the customs, manners, and peculiar modes of thinking, which distinguish one nation from another. If this is requisite, in general, it is particularly so, in the case of the Jews, who may truly be said, in almost every sense, to have been a peculiar people, and more especially so, in their sentiments and prejudices concerning the nature of the Messiah's character; for as the coming of the Messiah was considered by them as of the first national importance; so it necessarily had a powerful influence in forming their national character!

The celebrated Professor White, the learned and eloquent Bamptonian Lecturer, has so fully and ably expressed himself upon this subject, that no apology, it may be presumed, will be necessary for presenting it to the Reader in his own words.

"In the person of the Messiah, their promised Deliverer," says the Professor, "they beheld a mighty and glorious King, who should appear with all the pomp of temporal greatness, and all the terrors of earthly power, trampling upon the ene-
mies and oppressors of Israel, and leading forth his people amidst the triumphs of conquest, and the splendor of dominion. The manifest expiration of the time prescribed by the Prophets, the departure of the Sceptre from Judah, and the subjection of their country to the Roman power, were circumstances which at this time added new weight to the opinion which had thus been endeared by early prejudice, and sanctified by authoritative tradition. Every heart was now warmed with hope, and every eye looked forward with anxious expectation, to the moment when the glory of Sion should appear, and Judea be for ever exalted above the kingdoms of the earth—when they should behold suppliant nations crowding into the sanctuary, and Rome herself, the haughty mistress of the world, bowing prostrate at the feet of Jerusalem.

Nor were these glorious expectations confined to the chief Rulers of the Jews, whose superior stations seeming to entitle them to the first honors and emoluments of the Messiah's kingdom, might have induced them the more readily to embrace, and the more industriously to disseminate an
an opinion which promised so complete a gratification to their ambition. Even the Disciples of our Lord, who had been in general selected from the lowest and the meanest of the people, long retained the same delusive opinion, and indulged the same fallacious hopes with the rest of their countrymen.

Nay, so firmly was this belief impressed on their minds, that not all the frequent and solemn declarations of their Master to the contrary, were able to efface it entirely. Nor indeed do they seem to have been effectually roused from the pleasing dream of temporal grandeur which had captivated their imaginations, till his Death had tried the constancy of their faith, till his Resurrection had revived their drooping spirits, and his Ascension into heaven had rectified their errors, and invigorated their resolution.

From this mistaken opinion arose the frequent struggles for superiority among them which they have so ingenuously recorded. Hence the petition of the mother of Zebedee's children. Hence, too, the impatient and misguided zeal of Peter, who,
"who, when Christ pathetically related
his approaching humiliation, his suffer-
ings and his death, took him, and began
"to rebuke him, saying—Be it far from
"thee, Lord—this shall not be unto thee!"

These observations of the learned and
ingenious Professor, do not relate to matters
of doubtful speculation, about which dif-
ferent opinions are entertained. They are
fully admitted as indisputable facts, by
Christians of all denominations. They are
facts which are believed by all who believe
that there was such a person as Jesus Christ,
or who think there is any degree of credit
due to the New Testament. Nay more—
they are facts which the testimonies of
Josephus, Tacitus, Suetonius, and even the
Atheistical Volney, fully corroborate. And
what is particularly remarkable, they are
facts which have for their vouchers all
modern Jews; for they entertain the same
sentiments, and, as Christians term them,
the same prejudices concerning the nature
of the Messiah’s kingdom, with their re-
 mote ancestors, and consequently they are
living witnesses that these facts are built
upon such a solid foundation of genuine
His-
Historical evidence, as to leave no room for doubt upon the mind of the intelligent and impartial enquirer!

Such being the acknowledged sentiments and prejudices of the Jewish nation in general, and of the Disciples in particular, concerning the nature of the Messiah's character, and of that kingdom which Jesus had announced as approaching; the delicacy of his situation, and the difficulties which he had to encounter, in unfolding to them the true nature of his character, must be abundantly evident from his very entrance on his public ministry. Every one must immediately perceive, from a due consideration of the nature of their expectations, at the time of his appearance; the absolute necessity that he was under, of his acting with the utmost prudence and circumspection—of his being very sparing of his declarations, on the one hand, that he was himself their Messiah, least the too great eagerness of the people should frustrate the great object of his mission; and, on the other, while he checked their ardor, lest he should totally destroy their expectations of his being the Messiah, by not giving them the necessary assurances of his coming.
in that character, and thereby induce them to abandon him.

If the Gospel History be examined with a close and impartial attention to these circumstances, the judicious and attentive Reader cannot fail to observe the most unequivocal proofs of our Lord's having conducted himself in such a manner as to answer both these important purposes. Far from being forward in declaring himself to be the Messiah, even to his most intimate friends and followers; it was highly to the credit of his character that, in general, he left this to be inferred from the excellence of the doctrines which he taught; from the purity and integrity of his conduct; and from the many wonderful works which he wrought among them. Occasionally, however; and as circumstances and events more particularly required, he gave them the most direct and unequivocal assurances of the coming of the Messiah; which answered the purpose of keeping up their expectations of his coming, in that character, and of insuring their attachment to him, till, by the full disclosure of all the events which were to take place, during his abode upon earth, they would be effectually convinced that they
they had totally mistaken the true nature of the Messiah's character! But it is remarkable that even when Jesus assured his Disciples of the coming of the Messiah, he most cautiously avoided saying that he was the person. He did not say—Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel before I declare myself to be the Messiah! But, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel before the Son of Man cometh. He did not say—There be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see me coming in my kingdom—but till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

This cautious mode of procedure, though it perhaps disappointed the adversaries of our Lord of laying hold of his words to his prejudice—though it probably did not answer the sanguine expectations even of his own Disciples—though it sometimes threw them into the greatest perplexity, when they compared what he said to them, with their own pre-conceived opinions of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom—though, in a word, it did not fully satisfy them of what they most wanted to know—yet it was the only method which prudence dictated, whether it respected Friends or Enemies;
Enemies; for he well knew what was in man, and was thoroughly aware that the former would gladly lay hold of any opportunity of accusing Him to the Jewish Rulers, and that the prejudices of the latter were not to be removed, but by the most gradual and gentle means. It was upon this account that he consulted those prejudices, and, with so much tenderness, sympathized with their weakness, well knowing that, in the course of his ministry, he should have instructions to give them, which were very different from those which they had been accustomed to hear, and events to unfold, in which both He and They would be deeply interested—events which were totally incompatible with all their ideas of the nature of the Messiah's character—events in a word, which, if all at once made known to them, could not fail of blasting all their expectations of his being the person whom they looked for as their Messiah!

The first notice which St. Matthew gives of our Lord's entering upon the arduous and important work of correcting the prejudices of his countrymen, respecting the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, is in his cele-
celebrated Sermon upon the mount; and, as those prejudices were common to the people at large, as well as to the Disciples; it is natural to expect that it would be addressed to the multitude in general, and not exclusively to the Apostles. The Evangelical Historian has been very particular in stating this to have been the fact; for at the close of the chapter preceding the Sermon upon the mount, after having observed that Jesus went about Galilee, preaching the Gospel, or good news of the kingdom of the Messiah, he says—there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan. And, in the beginning of the fifth chapter, the Historian says, expressly, that it was in consequence of seeing the multitudes that he went up upon a mountain, and addressed this Sermon to them. It is true, indeed, the Historian adds, that when Jesus was seated, his Disciples came to him; but this only proves that they made a part of his audience. But this matter is put out of all reasonable doubt, by the Historian's remark at the close of the Sermon; for he says that, when Jesus had ended these sayings,
the people were astonished at his doctrine; and that it might clearly be understood who were meant by the people, the Historian says, that when he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

Mr. Evanfon, who, upon all occasions, extols the credit of St. Luke at the expence of the rest of the Evangelists, says, that the Sermon upon the mount was delivered to the Disciples; but even he is forced to own, that it was in the audience of a great multitude of people, and that he intended his instructions for the whole multitude of auditors with which he was surrounded. He adds—If indeed he had not, he would have acted directly contrary to his own doctrine, and instead of displaying the moral light of his Religion to the people, would have covered it with a bushel. We must (therefore) he says, conclude that this discourse was intended to be, and actually was heard by the surrounding multitude. According to Mr. Evanfon's own account therefore, St. Matthew and St. Luke agree that the Sermon was addresed to the Jews at large, or to the multitude, and not exclusively to the Disciples. It ought farther to be observed, that the word Disciple
\textit{Disciple} is sometimes used in a very enlarged sense, in some passages in the Gospel History, and that it was so used by St. Luke seems very probable, from the phrase \textit{ex\varepsilon\chi\lambda\omicron\omicron\nu\beta\alpha\iota\omicron\omicron\nu\alpha\omicron}, which at this early period was hardly applicable to his constant followers, or at least certainly not to the Apostles. The evidence, therefore, seems to be complete, that the Sermon upon the mount was delivered to the multitude at large.

But of all criticisms, the most trifling seems to be that which Mr. Evanfon has made upon the place from whence this Sermon was delivered, upon which he expends nearly two whole pages; for the expression of St. Luke, notwithstanding all that Mr. Evanfon has said, is by no means contradictory to the account given by St. Matthew. The phrase \textit{\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\varepsilon\nu\deltavno\omicron} may, very fairly, be translated an even spot upon a mountain, as well as upon a proper plain, and that the Evangelist intended a plain upon the mountain seems evident, from the use of the word \textit{\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron}, which seems to have been unnecessary in describing a plain which was unconnected with a mountain. This word, therefore, seems emphatically to point out a particular
particular spot upon the mountain, from which our Lord might more conveniently address his auditors; for whoever has been upon a mountain, cannot be ignorant that an even spot, and large enough too to contain a multitude, is no uncommon phenomenon even upon a mountain. Accordingly, as eminent a scholar as the Christian world has known, supposes that *τοπὸς πεδίου* was not a valley, but a plain upon the hill.* Beau-sobre and Lenfant are of the same opinion.

* Grotius's words are these—Id est, de sublimiore sec. sua contulit se in planitiem montis, capacam majoris turbæ, ina sermo qui sequitur habitus est ετοι τοπον πεδίου, in planitie ut hic spud Syrum, & nihilominus in monte, quod omnino exigere videtur Matthæi narratio. Grot. in loc.

It is submitted to the judicious Reader, whether the opinion of Grotius is not supported by the consideration of the warmth of the climate in Judea; a mountain being much cooler than a plain, and consequently more comfortable both for the speaker and for the hearers. That Jesus retired thither to enjoy this convenience is most evident, from St. Luke's account, plainly in connection with the delivery of the Sermon; for he says, that *Jesus went up upon a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.* Now this he would hardly have done, but for the sake of the advantage of a cool situation, and the higher he was, the more comfortable probably he would find it. When therefore the multitude came to him, his descending from his more lofty retreat to an even spot upon the mountain, would afford them likewise the advantage of a cooler situation than if they had stood upon the plain, as Mr. Evanson asserts they did. And thus St. Matthew's and Luke's accounts are, in this respect at least, perfectly harmonious!

After
After what has been here presented to the Reader, let him judge of the propriety of Mr. Evanston’s reasoning!—“Now,” says he, “let any man who knows what it is to speak to a crowd of people, conceive what situation a speaker, who wished to be heard by as many as possible, would choose for himself, on such an occasion. If the people were in an open plain, he would endeavour to take the advantage of some small rise in the ground, or other mode of elevating himself, so as to be seen by his audience; or if an hill were adjoining, he would ascend the slope of the hill a little way, so as to answer the purpose, whilst the people remained in the plain; or if they ascended the hill, he would accomplish the same effect by remaining himself at the foot of it, in the plain: but would any man in his senses, so circumstanced, and intending to be heard by the crowd, go up to the top of the hill, which, from its convex form, must necessarily prevent all but those who immediately surrounded him, from either seeing or hearing him, and even there set himself down before he began to teach them.” “Yet precisely such,” says Mr. Evaston, “is the situation in which the Author of this History
tory makes our Saviour place himself, to instruct the people in the moral duties of the Gospel!"

A little candor, and even Mr. Everson's own reasoning, here quoted, might have shewn him, that going up upon a mountain did not necessarily suppose going up to the very top of it, and most certain it is, that St. Matthew affirms no such thing. But after all, who will venture to assert that St. Matthew's and St. Luke's accounts were delivered upon the same occasion? There are, indeed, some particulars in the two accounts common to both the Evangelists; but whoever will be at the pains to examine them, will find St. Matthew's Sermon far more diffuse and comprehensive than that of Luke, so that there is nothing unnatural in supposing that they were delivered upon different occasions, and were intended to answer different purposes!

It is difficult to refrain from making one remark here, namely, that Mr. Everson has chosen St. Luke's account for his favourite History, and the rest are, in his estimation, of no value—are, in short, Impostures! Dr. Priestley, on the contrary, has asserted,

* See Everson's Dissonance, p. 140.
that the authority of Luke is certainly less than that of an Apostle, and that he might possibly have been misinformed with respect to the early part of his History. It is not difficult to perceive the pernicious tendency of such opinions!

It being clear, from what has been said, and even from Mr. Evanson's view of the matter, that the Sermon upon the mount was addressed to the people at large; it will appear upon examination, that there is the strongest internal evidence that the first object of our Lord, in this Sermon, was to correct the erroneous opinions of his hearers, concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom. This will appear, from the following short paraphrase of the Beatitudes; which, though not absolutely necessary to the great design of this work, will not, perhaps, be thought wholly unconnected with it, or unworthy of the judicious Reader's attention, particularly as it will lead to the consideration of a few verses which immediately succeed them, the beauty, propriety, and force of which, seem not to have been sufficiently attended to.

The Jews entertained the fond imagination of enjoying high distinction, and possessing
feeling places of great trust and importance under their Messiah. But Jesus, who was thoroughly acquainted with the human heart, instead of saying that such a disposition was opposite to the character which became the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom, contented himself with simply describing the disposition that would qualify them for becoming such. Blessed, or happy, are they who are poor in spirit, or who are unambitious and humble minded, for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

With the possession of universal dominion, under their Messiah, and the exalted stations consequent upon it, the Jews, naturally enough, connected great pleasures and enjoyments of every kind. But Jesus, foreseeing the awful events which were to happen to their country, taught them that a state of sorrow and mourning was best suited to the circumstances of the times, and most agreeable to the declaration which he had made—that Repentance was a necessary preparation in persons of their description, for an entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. In the midst of the calamities which are coming upon the Jewish nation, they
they shall have their peculiar consolations; while those who are expecting great enjoyments and worldly pleasures, under the reign of their Messiah, shall have their views completely frustrated, and be involved in the general ruin which is coming upon the nation.

The Jews considered a war-like spirit in their nation, as essential to the promotion of their aspiring views, with regard to the conquests which they expected to make, under the banners of their Messiah. But to this Jesus opposed a spirit, which was of a nature, both in its principle and in its effects, totally different. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. This meekness of temper will better qualify them for enjoying with comfort, such a portion of this world's goods, as the condition of the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom requires, and the providence of God shall allot to them, than the most war-like courage, and the most heroic and enterprising spirit.

The Jews were thirsting for exemption from the servitude which they were under to the Romans, and still more to conquer and subdue them: and their appetites were not to be satiated but by becoming, under their expected Messiah, the absolute Lords of
of the world. But Jesus, on the contrary, endeavoured to turn their attention to a very different object, for the exercise of their ambition. **Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.** That will yield them more solid and durable satisfaction than the most extensive acquisitions of a worldly nature, and at the same time they shall have such a sufficiency of the enjoyments of this world, as shall answer all the purposes of real happiness. In a subsequent part of this Sermon, our Lord more fully explains this beatitude. ch. vi. 33. **Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, i.e. the righteousness which is inseparably connected with it, and all these things, viz. food and raiment, and all that is necessary to the comfortable enjoyment of life, shall be added unto you;** for, says our Lord—**Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.**

The Jews confined their charity and compassion to those of their own nation, and had no dealings, even with Samaritans, though more nearly allied to them, both in civil and religious sentiments, than any other people. But, in opposition to this narrowness of disposition, Jesus says—**Blessed are**
are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

St. Luke's manner of expression seems to be an admirable comment upon this passage.

ch. vi. 36. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful, i.e. Let your mercy be as extensive as that of the great Parent of the Universe; which is not confined to this or the other nation, but folds within its embraces the whole human race, and is kind even to the unthankful and to the evil.*

* That a charitable and humane disposition towards other nations, or parties who differ in sentiments from ourselves, is intended to be pointed out in this beatitude, seems extremely probable, from the very high pitch to which the Jews carried their national partiality. St. Peter candidly confessed that he, in common with the rest of his countrymen, considered it even as unlawful to keep company with, or to go to one of another nation, believing that they were, exclusively, the favorites of heaven. The unfriendly influence which this principle must have had in contracting the humane and benevolent affections, must be obvious to every one, and therefore it with great propriety made an important part of the instructions of one; the basis of whose Religion was, that God was the common Father of all mankind, to counteract such a narrowness of mind. If there is any one virtue of the human heart, more peculiarly calculated to produce happiness than another; it is the exertion of the humane and tender affections towards our fellow men; and when it is exerted upon that never to be forgotten and fundamental principle, that we are all the children of one common Parent; then it must do the highest honor to our nature, and be most acceptable and pleasing to him who is most assuredly concerned for the welfare of all mankind.

The
The Jews, as appears from various parts of the Gospel History, were extremely nice and punctilious in their external conduct, and lost no occasion of displaying the superior sanctity of their characters, by praying in the corners of the streets, by giving alms in the most public manner, by making broad their phylacteries, &c. while, at the same time, they devoured widows' houses, omitted the weightier matters of the law, and were, in reality, full of hypocrisy and iniquity. With a particular view to this part of their character, our Lord seems to have pronounced this beatitude—\textit{Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God}. No outward actions, however specious and plausible to men who can judge from the appearance only, are truly valuable in the sight of God, unless they proceed from purity of intention and an upright heart; nor will they who perform them be entitled to that enjoyment of God, which is the sum of all true happiness.

The sentiments of the Jews concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, naturally led them to cherish dispositions the most unfriendly to peace. But, to check, and if possible, to root out propensities so adverse to human happiness, and to
the quiet and security of mankind, Jesus says—*Blessed are the peace-makers*, for they shall be called or accounted as the children of God, who is the God of Peace; which would most eminently qualify them to become the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom, which they were so anxiously expecting should immediately appear!

A state of suffering, according to the ideas which the Jews had formed of those glorious times, which they were then expecting, was in a great measure, at least, incompatible with those times. If, however, opposition should possibly arise, they fully expected that, under the conduct of their Messiah, it would soon subside, and terminate in the completion of all their wishes. But the doctrine of Jesus upon this subject, taught them what, by referring to the History of their Ancestors, they might previously have known, namely, that an exemption from trouble was, at no period of their History, a mark of the divine displeasure. Blessed, or happy, says Jesus, *are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and
be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the Prophets who were before you.

How far the spirit of these beatitudes has been caught, in this paraphrase, must be left to the judicious Reader to determine; but it seems impossible not to perceive the reference which they had to the peculiar sentiments which influenced the Jews, with respect to the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and their admirable tendency to give them jufter views upon this important subject.

Having, in these beatitudes, announced to his hearers the qualifications which were peculiarly calculated to render them happy, under the reign of their Messiah, whose kingdom was eminently designed to be a kingdom of righteousness and peace, our Lord proceeds, with an admirable unity of design, to awaken the attention of his hearers to the importance of their situation as Jews, and their super-eminent advantages for the promotion and extention of the knowledge of what he had been teaching them, concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and of the dangerous consequences to themselves, of not making a right use of those
those advantages. v. 13. Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt hath lost its favor, or its saltiness, wherewith shall it be salted; or, rather, how shall it recover its saltiness? It is no longer good for any thing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men. That is, as the words seem fairly to imply, when considered in connection with the preceding and subsequent context, and more particularly with verses 19 and 20—Ye Jews, in the present state of the world, are yet, as ye have hitherto been, from the earliest period of your History, the salt of the earth—the only depositaries for the preservation of the knowledge of God among the nations of the earth: But if the salt hath lost its saltiness, or is become insipid; if by your traditions afterwards, in this very Sermon particularly specified, you have made void the laws of God, and so corrupted them as to render them of no effect, you will cease to answer the purposes of salt for preservation, and being become insipid or of no use, you will be thrown away, and trodden under foot.

In the following verse, our Lord changes the metaphor, but still expresses the same
sentiment, under the sublimest of images. v. 14. Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set, or built, upon a hill, cannot be hid. That is—Your situation for communicating light to the world around you, is as conspicuous as a city which is built upon an eminence, which is seen by every one, and cannot be concealed!

The situation of the Jewish nation, with respect to the nations which surrounded them, both at and before the time of our Saviour, gives a peculiar propriety and beauty to the metaphors here adopted, as applied to them nationally; and nothing surely could be more admirably adapted to rouse them to a just sense of these important prerogatives, than such a representation; especially when it is added, that by a neglect to improve these advantages, they would not only be exposed to the danger of losing them, but like salt which hath lost its saltiness, be cast out and trodden under foot. This was, unhappily and notoriously, the fact with respect to this infatuated and devoted nation! They soon lost their distinguished pre-eminence, and were, even to a proverb, cast out and trodden under foot—
the objects of contempt and derision to all nations; in which unhappy and deplorable condition they remain to this very day, the monuments of divine vengeance! "Jeru-
"salem," says Mr. Kett, "has been thus constantly trodden down of the Gentiles,
"the Romans, the Saracens, the Franks,
"and the Turks. Its antient inhabitants
"have been expelled and persecuted, and
"its holy places have been polluted. The
"eagles of idolatrous Rome, the crescent
"of the Impostor Mahomet, and the banner
"of Popery, carried by the Crusaders, have
"been successively displayed amidst the
"ruins of the sanctuary of Jehovah, for
"nearly 1800 years."*

If the preceding interpretaion of the 13th and 14th verses be just, there cannot be any difficulty in giving to the following verse a precise and determinate meaning; a meaning which is replete with sound reasoning, and which perfectly harmonizes with the last metaphor, of the Jews being the light of the world. v. 15. Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are

* See Kett's History, the Interpreter of Prophecy, PP. 304-5.
in the house. As if he had said—Ye Jews have been appointed by Providence to be the lights of the world, upon the same principle, and for the same purpose that men light a candle in their houses, namely, that all who are in them may enjoy the benefit of its light. This being the design of men, in their humbler spheres of action; it is for a like purpose, but for a far more important one, that God has placed you in the supereminent situation which you now enjoy. In this view, how natural and how forcible is the conclusion which our Lord draws from this reasoning? So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Having thus pointed out to the Jews, the superior importance of their situation among the nations of the world, under the metaphors of salt to preserve, and of light to communicate the knowledge of God, and having urged upon them the importance of improving the advantages which they possessed, by motives which were peculiarly interesting to them as Jews, our Lord proceeds, in the verse immediately following, with the same regard to the sentiments of the Jews, concerning the nature of the Messiah's
Meffiah's kingdom, which he had already, so pointedly, displayed, and particularly guards them against imagining that to promote their ambitious and self-interested purposes, it was his design to introduce a relaxation of the Eternal Laws of Justice, Equity and Righteousness, in their favor.

v. 17. Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets. Very far from it. On the contrary, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill; that is—I am not come to destroy either, but to fulfil both—to give perfection to the one, and to accomplish what the others have written of me; for verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one iota, or one tittle, shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. And to let them know of what immense importance the eternal laws of morality, the lights by which they were to shine before men, in his estimation, were; he adds, what must for ever do the highest honor to him and his Religion, v. 19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, (of the law) and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your
righteousness shall very far exceed (for so the original imports) the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The remaining part of this most excellent Sermon upon the mount, is plainly intended to correct, in detail, the highly vitiated morality of the Jews, in points of great and essential importance—to introduce in its stead such a purity and rectitude of morals as should extend to the whole conduct, internal as well as external, and such as would render them worthy of the subjects of his kingdom—such, in a word, as would make them to shine as lights in the world, and be productive of the best effects in promoting the knowledge of God and his Son, among the nations who were sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death; to illuminate whom, was one great and important purpose of the coming of the Messiah!

This view of the general nature and design of our Lord's Sermon upon the mount, and particularly of the former part of it, is sufficient, it may be presumed, not only to rescue it from the imputation which Mr. Evanson has thrown on it, of its being a defultory unconnected harangue, and an incoherent
coherent moral lecture; but to excite the admiration of every person of a just taste, of the wisdom which dictated it; sufficient to satisfy the most incredulous, that it contains every internal character of its being genuine, which the most rigid laws of criticism can require. The dispositions delineated in the beatitudes, are such as are most ornamental to human nature—such as are every way worthy of a teacher come from God, and such as might, a priori, have been expected from the Divine Author of our Religion; especially when addressing men, whose sentiments and characters were such as they are universally allowed to have been!

The effect which this discourse had upon the minds of the hearers, was such as might naturally have been expected from the use of a language which was, and could not but appear to them, so new and extraordinary. The Evangelist has not failed to point this out, in a very impressive and striking manner. *When Jesus, says he, had ended these sayings, the people were astonisshed at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.*

The Reader's attention is now particularly requested to a critical and minute examination
tion of the various passages, in the Gospel History, considered as such, which more immediately relate to the coming of Christ; in which he will possess the advantage, with very little trouble, of referring to those passages, as they stand in the New Testament; of forming an accurate judgment of the reasoning which is adopted, and of detecting any improper conclusions, if any such there should be, which either inattention, or prejudice, may have too hastily formed!

The eighth and ninth chapters of St. Matthew, which immediately follow the Sermon upon the mount, are chiefly employed in the relation of various acts of power which Jesus exerted, for the benefit of his countrymen, but chiefly with a view to engage their attention to him as the Messiah. And towards the close of the latter of these chapters, the Evangelist says, that Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel, or good news, of the kingdom.

It can require no formal proof, after what has been said, that the work, in which Jesus was here engaged, was the announcing the approach of the Messiah, or of the kingdom which he was to set up, and giving his hearers
hearers such instructions concerning its nature as circumstances might require. It seems equally evident, when it is said, immediately afterwards, that when Jesus saw the multitudes, and was moved with compassion towards them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd, that his compassion arose from a deep sense of the importance and the difficulty of his undertaking, and of the deplorable condition of the great body of the people, from the neglect or from the impositions of their Rulers. With this impression upon his mind, he says, v. 37. The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few—Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he may send forth laborers into his harvest.

In this connection the tenth chapter, with singular propriety, opens with an account of Jesus's investing the twelve Apostles, (whose names are particularly mentioned) with a power over unclean spirits, of healing all kinds of diseases, and of his giving them a commission to assist in the execution of his important office, of announcing to his countrymen the approach of the Messiah's kingdom. v. 1. And when he had called unto him his twelve

Dis-
Disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease. And he commanded them, saying—Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And, as ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

When our Lord here says, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, it must be observed, that it is precisely the same language which he made use of when he began his ministry, and that it plainly relates to the same event. And it is equally evident, that when, at the close of the preceding chapter, he is described as going through every city and village, preaching the Gospel, or good news, of the kingdom, that is, of the kingdom of the Messiah, he was performing the same office which his Apostles are here commissioned to execute.

In giving his Disciples a commission of such importance, it was evidently necessary that our Lord should give them such particular directions for the regulation of their conduct, as the nature of the service in which they were engaged, and the peculiar circumstances of the times required. This he does from the seventh to the sixteenth verse,
verse, which he concludes by telling them, that it would require the utmost exercise of their wisdom and prudence to discharge the duties of their office with success! Behold, says he, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves! In the seventeenth and following verses, he informs them of the great difficulties and hardships which they would have to encounter, in the faithful discharge of their commission. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they shall scourge you in their synagogues, and ye shall be brought before Governors and Kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it is not you who speak, but the spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. Moreover the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father his child; and children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And to shew, in the strongest manner possible, the violence of the opposition which they must expect to meet with, he adds, in the twenty-second verse—Ye shall be hated by all men for my name's sake.
It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a person who does not fully enter into the sentiments and prejudices of the Disciples of Jesus, upon the subject of the coming of the Messiah, to imagine the extreme surprise and astonishment which this prediction of the sufferings which they were to encounter, must have produced upon their minds; for though they could not perhaps expect to be entirely exempted from sufferings, in the full attainment of the great object of their ambition; yet neither could they have entertained any idea of such mighty opposition, at least from their own countrymen, as to be delivered up to the great councils of their own nation, and scourged in their synagogues, for proclaiming tidings which were equally grateful, and equally expected, by the whole Jewish nation as by themselves. Our Lord therefore being fully aware of the effect which his prediction of such mighty and such unexpected opposition, from their own countrymen, must have had upon their minds, thought it absolutely necessary, besides the general assurance which he gave them, in the nineteenth and twentieth verses, of assistance from above, to offer to their attention some farther
farther considerations of the most consolatory kind, to enable them, with becoming fortitude, to bear the troubles to which they might be exposed in the discharge of their duty.

The first consolatory consideration which our Lord offered to his Disciples was, what could not but have a considerable effect upon their minds—that by perseverance they would not fail, ultimately, of success. v. 22. He that shall endure to the end shall be saved; plainly intimating that they must not expect the attainment of the great object of their wishes, without faithfully and diligently performing the duties, which the nature of the service in which they were engaged, particularly required, whatever troubles they might meet with, in the execution of that service. Another consideration of a consoling nature, which he offered to them was, what could not fail to have its due weight upon their minds, under such circumstances, that in very pressing exigencies, it would be lawful, and even necessary, to save themselves from the impending dangers to which they might be exposed, by flying from them. v. 23. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. But neither
neither of these considerations would, of themselves, have been sufficient to have animated the Disciples of Jesus, to endure the troubles which he had taught them to expect, without having their minds particularly directed to the time when they should have their hopes of the attainment of the great object of all their expectations realized; when the kingdom of heaven should no longer be at hand, but actually come. Our Lord appears to have been thoroughly sensible of this, and therefore he not only tells them that they should ultimately be successful, and that, in the mean time, it would be lawful, in cases of imminent danger, to flee from one city to another, but he immediately adds, in this connection, and that in terms the most pointed and decisive, that they should not have gone over the cities of Israel—they should not have fully completed their mission of announcing the approach of the Messiah's kingdom, ere they would be fully satisfied that their wishes of his coming were fully accomplished! When they persecute you in this city, flee to another; for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come. Such an assurance as
as this, to men whose views were so strongly directed towards the expectation of a Messiah, who, in their opinion, was ultimately to lead them to conquest and to empire, was absolutely necessary; and it is highly probable that, if it had not been given, they would have forsaken him, notwithstanding the high regard which they entertained for the peculiar excellence of his personal character!

It is not easy to imagine that the Disciples of Jesus could, in such circumstances as are here described, have entertained any other idea of the coming here mentioned, than the coming of the Messiah, or of the kingdom which he had announced to be at hand; for to that coming their whole attention was originally directed, and they were themselves invested with a commission, as related in this very chapter, for this express purpose, to inform their countrymen of its approach. As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. And here our Lord tells them, for their encouragement in the discharge of their duty, that they should not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man come. That the Disciples understood this phrase; the coming of the Son
Son of Man, as descriptive of the coming of the Messiah, seems to be pretty evident, from the question of our Lord, in the sixteenth chapter of this Evangelist; for upon his asking his Disciples—Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am; they immediately replied—Thou art the Christ, or the Messiah, the Son of the living God. What can deserve the name of demonstration of the true meaning of a Writer, if this, and indeed if the whole of the context, does not? Or how can any other sense be put upon the coming of the Son of Man, than the coming of the Messiah, without violating all the rules of good writing, and rendering it impossible to ascertain the Writer's meaning!

To these arguments which our Lord made use of to support the minds of the Disciples, under the difficulties and hardships to which he had assured them they would be exposed, in the execution of their commission, he adds another, which, if not of equal force with the last, was at least admirably adapted to reconcile them to their situation, however hard it might appear to them; for, in the twenty-fourth verse, he tells them, in terms sufficiently significant, that he had himself, at least equal,
equal, if not superior difficulties to encounter. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more, is it to be expected, that they will call them of his household? Fear them not therefore.

If ever clearness and perspicuity were to be found in any writing, either antient or modern, surely this has a just claim to it! What reasoning can be more close, or better adapted to the situation of the Disciples of Jesus, at the moment of their setting out to execute the commission with which they were invested? And, at the same time that it stands distinguished for perspicuity, it carries, in every part of it, such unequivocal marks of genuine History, as must leave, on the mind of him who considers it with attention, no doubt of its authenticity, nor suspicion that any other meaning can possibly be affixed to the whole discourse! Nor must it be forgotten, that while it stands recommended for these most essential qualities of good writing, it affords the most pleasing and the most affecting traits of the benevolence and humanity of our Lord's charac-
character, in affording to his followers every consolation and encouragement which the peculiarity of their situation demanded!

It is unnecessary to the purpose of this enquiry, to take any notice of the remaining part of this chapter, farther than to observe, that it plainly contains a continuation of the same subject, with additional directions how the Disciples were to conduct themselves, in the arduous employment which they had undertaken, and the most weighty and awful considerations suggested, of the extreme danger of preferring even the dearest interests of this life, to the superior duty which they owed to him. v. 32. Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it.

The judicious Reader will observe, that what is here asserted by our Lord, is perfectly
perfectly consistent with the soundest reasoning; as it proceeds upon the fundamental principle of all true Religion, that God is to be obeyed rather than man. And that the Disciples might conduct themselves upon this principle, he directs them to look up to God, as the fountain of all his claims.

v. 40. He that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

q. d. You have received a commission from me, in consequence only of my having received a prior commission from my Father. To him, therefore, you are ultimately to be accountable for the manner in which you shall discharge the commission which you have received immediately from me!

For their farther encouragement to be faithful to him, he adds, in the forty-first verse,

He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink, to one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a Disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

From this view of the chapter under consideration it appears, that the whole of it
it is employed in laying down rules for the regulation of the conduct of the Disciples, in the execution of their commission to preach the glad tidings of the approach of the kingdom of heaven. And this is confirmed by the Evangelist, in the beginning of the following chapter; for it is said, that when Jesus had made an end of commanding, or rather of giving directions to his twelve Disciples, he departed from thence, to teach and to preach in their cities.

The second verse of this chapter commences with an account of a message which John the Baptist, while under confinement, sent to Jesus, in consequence of his hearing of the miraculous works which the latter had performed. *Now when John had heard in the prison, the works of Christ, he sent two of his Disciples, and said unto him—Art thou he that should come, whom, as Jews, we are anxiously expecting is now about to appear, or are we to expect another?* This message of the Baptist is one among many proofs of the general expectation of the coming of the Messiah, at the time when Jesus appeared. And his answer is well worthy of particular notice, as it clearly shews his cautious manner of conducting himself, when
when questioned concerning the nature of his character, even by those to whom, it might be thought, that he might have expressed himself more frankly. Without directly answering their question, he refers them to the many wonderful works which they had either been eye-witnesses of his performing, or which had been reported to them, by the testimony of others. v. 4. 5. Go and shew John again those things which ye do bear and see. The blind receive their sight—the lame walk—the lepers are cleansed—the deaf hear—the dead are raised up—and, he adds, the poor have the Gospel, that is the good tidings of the kingdom of the Messiah, preached to them. The following sentence seems to be particularly worthy of attention, as it has a manifest allusion to the prejudices of the Jews, upon the subject of the coming of the Messiah. v. 6. Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me. Happy is the man who shall not be offended at my present humble appearance, but shall own me to be the person which my works declare me to be, notwithstanding I have none of those worldly honors and emoluments to bestow, which are generally considered as
inseparably connected with the coming of the Messiah!

The passage to which the Reader's attention is next requested, upon the subject of the coming of Christ, is in the sixteenth chapter of the same Evangelist, where our Lord, upon his entrance into the country which was under the jurisdiction of Philip, asked his Disciples what was the public opinion concerning him? v. 13. *Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?* Their reply was—*Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremiah, or one of the Prophets.* Our Lord then asked them their own opinion of the nature of his character. v. 15. *But whom say ye that I am?* to which the Apostle Peter (probably in the name of the rest) without hesitation, replied—*Thou art the Christ, or the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*

If the state of things, at the time this conversation took place, is considered, it required no small exercise of faith, to make this noble confession; for there were then no signs of the nature of those which they had affixed to the character of the Messiah, which could lead them to think their favorite
vorite idea of a worldly kingdom was about
to be realized. And it is particularly worthy
of notice, from their account of the senti-
ments of the people at large, that they were
singular in their opinion upon this head;
some saying that he was John the Baptif,
some that he was Elias, and others Jere-
miah, or one of the Prophets; but none
that he was the Christ, or the Messiah.
This has been thought extraordinary, and
it has been considered as not easily to
be accounted for, from the known and ac-
knowledged sentiments which the Disciples
of Jesus then held; which certainly were
not, at this time, materially different from
the rest of their countrymen, concerning
the nature of his character. But surely
there is nothing contrary to probability, in
the supposition that they might believe
Jesus to be the Messiah, though he had not
yet given them any of those distinguished
proofs of his sustaining that character,
which they had affixed to it. They had
heard him say, that the kingdom of heaven, or
of the Messiah, was at hand. They had
themselves received a commission to an-
nounce its approach; they had seen him
work many miracles, which very fully
evinned
evinced that he was an extraordinary person, and from an intimate acquaintance with him, they entertained no doubt of the perfect integrity of his character. Add to all this, that they had had frequent opportunities of observing the superior excellence and sublimity of his instructions, and it will be found, in no respect, unnatural or improbable, that they should believe him to sustain that character, though he had given them none of those proofs of his Messiahship, which they, in common with the rest of their countrymen, had considered as inseparable from that character! Besides, it should be observed, that by their following him with such unshaken perseverance, they sufficiently declared, that they expected the time would one day come, when he would give them the fullest satisfaction that he was the Messiah!

But perhaps this premature declaration of St. Peter, as it has been termed, that Jesus was the Messiah, is best accounted for, by our Lord himself, in the eulogium which, upon that occasion, he pronounced upon him, and fully justifies the supposition which has been just made, viz. that his excellent instructions had drawn from Peter this
this noble confession. Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. As if he had said: Had you consulted flesh and blood only, your worldly prejudices and secular views, you would never, under the present circumstances, have acknowledged me to be the Messiah; but the doctrines which I have taught you, in the name of my Father, have plainly influenced your judgment upon this occasion, contrary to all human appearances, and extorted from you a confession, which no other consideration could have induced you to have made!

This confession of St. Peter, was so contrary to the general ideas which then prevailed among the Jews, concerning the nature of the Messiah's character, that our Lord, whose prudent attention to the circumstances of things, appears never, for a moment, to have deserted him, thought it necessary to give his Disciples a strict charge, not to tell any one that he was the Messiah. Then charged he his Disciples, that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ, or the Messiah. This caution was perfectly agreeable to our Lord's general conduct, and
to his own precept, to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves; and it was for this obvious reason, absolutely necessary, that if once such an opinion should be propagated, it might not only have created popular tumults and insurrections in his favor, which he, at all times, most carefully avoided, but might have entirely defeated the great and important purposes of his mission!

But our Lord did not stop here. He not only thought it necessary to charge his Disciples to tell no one that he was the Messiah; but as he had, by his decided approbation of St. Peter's confession of his being the Messiah, acknowledged that he actually sustained that character; he plainly foresaw the absolute necessity of checking any worldly views, which might now begin to operate, with redoubled force, upon the minds, even of the Disciples themselves, with respect to their expectation of their beloved master's coming in that character! For this purpose it was, with the most consummate wisdom, that he chose this opportunity of informing them of the sufferings which he himself was to undergo. From that time forth, says the Evangelist, i.e. from the time when St. Peter made his noble
noble confession that he was the Messiah; or from the time when he charged them not to tell any one that he sustained that character, began Jesus to shew unto his Disciples, how that he must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the Elders, and chief Priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.*

When our Lord, as hath already been seen, in the tenth chapter of this Evangelist, had forewarned his Disciples of the great troubles to which they might be exposed, in

* Our Lord having predicted his own sufferings and death, which afterwards were most exactly accomplished, affords a strong proof of itself, of his being a true Prophet of God; but when this prediction is combined with that of the antient Prophets foretelling the same events, they form together a body of evidence, which is not to be resisted by those who are judges of the nature of evidence!

The judicious Reader cannot but be pleased with the observations of Mr. Kett upon this subject, in his History, the Interpreter of Prophecy. p. 227. to p. 235. "So clear " and full," says he, "are the declarations of Isaiah, rela- " tive to the coming of the Messiah, the nature of his king- "dom, and the benefits resulting to mankind from its " establishment, that he has, with great propriety, been " called the Evangelical Prophet. One of his predictions " in particular can never be too frequently brought forward, " as an instance of a revelation of the Divine Will, directed " to one uniform course of circumstances and events. The " regularity of its plan is unbroken: it is complete in its " various parts, and it stands detached from other subjects. " It is a striking picture, of which the outlines are strongly " marked,
in the execution of their commission to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, the Evangelist gives not the slightest intimation of their having expostulated with Jesus upon the occasion; though he, at the same time, told them they were such as awaited himself, and for this reason, probably, that they could not, upon their own principles, expect that the purposes of his Messiahship could be attained, without both their master and themselves being exposed to some difficulties! But, no sooner did he

"marked, and the colours are natural and lively. The form of expression is remarkable; for the Prophet speaks of things to come, as if they were either present or past. Fully occupied by the importance of his subject, and carried forward to distant times, he flies over the interval between the prediction and its fulfilment, and writes in the manner of an exact and faithful historian. Isaiah liii. 3d to the 13th."

Having quoted the passage here referred to, at full length, Mr. Kett says, "This Prophecy is an exact anticipation of some of the most remarkable circumstances relating to the life and death of Christ, and the great benefits of his Passion." And to prove that it was literally accomplished in our Saviour, Mr. K. brings together the parallel passages in the prophetical and in the historic writings, and then says, "Struck by the exact application of this passage to the character and sufferings of Christ, the devout Eunuch of Ethiopia listened to the explanatory narrative of St. Philip, and became a zealous convert to the faith. In this instance the power of Prophecy, as one great evidence of the truth of Christianity, was eminently displayed."
enter into farther particulars, and foretell, in a close connection with an acknowledge-
ment made by themselves, that he was the Messia/h, that such sufferings awaited him, as would terminate in a violent, ignominious, and cruel Death, and that from the hands of their own countrymen—from the Elders, the chief Priests, and the Scribes, than they immediately took the alarm! And well they might; for these sufferings, and from such a quarter too, were so totally incompatible with the ideas which they had affixed to the Messia/h's character, that they could no longer keep silence! And Peter, who, upon all occasions, seems to have been most forward to express his attachment to his master, immediately exclaimed—Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee. The Evangelists have not failed to mark the extreme astonishment of the Disciples, upon this interesting subject, in the most pointed manner; for in the next chapter, upon the same subject being renewed, St. Matthew says, v. 25. they were ἄπνεον αἰθίῳσιν υπέρφιλος filled with extreme grief at the news. St. Mark's expression, ch. ix. 32. is still more forcible; for it very strongly expresses the extreme perplexity into which they were
were thrown, in consequence of this prediction, ἀπέστειλεν διὰ τοῦ στίχου—they knew not what to make of the matter. And St. Luke has exactly the same sentiment with St. Mark, with this addition, that it was παρακαλώμενον hid from them, or so wrapped up in darkness, that they could not perceive what it meant; that is, their prejudices concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, plainly hindered them from comprehending how such an event could be compatible with it.

The evidence that the prejudices of the Disciples were the real causes of their astonishment, and indeed could not but be so, it would be impossible to doubt, even if our Saviour had not pointed it out; but his reply to Peter renders it absolutely decisive. ch. xvi. 23. Get thee behind me Satan, thou art an offence to me; for thou savourest not τὰ τῶν θεοῦ the things of God, or spiritual things, but τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων the things of men, or temporal things. St. Luke likewise gives a very strong proof that prejudice was the real cause of their not understanding our Lord; for upon his saying, ch. ix. 45. that they understood not this saying—that it was hid from them, and that they perceived it not, he adds, in the verse immediately follow-
ing—Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest, i.e. which of them should fill the most exalted stations in the Messiah's kingdom. The same contention is recorded upon another occasion, near the close of our Lord's life, by the same Evangelist. ch. xxii. 24. There was also, says he, a striving among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

It being indisputable, from our Lord's own account, that his Disciples were chiefly influenced by views of worldly ambition, when they so strongly remonstrated with him on the subject of the sufferings which he told them he should have to undergo—what line of conduct was it natural for him, upon such an occasion, to pursue? What line of conduct did he actually pursue? Why precisely that which he had pursued, when he gave them their commission to preach the glad tidings of the approach of the Messiah's kingdom; for as he there told them, as has been noticed at large, of the troubles which they would have to encounter, in the discharge of their duty, and at the same time plainly hinted, that the same, or even greater troubles, awaited himself; so he says here, v. 24. If any man will 
come after me, if any man will be my Disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. As if he had said—The troubles and sufferings which I have told you were coming upon me, have given you great offence; but I now tell you, that if you will follow me with fidelity, you must deny yourselves, by giving up those worldly gratifications which have got such a strong ascendency in your minds, in your expectation of the coming of the Messiah, and you must take up your cross, as I do mine, and must expect to meet with the same, or similar sufferings, in the discharge of your duty. He then says, v. 25. Whosoever will save his life, by meanly shrinking from his duty, on account of any sufferings that may befall him, shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it. But how find it? Why, says St. John, in a passage which seems to be an accurate paraphrase of this—He shall keep, or rather preserve it unto life eternal. In the two following verses, the superior advantage of preferring duty to interest, however extensive, is set in the strongest light which the power of language can possibly convey; for, says our Lord—What is a man profited, if he shall gain
gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? No equivalent can be found, in the whole universe, equal to it in value! And as a confirmation of the strong case which our Lord had put in the two preceding verses, he adds, v. 27. For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Nothing can be more evident than that the attention of the Disciples is here directed to a state of happiness, in a future world, as the reward of any sufferings which they might be subjected to, in consequence of their faithful adherence to him, as infinitely more worthy of their regard, than any acquisitions, however splendid and extensive, of a merely worldly nature. No reasoning can be imagined more closely connected, or better calculated to check the too eager expectations of the Disciples of Jesus, with respect to the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, than the whole of this discourse; none could be more fitted to reconcile them to the troubles which they might have to undergo, in consequence of their attachment to him; for it shewed
them, very strongly, his own determined contempt of danger, and consequently had a very powerful tendency to fortify their own minds to meet the calamities which they might have to share in common with him. *The Disciple is not, as he had formerly said, above his master, nor the servant above his Lord.* It is enough for the Disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his Lord.

Had our Lord's address to his Disciples finished here, all would have been perfectly intelligible to the plainest understanding; but however much to the purpose it might have been, still it was not alone sufficient to satisfy their minds of what they most of all wanted to be informed. They knew that the Messiah was to come, and they still continued to expect his coming, with all the eagerness, and, at the same time, with all the prejudices with the rest of their countrymen. Whatever difficulties and perplexities therefore they might have in accounting for events, so foreign to their expectation, as Jesus had been teaching them would certainly take place; yet they could not, and it is abundantly evident, in fact, that they did not renounce their hopes of his coming in that character. They had, even in this very
very discourse, as has been seen, declared that he was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and he had, in the strongest terms, expressed his approbation of that declaration! Troubles and sufferings, in the accomplishment of the duties of his office, as the Messiah, were most certainly not incompatible, even upon their own principles, with that character, though they had no idea of such sufferings as Jesus had predicted, till he told them of them: still it was absolutely necessary, amidst such grating predictions, to support their expectations, and to interweave with them assurances that those expectations would be realized. These assurances were so necessary to complete their satisfaction upon the subject, that all other arguments, however forcible, would plainly have been thrown away upon them. Our Lord was perfectly aware of this, and therefore, with the utmost propriety, he sums up the whole, by an assurance of his coming in the character, not of the judge of the world, but of the Messiah, and that in terms of the greatest solemnity and strength of language. v. 28. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

14 It
It is impossible to doubt that the former of these advents, mentioned in the twenty-seventh verse, is closely connected with our Saviour's reasoning, which was intended to reconcile the Disciples to the sufferings which he had informed them were to befall himself. And the evidence that the latter advent was connected with the conversation which gave rise to the subsequent discourse, appears to be no less clear; for it was as essentially necessary to confirm them in that faith which they had so nobly avowed, namely, that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Nothing, it may be presumed, could possibly have prevented the perceiving this connection, but the intervention of the argument of our Lord, to reconcile his Disciples to the events which he had predicted were to happen to him. But surely the rules of sound reasoning will justify his returning, after having said what he deemed sufficient to attain that object, to the subject which first occupied his attention? What that was, will not, and, indeed, cannot be disputed. And a close attention cannot fail, it may be presumed, after what has been said, to enable the judicious Reader to perceive, that the
last verse has an immediate relation, not to
the verse immediately preceding, but to that
subject, and to that only; for he there
asserts, that they shall see the Son of Man,
the Messiah, coming in his kingdom, and
that they might have the most distinct and
correct ideas, both of the nature and time
of his coming, he expressly informs them,
that there were some then standing there who
should not taste of death till they saw the Son of
Man coming in his kingdom; which is clearly
distinct from his coming with his angels, to
give to every man according to his works;
the former being the language which he
used to denote the coming of the Messiah—the
latter of his coming finally to judge the world.

In the chapters which are parallel to
this, under consideration, there seems to be
nothing worthy of particular notice, but
what tends, in the strongest manner, to
confirm the sense which is here given. St.
Matthew says—there are some standing here
who shall not taste of death till they see the Son
of Man coming in his kingdom. In St. Mark,
our Lord's reasoning, and the occasion
which gave rise to it, are precisely of the
same import, though the verse which con-
ccludes the subject is, by a strange inatten-
tion,
tion, or misconception of the Translator, made to begin a new chapter, which has a direct tendency to mislead the Reader!

Mark viii. 34. Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. v. 35. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospels, i.e. for the sake of the good news which I have announced, the same shall save it. v. 36. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? v. 37. Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? v. 38. Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. ch. ix. 1. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that there be some standing here, who shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. St. Luke’s account is as follows. ch. ix. 23. And he said to them all— If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. v. 24. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. v. 25. For what is
is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels. v. 27. But, or nevertheless, I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.

Here the judicious and attentive Reader is requested to observe, that in all the three Evangelists, our Lord's reasoning is, in substance, exactly the same, and the occasion which gave rise to it is so notoriously so, that there is no necessity for troubling him with the repetition of it: And the very variations of the concluding verse of each of the Evangelists, strongly confirm the sense here contended for. St. Matthew says they should see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom: St. Mark, that they should see the kingdom of God come with power: and St. Luke, that they should see the kingdom of God. If this language be understood, of the coming of the Messiah, which it is allowed on all hands, at that time, engrossed the thoughts of the Disciples of Jesus, and which, it is hardly to be conceived, they could understand in any
any other sense; all is natural and easy, and most exactly coincides with his original language, and with that language which he had taught them to make use of, when he first gave them their commission! But if a second coming, after the Ascension of Jesus, and that while some who were then living, be intended, how was it possible for the Disciples to understand him? how reconcile the two advents with each other? But they, it may be said, did not always understand him. True, they did not. But the question is, whether, with the sentiments which they avowedly entertained, they could possibly imagine that the great purposes of the Messiah's first coming should have been ascertained to their satisfaction, before it had been acknowledged by themselves to have taken place! Could the Disciples of Jesus have understood him as predicting the end of the world, in the strict sense of that phrase, at such an early period, there can be no doubt that they must have forsaken him, as an Impostor, as not answering, in the most essential and important respects, the true characteristics of the Messiahship; for, if the coming mentioned in these passages of the several Evangelists, means his coming to 

judge
judge the world, as has been contended; how, even in the estimation, and upon the principles of the Disciples themselves, were the prophecies of the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, over all the kingdoms of the earth, to be accomplished? In every view, therefore, in which the subject can fairly be considered, the supposition that this was our Lord's meaning, in these passages, is most preposterous and absurd, and countenanced by no one circumstance of probability, or just reasoning! Upon the contrary, the connection and occasion of the discourse—the declaration that Jesus was the Christ, or the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and Jesus's approbation of that declaration, followed by his prediction of his own sufferings and death, naturally, and, indeed, necessarily led him to assure them, that notwithstanding these events, so contrary to their expectations, their hopes of his coming, as the Messiah, should not be disappointed; but that some of those who were then present, should not taste of death till they saw him coming in his kingdom.

If the view which has now been given of the tenth and sixteenth chapters of this Evangelist, be perfectly accurate and satisfactory
factory to the judicious and attentive Reader; it will appear that the conduct of our Lord, upon these different occasions, was at once a proof of the strict integrity of his character, and of his extreme sensibility to the peculiar delicacy of the situation of his Disciples, owing to the strong prejudices which they had imbibed, concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and of the necessity of his adapting his instructions to those prejudices! With the most heroic fortitude and intrepidity, he apprized them of events which were totally incompatible with all their ideas of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and, at the same time, with the most distinguished tenderness and humanity, he endeavoured, by every interesting consideration, to lead them to the most enlarged views of the great object of his mission—to correct their prejudices and, above all, to afford them all the consolation and encouragement which the peculiarity of their situation required; in the one case telling them, that they should not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man came; and in the other, that there were some of those who were then present, who should not taste of death till
till they saw the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

It must likewise be observed, as a still farther proof of the benevolence and humanity of the character of Jesus, and of the superior wisdom which directed his conduct, that the painful discoveries which he found it necessary to unfold to his Disciples, were gradual, and as they were able to bear them! When he first gave them their commission to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom of heaven, or of the Messiah, he told them that they must expect to meet with much ill-treatment, and run great hazards in the execution of their office, and that he himself should not be exempted from similar troubles. But it was not till they had seen him perform the most numerous and astonishing miracles—till they had formed an acquaintance with him sufficient to engage their affections towards him—till, in short, they were so fully satisfied of the perfect integrity of his character, as to extort from them a declaration that they believed him to be the Messiah, that he ventured to give them any explicit and direct information that he was to be the victim of Jewish malice, and that he was to die by their
their hands upon a cross, as a notorious Malefactor and Impostor! How necessary this prudent caution was, is most evident, from the extreme astonishment which they even then expressed, and their utter inability to comprehend what he could possibly mean by such a declaration! It may therefore reasonably be presumed, that if it had been made before, it would have totally overwhelmed them with despair, and have induced them entirely to have forsaken him!

If this cautious and prudent conduct was necessary upon these occasions, it certainly could not be less so, in the discoveries which Jesus had yet to make to them; for what could have been more directly opposite to all their deep rooted prejudices, concerning the nature of the Messiah’s kingdom, than his prediction of the ruin of their Temple, the entire destruction of Jerusalem, and the subsequent dispersion of their whole nation? The effect which an early and premature discovery of these calamitous events must have had upon their minds, cannot possibly be doubted! Our Lord, therefore, knowing how extremely ungrateful these awful predictions could not but be to them, seems to have been induced, in the
the earlier part of his ministry, to have communicated them by distant hints and obscure intimations, and chiefly by the aid of parable.* And it is highly probable, that he postponed a full and explicit prediction of these fearful calamities, till towards the close of his life, that their minds might be the better fortified to give him a patient hearing, upon a subject so truly disagreeable to them, and so contradictory to all their expectations. And when he did communicate them, his humane regard to their prejudices is, evidently, as conspicuous as in the cases which have been already stated; for he interweaves with them such assurances of his coming, and such particular cautions to beware of deceivers, who should assume the character of the Messiah, as the peculiar delicacy and difficulties of their situation, so urgently required!

* Many of our Lord's parables have an evident relation to that melancholy event, and were probably delivered at an early period of his ministry, when it would have been inconsistent with the great ends of it, to have been more explicit. In the following places, our Lord uses the parabolic method in speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem. Luke xiii. 6, 29. Matt. xxii. 1-7. Luke xiv. 17-24. Matt. xxi. 33-46. Mark xii. 1-12. Luke xx. 9-19. Luke xix. 11-27.

The
The prediction of the ruin of their Temple, (in which that of their country was necessarily involved) was in consequence of their taking a survey* of its magnificent buildings; the destruction of which, our Lord told them, would be so complete, that there should not be left one stone upon another, which should not be thrown down.† This awful

* The Survey of the Temple, according to our translation, produced this question from our Lord—See ye not all these things? But perhaps the original rather expresses a caution than a question—Look not on all these things, i.e. with excessive veneration and delight, as you have hitherto been accustomed to do—for verily I say unto you, there shall not be left one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down. This gives an energy to our Lord's prediction, which is strongly supported by the narration in St. Luke, in the parallel chapter, which is thus expressed—As for these things which ye beheld, the days will come in which there shall not be one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down.

† "Not leaving one stone upon another," says the Bishop of Waterford, "is a proverbial and hyperbolical way of speaking, to denote very exemplary destruction." Dr. Jortin, speaking of the Temple at Jerusalem, says," it was so magnificent, that it was esteemed, for art and beauty, one of the wonders of the world; whence it was natural to expect that the Romans, according to their usual custom, amidst their conquests, would endeavour to preserve it safe and entire. And Josephus tells us, that Titus laboured with all his power to save it; but that his soldiers, as if moved by a divine impulse, would not hearken to his positive and repeated orders, but set fire to every part of it, till it was entirely consumed, and the soil on which it stood was ploughed up, and not one stone left on another." See Jortin's Remarks on Eccles. Hist. vol. i. p. 30.
prediction, very naturally, led the Disciples of Jesus to enquire when these things should be, and if they must be, for that, as was before observed, is evidently the elipsis to be supplied—what shall be the sign of thy coming? Thus far all the three Evangelists agree; but St. Matthew has an additional question—and of the end of the world? The surprise and astonishment of the Disciples at our Lord's prediction, is sufficiently obvious; but, of the precise meaning of these questions, together with the meaning of our Lord's reply, there is a considerable difference of opinions among Commentators and Divines; some referring them to the single event which led the Disciples to put them—others asserting that they relate, not to the destruction of Jerusalem only, but to the final judgment of the world; and others again declaring, that they relate to three perfectly different and distinct events. Of this latter opinion is Mr. Kett, who, in his late publication, entitled History the Interpreter of Prophecy, having quoted St. Mark's account, says—"The parallel passages of Matthew and Luke, plainly indicate that this enquiry respected the destruction of Jeru-

* See p 30.
"Salem—the second coming of our Lord, and
the end of the world—events,” he adds,
which they possibly expected would happen
together, and to which the reply of our
Lord evidently refers."

But, if the enquiry of the Disciples re-
spected these several events, and the reply of
our Lord evidently refers to these events; it
will be extremely difficult, if not impossible,
to parry the objection of the Historian of
the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire,
which it is the principal design of this work
to confute; for it is indisputable, that what-
ever event, or events, are described in these
parallel chapters, they all agree that they
were to happen in that generation.

The learned University Preacher, speaking
of the twenty-fourth of Matthew, says, it is
"a chapter in which a prophecy of the de-
struction of Jerusalem is entangled with an
apparent or a real prediction of the approaching
dissolution of the world.” He adds—
"The various and opposite methods which
Theologians have adopted, to remove an
objection which is too obvious to be over-
looked, form, it must be confessed, a very
considerable presumption that an adequate
solution of the difficulty has not hitherto
been
been discovered, and that the objection (of the Historian) is founded on the basis of truth.*

The natural supposition, one should have imagined, previous to enquiry, would have been, that as our Lord's prediction evidently related solely to the destruction of Jerusalem; the question of the Disciples would have been confined to this event, and to a solicitude to be informed, how such an event could possibly be reconciled with his coming as the Messiah. This will be found, in fact, to be the case with respect to the accounts both of St. Mark and St. Luke; but St. Matthew, as has before been observed, it must be confessed, has an additional question, the precise meaning of which, it has not been so easy to determine.

But whether there be one, two, or three events described, in the parallel chapters of

* See Edwards's Sermon, p. 18. He adds—"Some interpreters imagine that the prophecy relates entirely to the ruin of the Jewish nation:—others, by the convenient introduction of types and double senses, preserve in it a reference throughout to the consummation of all things:—Some have contended that it partly belongs to the former, and partly to the latter; but what portions of it are applicable to the one, and what to the other, they cannot ascertain:—while a few have ventured to assert, that it represents the final judgment as immediately subsequent to the Jewish calamities."
the Evangelists; it will readily be allowed, can only be determined by a critical and minute enquiry into the meaning of these questions, as they have stated them, and of the answer or answers which our Lord has given to these questions. It cannot, however, but appear very strange, to imagine that the Disciples should have expected events so extremely heterogeneous, and so totally different in their nature, to happen together; for all their ideas upon the subject of the coming of the Messiah, so far, at least, as has yet appeared, were most certainly in direct contradiction to such an opinion, and that they were not essentially changed, till after the Resurrection of their Lord, is demonstrably evident, from the question which they put to him, after that event had taken place. Act. i. 6. Lord wilt thou, at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel?* It is true indeed, that our Lord directed the attention of his Disciples to a future state, in which every man should receive according to his works,

* It should be observed, that the Disciples, by restoring the kingdom to Israel, undoubtedly meant, the Messiah's exercising kingly power and authority, and, particularly, his rescuing the Jewish nation from that servitude to the Romans, which they had long, with the greatest impatience, submitted to!
as a most powerful and engaging motive, for their conducting themselves in a proper and becoming manner, in the discharge of the commission with which he had invested them; but there is no evidence hitherto, of his having given the slightest hint when that judgment should take place.* Mr. Kett, therefore, should have made it perfectly clear to his Readers, that the enquiry of the Disciples related to these different events, before he could have been warranted, by the rules of sound reasoning, in drawing the conclusion which he does, that "our Lord's reply evidently refers to these events." But, so far is Mr. Kett from giving any evidence, that the three events which he mentions were, in their opinion, to happen together, that he only says they possibly expected that would be the case, without attempting to account for their having entertained such an opinion.

The evidence of the true meaning of the questions of the Disciples, as stated by the

* It is an observation of Bishop Newton, that if we consult reason, if we consult revelation, about the time when the general judgment shall come, neither of them afford us any light: both of them leave us in darkness. See his Dissertation on the General Judgment.
learned University Preacher, appears, upon the whole, so accurate and so unexceptionable, that no apology seems necessary for presenting it to the Reader, in his own words.

"The Disciples," says he, "astonished and concerned at the denuntiation of that severe sentence, which involved even the costly and magnificent structure of the Temple came privately unto Jesus, saying—Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Matt. xxiv. 3.) In the parallel place of St. Mark, (xiii. 4.) the question is put thus—Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled? And, in the correspondent passage of St. Luke, (xxi. 7.) the question is still differently proposed. But when shall these things be, and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? By comparing St. Luke with St. Matthew, we discover that the two questions of the latter relate entirely to one subject; the first to the time when the vengeance was to be inflicted—the second to the signs which were to precede its execution."
"If again we compare St. Luke with St. Mark, we perceive that the distinction which a late Writer would introduce between these things, and all these things, is utterly without foundation. (See Theolog. Reposit. vol. vi. p. 188.)"

Now, in answer to these questions—What was the first object which our Lord had in view? Why, plainly that which had so remarkably distinguished his conversation with them, upon former occasions, when he told them of the difficulties and hardships which they would have to encounter in executing the commission with which he had invested them, to preach the good news of the kingdom of heaven, or of the coming of the Messiah, and afterwards, when he foretold his own sufferings and death! Deeply sensible of the effect which so terrible a denunciation upon everything which, as Jews, they held most dear upon earth, and thoroughly satisfied, from the very nature of the questions which they put to him, what lay nearest their hearts, namely, their expectations of his coming as the Messiah, and their extreme anxiety to have this prediction reconciled with those expectations—his first care was,

* See Edwards's Sermon, p. 201.
to guard them against withdrawing their confidence from him, as their Messiah, and looking out for others, who might lay claim to that character. v. 4. 5. And Jesus answered and said to them—Take heed lest any man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, or, the Messiah, and shall deceive many. Nay, so strongly was he impressed with the urgent necessity of this caution, that having told them in the twenty-first verse, that the afflictions of those times would be such, as were not from the beginning of the world to that time; that he finds himself unable to proceed, without again renewing his caution to them, with the greatest earnestness! v. 23. 24. Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, or the Messiah, or there—believe him not; for there shall arise false Christs, false Messiahs, and false Prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. And that this caution might make the deepest impression upon their minds, he adds, v. 25. Behold I have told you before! Wherefore, says Jesus, v. 26. If they shall say unto you—Behold he is in the desert, go not forth—behold he is in the secret chambers, be—believe
believe them not. St. Mark says, v. 5, 6. And Jesus answering them began to say—Take heed lest any man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many. And having described to them the exceeding greatness of the calamities which were coming upon their nation, he, in like manner with St. Matthew, repeats the caution. v. 21, 22, 23. Then if any man shall say to you, Lo here is Christ, or lo be is there, believe him not; for false Christs and false Prophets shall rise, and shall shew* signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect. But take ye heed: bebold I have foretold you all things. St. Luke, in his account, does not repeat the caution; but it stands the foremost in our Lord's answer to the questions of the Disciples. ch. xxi. 8. And he said—Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and the time draweth near, when his coming will be fully manifested—go ye not therefore after them.

* The Greek word which is here translated, to shew, signifies, to give, i. e. says Dr. Farmer—they will appeal to, promise, or undertake to produce, such signs, using the very language of the Jewish legislator, who represents a prophet as giving, i.e. proposing and appealing to a sign or wonder, whether it did, or did not come to pass. See Farmer on Miracles, p. 304.

These
These cautions, so harmoniously related, by all the three Evangelists, as occupying the first thoughts of our Lord, in his reply to the questions of the Disciples, afford a demonstrable proof that they did not, at this time, consider that he had given such full proofs of his being the Messiah, as they expected; for, if he had, it would have been, not only unnecessary, but absurd, to have cautioned them, in so particular a manner, against false Christs and false Prophets, who might assume that character! But these cautions of our Lord, not only shew a peculiar and marked attention, highly honorable to his character, to the difficulties of their situation, arising from their prejudices concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, and the absolute necessity of his affording them such assurances of his being the Messiah, as might, notwithstanding the calamitous events which he had predicted, keep up their expectations of his coming in that character; for the words just cited, it must be particularly observed, not only contain a caution against their being drawn away by the arts of deceivers, but a plain avowal, likewise, that he himself sustained the character of their Messiah! v. 5. Many
shall come in my name, i.e. most evidently, in the name of the Messiah—the character which I claim, and shall deceive many. When, therefore, the Disciples ask Jesus, What shall be the sign of thy coming, it is evident to a demonstration, that they mean, not a second, but his first coming, as the Messiah, and that they can mean nothing else! To say a single word more to prove this, farther than to repeat that this reasoning does not depend upon any preference which may be given of one Evangelist to another, would be to offer an insult to the Reader's understanding; for, in this respect, they all speak precisely the same language!

Whatever difficulty there may be, in ascertaining with precision the meaning of the other branch of the question, namely, what shall be the sign of the end of the world, or as some have supposed the words should have been translated—the end of the age, it must be particularly observed, that though neither Mark nor Luke have any such question; yet in answer to the questions of the Disciples, as stated by the Evangelists, both of them in common with St. Matthew, speak of the coming of the end, and nearly in the same words. Ye shall, says St. Mat-
Matthew, v. 6. hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. So again he says, v. 14. This Gospel, or good news, of the kingdom of the Messiah, shall be preached in all the world, for a witness, or testimony, to all nations, that the promise of the coming of the Messiah, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, was fulfilled, and then shall the end come. St. Mark says, ch. xiii. 7. When ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, be ye not troubled; for such things must needs be, but the end shall not be yet. St. Luke likewise says, ch. xxi. 9. When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not immediately.*

* Dr. Prieley, in his Fast Sermon, preached at Hackney, in the year 1794, says, that to him it appears not improbable, that several circumstances in our Saviour's prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the desolation of Judea, relate to this great and more distant period, (termed by Mr. Kett, the second coming of our Lord;) for, says the Dr. it was delivered in answer to a question, put to him by the Disciples, which respected both these events, on the idea of their being coincident. And to prove this, he quotes St. Luke, whose account he thinks the most orderly and distinct of any, as saying—When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass, but the end is not till by and by; from which, he seems to have thought,
If the end here mentioned, in all the three Evangelists, relates to the end of the Jewish state and government, or the destruction of Jerusalem, predicted by our Lord; it seems to be found reasoning to conclude, that though the Evangelist Matthew is singular, in the additional branch of the question, the end of the world; yet, as the answers of all the three Evangelists are essentially the same; that they all relate to one and the same subject, i.e. not to the end of the world, in the strict and proper sense of that phrase, but to the end of the Jewish government. This seems to receive no slight confirmation from the connection of wars and rumors of wars, with the end which they all mention;

thought, that the Evangelist spoke of a very far distant period, viz. the second coming of our Lord. It must however be observed, that the original conveys no such meaning; but only that it should not be immediately; which was strictly true of the destruction of Jerusalem, but seems by no means applicable to what was to happen when perhaps thousands of years should have lapsed; especially as our Lord says positively that that generation should not pass till all were fulfilled.

It seems to be particularly unfortunate for Dr. Priceley’s argument, that he should have given the preference to St. Luke’s account, in this instance; for he most decidedly confines the Disciples questions to one single subject, namely, to the destruction of Jerusalem. When shall these things be, and what sign will there be, when these things shall come to pass?

which
which is allowed on all hands to relate to the
destruction of Jerusalem. Besides—What
has the abomination of desolation, mentioned in
the fourteenth verse, to do with the end of the
world, if by that expression is meant the final
consummation of all things? Or to what pur-
pose should the Disciples be directed, upon
such an occasion, to flee to the mountains, and
to make such speed as not to enter into an
house, to take any thing out of it; or to
return from the field to secure even their
necessary clothing?

Bishop Pearce, who translates this branch
of the question, not by the phrase the end of
the world, but by the end of the age, has en-
devoured to show, that it signifies the end of
the age, during which, the Jewish church
and state were to last. To confirm the just-
ness of this translation, and the distinction
that was made between the Mosaic age and
the age of the Messiah, he has produced two
passages from the Epistles, which are here
submitted to the Reader's consideration,
together with such remarks upon them as
appear strongly to corroborate this mean-
ing. The first is, 1 Cor. x. 11. All these
things (the things of which the Apostle had
before been speaking) happened to them for
exam-
examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. The Bishop's note upon this passage is as follows. "St. Paul," says he, "did not imagine that the end of the world was at hand, as some Commentators have, much to his prejudice, supposed; he only alluded to the Jewish distinction of time." The other passage is in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. ix. 26. Now once, in the end of the world, hath he, the Messiah, appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; "which phrase," says the Bishop, "relates, not to the end of the world, but to the preceding age's being ended." See Bishop Pearce in loc.

It has been suggested, by an eminent critic, who however has not authorized the mentioning of his name, that these passages are equally doubtful, as to their true meaning, as that which they are intended to support, and that therefore they cannot satisfactorily establish the meaning here contended for. With all due submission, however, it must be observed, that the current of the argument of the Writer to the Hebrews, in the latter of these passages, appears to be strongly in favour of this sense; for his prin-
principal object most evidently was, to contrast the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations against each other, with a view to draw a conclusion to the advantage of the latter, both in point of excellence and duration. Of the superior excellence of the Christian dispensation, in the estimation of the Author of this Epistle, some judgment may be formed, from the magnificent description which he gives of the founder of it; in which he seems to labor for expressions sufficiently strong to express his high sense of its value. ch. i. 1-5. God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath in these last days* spoken to us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all, i.e. of all former dispensations, by or for whom he made sons of the worlds, or ages; who being the brightness

* The last days, the last times, and the latter times, are phrases which are generally, if not always, used in the Epistles, to denote the concluding period of the Jewish economy: and it is a remark of Dr. Benson upon 1 John, ii. 18. that if the Apostle had said “that the last day or hour of the world was then just at hand, he had said what was not true. We know that almost 1700 years have run out since, and that the last hour of the world is not yet come.” See Benson in loc.

Mr. Peirce of Exon, on this passage, Heb. i. 1. says, "This, or the like phrase, is often met with in the Old
ness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath, by inheritance, i.e. being heir of all, obtained a more excellent name than they.

With respect to the duration of the Christian dispensation; the same Writer having quoted a prophecy from the Old Testament, of a new covenant which was afterwards to be established, meaning thereby the Christian covenant, draws this conclusion from the abrogation of the former, ch. viii. 17. In that he faith a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away; plainly intimating by this reasoning, that the new covenant was not soon to vanish away. And this is perfectly in harmony with the

"Testament, to many of which he particularly refers. And," he adds, "the like we find in the New Testament also. Acts ii. 17. 1 Tim. iv. 1. 2 Tim. iii. 1. 1 Pet. i. 20. 2 Pet. iii. 3. These last days were understood by the Jews to signify the days of the King Messiah. And that this is the meaning of such phrases, may easily appear to such as will consult the learned Mr. Joseph Mede upon this argument, in his Apology of the latter times. ch. xi. xii. &c." See Peirce in loc.
language of antient prophecy, which constantly describes, either in express words, or in words to that effect, the kingdom of the Messiah as an everlasting kingdom, and as that which should not be destroyed; but would be productive of the happiest effects upon the moral and religious condition of mankind. How then, may it not with propriety be asked, could the Jewish Christian, who cannot be supposed to have been ignorant of the prophecies of the Old Testament, have entertained an idea that the destruction of Jerusalem, the second coming of our Lord, and the end of the world, were to happen together? When the known and acknowledged sentiments of the Disciples of Jesus, at this period particularly, are considered, the supposition is, in every view, most preposterous and absurd, and too injurious.

* Mr. Edward King, in his Morals of Criticism, pp. 251-2. says——"Nothing can be more manifest, than that the Disciples here did in reality (whatever their intention was) ask three distinct questions; although it seems probable that (as in other instances they had not at first a full and right apprehension of things, so in this instance also) they might confound the three ideas together, and at the same time mean to ask only one question."

Mr. King’s ideas upon the subject of this prophecy will be more fully noticed hereafter; but it is difficult to refrain from remarking here upon the impropriety of his assertion, that
jurious to his character to be admitted, without the fullest and most decisive proof.

It must be farther observed, that if this passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews be examined with attention, it will of itself furnish no slight proof that the end of the world, or age, can relate only to the first coming of the Messiah; for the appearance of Jesus to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself, is clearly distinguished from the second coming, which the Author of the Epistle directed those to whom he wrote, to look for—when his coming should be without sin unto salvation, and can only mean his first coming under the character of the Messiah; for it was then only that he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. This sacrifice, the Writer to the Hebrews says, was not like the sacrifices, which were offered under the law, to be repeated frequently:

that it is manifest the Disciples did in reality ask three questions, though he thinks it probable they meant to ask only one. His reason for it seems as improper as his assertion; for though it is true the Disciples had not, at first, a right apprehension of things, yet it seems to be unreasonable to ascribe to them a meaning different from that apprehension, whether right or wrong. Now their apprehensions did not, at this time at least, extend beyond his first coming, and to that coming alone, there is the greatest probability, previous to enquiry, they did confine their question!
it was sufficient that it was made once.—

Now once in the end of the world hath he, the Messiah, appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall be appear, the second time, without sin unto salvation.

In the other passage, 1 Cor. x., 11. to which the learned Bishop refers, the Apostle asserts that the Mosaic dispensation had a manifest reference to the Christian, v. 1.

All our fathers, says he, were under a cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea. And all ate the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. But, says the Apostle, with many of them God was not well pleased, for they were overthrown, for their disobedience, in the wilderness. Now, says the Apostle, these things were our examples, i.e. examples or beacons to the Corinthian Christians, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. In the eighth and following verses, the Apostle enume-
enumerates several instances of their disobedience, and then again repeats what he had said in the sixth verse, v. 11. Now all these things happened unto them for examples; adding—they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. If the Jews, under the Mosaic dispensation, did not escape the punishment due to their disobedience—still less could they who were under a more perfect one, expect to escape. Wherefore, says the Apostle, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

If there is good ground, from what has been said, for believing that the end of the world,* or age, means the end of the Jewish dispensation, “we may reasonably expect,”

* When Jesus took his final leave of the Temple, four days before his Crucifixion, says the Bishop of Waterford, his Disciples observed to him the beauty and magnitude of the stones with which it was built; and the magnificence of the donations with which it was enriched. Upon this our Lord replied, See ye not all these things? There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And the same day, as he sat on the Mount of Olives, which commanded a full view of the Temple, and of the whole city, a circumstance which added energy to a discourse, in which their desolation was described and deplored, four of his Apostles, Peter, James, John, and Andrew, said to him apart, Master, tell us when these things will be, and what is the sign of thy coming (to effect this destruction), and of the conclusion of the (Mosaic) age.
to use the words of the learned University Preacher, "that as the information solicited is confined to one event, the information communicated will be equally restricted. This presumption," he adds, "will be confirmed by a perusal of the chapter we are at present considering; in which, from the third to the twenty-ninth verse, our Saviour replies to the second question, by pointing out the signs which would enable the Disciples to prognosticate his coming: he proceeds from the twenty-eighth verse to answer the first question, by defining the limits within which both the desolation and his own glorious advent would certainly happen; and declaring, in the most solemn language, that they should come to pass in that generation; but as the precise time of their accomplishment was known only to the Father, he concludes the chapter by delivering an exhortation to sobriety and vigilance." See Dr. Edwards's Sermon, p. 22.*

From

* The Author of the Pursuits of Literature has bestowed the highest encomiums upon Mr. Edward King, the learned Author of Morals of Criticism, which it is not the design of this note to detract from, so far as his piety and good inten-
From this excellent epitome of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew; it would be natural enough to conclude that the whole of it, in his opinion, related to the intentions are concerned; for which the fullest credit will readily be given him. But as his learned Encomiast says he "never observed more caution and more wariness than in this writer," it will be necessary to attend particularly to what he has said upon the subject of this prophecy of our Lord. He first states that there has been "an inconceivable prejudice of applying the whole prophecy merely to the destruction of Jerusalem; (to which it can only relate in part;) and as strong a prejudice on the other hand, of always conceiving the second coming of our Lord, and the end of the world, and the final destruction of the earth, as being all one and the same event." This observation of Mr. King, so far as it concerns the second coming of our Lord, and the final destruction of the earth, in no respect, will apply to the object of this work, and whether the application of the prophecy, exclusively, to the destruction of Jerusalem be a prejudice, can only be known by a close investigation of the subject of this prophecy: but the note in page 148, will very sufficiently evince that Mr. King begins his examination with but little appearance of caution and wariness!

As little caution and wariness is there in Mr. King's assertion, that "our Lord separates the several events, and, in reality, gives three distinct answers: the want of at- tending to which circumstance, has flung confusion upon the whole subject."

Mr. King's method of removing this confusion is as follows:

"First," says he, "we find our Lord, gives a general answer, which applies equally to all three events."
"Then, He gives a particular answer to the first question."
"Then, as particular an answer to the second."
"And lastly, as particular an answer to the third."
the advent of Jesus, as the Messiah; of which it cannot be denied, without denying the whole tenor of the Gospel History, they were in constant and earnest expectation. Yet, according to him, this advent is not

"And after that, He assumes the general consideration of the sudden manner in which every one of these three tremendous events were to come to pass, and concludes with admonitions." page 252.

Our Lord's "general answer, which," Mr. King says, "applies equally to all three, in one sense or another," extends from the third to the fifteenth verse, concerning which assertion, the Reader must judge for himself; for there seems to be no necessity for saying a single word to disprove so glaring a misrepresentation! The first question concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, Mr. King says, extends from the fourteenth verse to the twenty-third.

"Having finished this particular answer to the first part of the question concerning the destruction of Jerusalem," Mr. K. says, "our Lord then resumes the subject by the word of reference, Tert; and goes on to describe the signs of his second coming; informing us, that, even after the destruction of Jerusalem, there should again be false Christs, (that is, persons pretending that the Messiah, the appointed Ruler, was come, and assuming that character) in the same manner as we know there really had been Impostors of that kind, just before the destruction of Jerusalem."

This second coming, Mr. King thinks, is described from the twenty-second verse to the thirty-sixth; which verse, he says, "must surely refer to the end of the world; or the end and perfecting of the day of judgment; or the total destruction of the present scene of things upon earth."

The Reader will, it is hoped, be able to form some judgment how far Mr. King has succeeded in his enquiry, by attending to the examination of this subject, and to such remarks as may occasionally be made upon Mr. King's hypothesis.
the advent of the Messiah, but of "the Son of Man descending visibly from heaven, before the generation then existing was totally extinguished;" and from hence he hastily concludes, that "this awful appearance is not recorded in history, amongst the stupendous prodigies of the Jewish war." But, before a conclusion should have been drawn by the learned University Preacher, so injurious to Christianity, it should have been shown, with some degree of evidence, that the coming mentioned by the Disciples, was such as he has asserted it to be; and that it cannot possibly admit of any other sense; for there seems to be no reason why the advocates of Christianity, who are called upon to defend it against objections, should acquiesce in assertions without proof! Now this is a question of fact! Did the Disciples of Jesus, at the time when they put these questions to him, believe that the Messiah was come—or did they not? If they did, the learned University Preacher was certainly justified in affixing another meaning to their question concerning his coming; and provided he produced sufficient proofs, from the History of the Evangelists, to support that meaning, he
he had an undoubted right to draw such inferences from it as the truth of things required! Fortunately, however, for Christianity, the evidence that the Messiah was not, in the estimation of the Disciples of Jesus, yet come, in the sense in which they expected him to come, is as complete as can be wished! No man, it may be asserted, without fear of contradiction, can read the Gospel History with attention, without being fully convinced that, at the time when they put these questions, they continued to expect his coming—not in the character of the Judge of the world, but in that of the Messiah. Of this there is the most direct and unequivocal proof, in the reply of Jesus, which is immediately connected with the questions of the Disciples; for as hath already been observed, what could have induced him, so earnestly and so repeatedly, to caution them against false Christs, but a firm persuasion that they supposed the coming of the true Messiah was not, in the sense in which they expected him, yet realized? And, if not, they were particularly justified in asking the questions which they did, when they were told of events which contradicted all their ideas of the nature of the
the Messiah's character. Nay, it may be asserted that, if they had not asked these questions, one important internal evidence that the History is genuine, would have been wanting; for it was impossible for them not to have been extremely solicitous to obtain some information concerning it, or to have rested satisfied till they had obtained it! If then the first coming of Jesus as the Messiah, is a natural and probable solution of the meaning of the coming mentioned in the questions of the Disciples, why seek for any other? Or for a meaning which is justified by no one circumstance, either in the characters and sentiments of those who put them, at that period at least—or, as will hereafter appear, in the reply of our Lord to those questions, but which, on the contrary, is contradicted, in the strongest manner, by them all?

Our Lord having, as has already been observed, in the fourth and fifth verses, in a very particular and impressive manner, guarded his Disciples against the arts of deceivers, who might assume the character of the Messiah,* he immediately connects with this

* Mr. Edward King, in his Morals of Criticism, p. 287. says, "that the immediate signs of our Lord's second coming
this caution; the particular signs by which they might be fully assured of his coming. v. 6, 7, 8. Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet; for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows; i. e. of the troubles which were to befall their country, in those calamitous times.* In the ninth and following verses, our Lord proceeds to inform them of the personal troubles to which they would

** to restore all things, are declared to be the appearance of ** false Prophets and false Christs (or pretended Rulers and ** Deliverers.)** But if Mr. K. refers to this passage of St. Matthew, for proof of this, there seems to be no ground whatever for such an application! Again he says, p. 258, that our Lord informs us "that even after the destruction of Jerusalem, there should again be false Christs, (that is, persons pretending that the Messiah, the appointed Ruler, was come, and assuming that character) in the same manner as we know there really had been impostors of that kind just before the destruction of Jerusalem. Such, he tells us positively, there shall be again, before his second coming. And there shall be, moreover, some particular great disturbance, and general affliction in the world, just at that time."

* For the fulfilment of these predictions see Jortin’s Remarks, vol. i. p. 21. Lardner's Antient Jewish and Heathen Test. vol. i. p. 47, &c. and Bishop Newcome’s Observations, p. 187, &c.
themselves be exposed, and of the infidelity, or falling away of some, arising from the arts of deceivers, and from the peculiar hardships and difficulties of the times. But, to encourage them to perseverance, and to facilitate their escape, of which he gives them the strongest assurances, he points out to them some farther signs of the approaching completion of his prediction. v 9 to the 14th. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill some of you, and ye shall be hated by all nations for my name's sake, i. e. for adherence to me as the Messiah. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another, and many false Prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end—whosoever shall continue faithful to me, in the midst of such terrible calamities, as the person whom they believe to be the Messiah—the same shall be saved. He shall be thoroughly satisfied, from the awful desolations which are coming upon the Jewish nation, that the Messiah's kingdom is of a very different nature from what he apprehended, and, by taking the warning which I have given him, shall be saved from
from the calamities in which others will be overwhelmed.

It has again and again been observed, that our Lord, with the most distinguished tenderness and humanity, sympathized with his Disciples, in the distresses which he knew such ungrateful tidings, as he had from time to time to communicate to them, could not fail to produce upon their minds, and that therefore he offered them such consolations as had a tendency to keep them from despondence, under the exigencies of the moment. But, it will readily be admitted by the attentive Reader, that, in no case, was this more necessary, than when he described calamities the most awful that the mind of man can conceive! He therefore assures them, as he had done upon a former occasion, not only that their perseverance would ultimately be crowned with success—but points out the very time when they might obtain the deliverance which they so anxiously expected. v. 14. And this Gospel, this good news, of the kingdom, i.e. of the kingdom of the Messiah, shall be preached throughout the whole world—or, as it is in St. Mark, ch. xiii. 10.—must first be published among all nations—and then shall the end come.

The
The Disciples of Jesus, who had themselves received a commission to announce the approach of the Messiah's kingdom, could not possibly be at any loss to understand what our Lord here meant, by the expression the Gospel of the kingdom; for it was uppermost in their thoughts, and anxiously expected by them. And what our Lord meant by the end here mentioned, must be extremely evident from the following verse, v. 15. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the holy place, who so readeth, or rather perceiveth it, let him understand, i.e. let him take warning, and follow my directions for his security, at such an awful crisis! And that this expression, the abomination of desolation, might not be misunderstood, it is immediately added, v. 16. Then, when this was to happen, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains—let him who is on the house top not come down to take any thing out of his house—neither let him who is in the field, return back to take his clothes; for the danger would be so pressing, as not to admit of the least delay! And woe to them who are with child, and to them who give suck in those days: but pray ye that your flight be...
not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day; for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened. St. Luke's account is given with so marked a precision, that it might have been supposed impossible to have applied it to any other event, than to the destruction of Jerusalem, if precision could have exempted it from an application to a distant period. ch. xxii. 20. When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them who are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them who are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them who are in the countries enter thereinto; for these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written concerning them, may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days; for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. But
But notwithstanding this precision, Dr. Priestley says, "To me it appears not im-
probable, that several circumstances in
our Saviour's prophecy concerning the de-
struction of Jerusalem, and the desolation
of Judea, relate to this great and more
distant period."* viz. to the Millennium,
and to the events which are now passing in
the world, as preparatory to the destruction
of all the kingdoms of the earth, and the
establishment of the Messiah's kingdom, in
its utmost splendor and glory. These he
thinks to be the days of vengeance mentioned
by St. Luke; for he says, "the only days
of vengeance particularly announced by
the antient Prophets, to which Jesus here
alludes, relate to the judgments of God,
upon the Gentiles who had shewn en-
mity to the Jews, and especially in their
opposition to their resettlement in their
own country."† It would be high pre-
sumption in any one to deny, that the
events which are now passing in the world,
may Possibly lead to the accomplishment of
the great designs of Providence, foretold by
the antient Prophets; but to say that the
only days of vengeance mentioned by St. Luke,
relate to the judgments of God upon the Gentiles who had shewn enmity to the Jews, is flatly to contradict St. Luke's account; which, on the contrary, certainly relate to the destruction of Jerusalem, if not to that only! Besides, it is notorious that the antient Prophets foretell days of vengeance, not upon the Gentiles only, but upon the Jews also; and particularly that very vengeance so accurately described by St. Luke.

St. Luke, it is true, in his description of his country's destruction, states that the effects of that awful calamity would be felt by the Jewish nation till the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled; which event, an experience of a long series of ages has shewn to remain, as yet, unaccomplished; but this appears to be the only circumstance in the prophecy which hitherto, at least, relates to a distant period; or which can be so applied, without setting at nought all the rules of language; without disregarding the connection and occasion of the discourse, and without rendering prophecy as uncertain as those of the antient heathen Oracles.

After our Lord had thus described the exceeding greatness of the calamities which were coming upon the Jewish nation, his extreme
extreme sensibility to the deep impression which such a description could not fail to make upon the minds of his Disciples, deeply tinctured as they were with the idea of the Messiah's kingdom being of a worldly nature, induced him, with the greatest earnestness, to repeat his caution to them, to beware of deceivers, lest, in such circumstances they should be drawn from their own steadfastness, by the hopes of such a deliverer. v. 23. Then, at such a period of trial and difficulty, if any man shall say unto you—Lo, here is Christ, or the Messiah, or there, believe him not; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, who will take advantage of such a general expectation,

- Mr. King says, M. C. p. 258, that this is a word of reference, (it must be supposing to what went before) and that then the Evangelist goes on to describe the signs of his second coming, informing us that, even after the destruction of Jerusalem, there should again be false Christs, &c. But on what authority does Mr. King say this? For this word of reference is used in the 9th, the 10th, the 14th, the 16th, the 21st, and the 23d verses—the reference therefore is not to be disputed; but to what is the question? not, as it should seem, to a second coming, of which, even according to Mr. K.'s own account, they had no idea; but to his first coming, on which all their thoughts were wholly engaged; and these several notes of reference in our Lord's answer, as if by design to prevent mistakes, evidently show to what they belong. But what is particularly remarkable, this same word of reference is continued in the 30th verse.
and shall prophesy smooth things, and such as are more adapted to the general wish, and shall shew great signs and wonders, inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. But our Lord does not stop here! To give all possible weight to his caution, again and again repeated, he finishes it by expressly telling them, that he had been thus particular in foretelling all this, that they might be the more upon their guard against the artifices of deceivers. v. 25. 

Behold I have told you before! Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold he, the Messiah, is in the desert, go not forth—behold he is in the secret chambers, waiting for a fit opportunity to reveal himself, and to work your deliverance, believe them not; for as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man, for perspicuity, be—i.e. all will see, and be compelled to acknowledge, from the most melancholy and fatal experience, that far from being raised, as they expect, to great power and worldly splendor, by the coming of the Messiah, they shall be humbled to the very dust, and become a proverb and a bye-word among the nations. Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles till the times
times of the Gentiles be fulfilled; for wherefo-
ever the carcase is, there will the eagles, the
destroying armies whose standard is the
eagle, be gathered together, to compass them
round, and to lay them even with the
ground, and their children within them.
See Mark xiii. 21. 22. 23.

The extent of the desolation mentioned
in the preceding part of the chapter; the
Evangelist goes on to describe, in figurative
but strong language, in the twenty-ninth
verse. Immediately after, or as the preposi-
tion translated after should have been ren-
dered * amidst, or during, the tribulation of
those days shall the sun be darkened, and the
moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall
fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall
be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of
the Son of Man in heaven. The language
of St. Luke, in the parallel chapter, it
must be observed, is less figurative, and

* Mr. Edward King has thus translated this preposition.
Immediately, amidst the affliction of those days, &c. And
he says—H. Stevens informs us, that the preposition here
with an accusative signifies inter or propter. He adds—
I find no authority in his Thesaurus for translating it, in
this instance, post after. Neither does it appear, from what
Vigerus says, p. 620, that such a mode of translation is to
be preferred, even if it might be allowed. Morsels of Criti-
cism, p. 261.
may, of itself, very properly be considered as a good interpretation of the more splendid description of St. Matthew. ch. xxi. 25, 26, 27. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves thereof roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of the heaven shall be shaken, and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.

It seems to be deserving of particular notice, that St. Luke’s language, besides its being less figurative, and, upon that account, certainly, more easily applicable to temporal calamities, is, in the

* Dr. Townsend, having quoted v. 29, says,—“This is the symbolical language of prophecy, to signify the ruin of great personages and kingdoms, and denotes the same events which are thus predicted in St. Luke xxi. 23. 24. There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” The Dr. adds—“It is probable that our Lord, as was sometimes done by the Prophets, having first delivered these things in figurative diction, did then open the meaning of the prophecy in private. St. Luke hath recorded the explanatory part, St. Matthew only the figurative.”
closer manner, connected with his preceding description, and cannot, in fact, be referred to any other event, than the destruction of Jerusalem, without violating all the rules of good writing, and rendering the account of the Evangelist absolutely unintelligible! There shall, says St. Luke, v. 23, be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people, i. e. upon the Jews, and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled; and there shall be signs in the sun, &c.

But whatever importance there is in these observations, they will be strongly corroborated, by the consideration that our Lord here uses a language to describe the effects of the calamities which were approaching, in terms which, as Jews, could not but be familiar to the Disciples, and indeed to every Jew who paid any attention to the prophetic writings; for it was in terms similar to those of St. Matthew, that the antient Prophets of their nation described the effects of the calamities which, at different periods, were inflicted upon the nations of the earth, whether they related to
to Jews or Gentiles. This will be abundantly evident from the following passages, taken from the prophetic writings of the Old Testament; which are, beyond all doubt, descriptive of temporal calamities, and of temporal calamities only.

The Prophet Isaiah, speaking of the destruction of Babylon, says, ch. xiii. 9, 10. **Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with fierce anger and wrath, to lay the land desolate; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.** He adds—*The stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.*

The same Prophet describes the destruction which was to come upon Idumea, in language as strong as can well be conceived. ch. xxxiv. 4. **All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down as a leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree.**

The Prophet Ezekiel, announcing, in the name of God, the future ruin of Egypt, says, ch. xxxii. 7, 8. **When I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark. I will cover the sun**
sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not
give her light. All the bright lights of heaven
will I make dark over thee, and set darkness
upon thy land, faith the Lord God.

In the Prophet Joel there is a passage
which is particularly deserving of the
Reader's attention, as it seems to be de-
scriptive of this very calamity of the de-
struction of Jerusalem, predicted by our Lord,
ch. ii. 1, 2, 3, 10 Blow ye the trumpet in
Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain;
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for
the day of the Lord cometh—for it is nigh at
hand; a day of darkness and gloominess—a day
of clouds and thick darkness, as the morning
spread upon the mountains; a great people and
a strong—there hath not been ever the like,
neither shall be any more, for the years of many
generations. A fire devoureth before them, and
behind them a flame burneth. The earth shall
quake before them—the heavens shall tremble—
the sun shall be dark, and the stars shall with-
draw their shining.

The other phrase, the powers of the heavens
shall be shaken, used by all the three Evange-
liists, is in exact conformity to the language
of antient prophecy, and to that language
too which the Prophet uses, when describing
this
this very calamity of the destruction of Jerusalem. Isaiah ii. 19. They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. So again, ch. xiii. 13. I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of Hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.

From these examples, the similarity of the language of the Prophets to that of the Evangelists, in describing the calamities which our Lord had declared were coming upon the Jewish nation, is extremely evident. And should any one think that he used a strength of expression equal, if not superior to their's; it must be observed, that it might naturally have been expected his quick sense of the greatness of these calamities, together with the consideration of their near approach, would be discoverable, in the peculiar strength of his language. It must at least appear, in the highest degree, strange, that the declaration that all the things which had before been mentioned, were to happen, in that generation, should stand for nothing, merely because Jesus adopted a language that was peculiarly strong; for
for the calamities which were coming upon
the Jewish nation; the Evangelists all concur
in asserting, were tremendous in the ex-
treme, and such as were never to be exceeded
in any future period. Thus Matthew says,
ch. xxiv. 21. Then shall be great tribulation,
such as was not since the beginning of the world
to this time; and he adds—no, nor ever shall
be. St. Mark says, ch. xiii. 19. In those days
shall be affliction, such as was not from the
beginning of the creation unto this time, neither
shall be. And St. Luke calls those days, days
of vengeance, and farther says, there shall be
great distress in the land, and wrath upon this
people. In short, they all seem to labor for
strength of expression, sufficient to describe
the calamities of those times. This seems
not to have been sufficiently attended to, by
the patrons of a double meaning, in these
chapters; or, it may be presumed, they
would not have found themselves so pressed,
by the strong language of this prediction,
as to apply it to other distant events, in
defiance of the subsequent declaration that
all these things were to happen in that genera-
tion. But of this more hereafter. In short,
the language of antient prophecy appears to
be the only legitimate commentary upon
that
that of our Lord, in the verse under consideration, and to seek for any other, is only to puzzle and perplex what appears to be perfectly clear and evident! It must be added also, that the use of this language is one, among a multitude of strong internal characters, of the authenticity of the History; for nothing could have been more natural than for a Jew to express himself, especially upon such a subject, in the language of antient prophecy, which must have been so perfectly familiar to his hearers.*

* The Author of the Pursuits of Literature has, by quoting Mr. E. King's interpretation of the twenty-ninth verse of this chapter, given an importance to it which it does not appear to deserve, and, as it should seem, merely because of the dreadful effects of the present Revolution in France—as if the destruction of any great power, would not be productive of the same or similar effects! That these effects have been, in general, the natural consequences of the destruction of States and Empires, seems plain, from the language of the Prophets, here laid before the Reader; and as the Evangelists, one and all, particularly mention the state to which these calamities refer, it cannot, on this account, be interpreted of any event or events which were to happen thousands of years afterwards, without setting all just rules of criticism at defiance. What would be thought of a modern writer, who should assert that the City of London was to experience a very heavy calamity in this generation—that the whole of England should be so materially affected by it, as to suffer incredible miseries in consequence of it; and on being questioned, as to his meaning, he should assert that he had been describing events which were to happen thou-
The Evangelist goes on, in the thirtieth verse, in the same figurative style, and with the same allusion to the language of antient prophecy. And then, i.e. when these calamities should be inflicted upon the Jewish nation, shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth, or rather of the land, *mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, or, according to St. Luke, in a cloud, with power and great glory. The learned University Preacher says, that "the thirtieth verse seems strongly to oppose, if not irre- fragably to confute, the opinion that the "chapter relates entirely to the destruction "of Jerusalem;"† but perhaps, on due consideration, this verse will, on the contrary, be found not to oppose, but most accurately to confirm and strengthen the unity of sense which is here contended for.

thousands of years afterwards, notwithstanding he had before asserted that all the things he had spoken of, were to happen in that period? Yet just the same is the statement of the Evangelists, according to Mr. King's account! When will men of genius and learning do justice to their own understandings, and to the sacred writings? When will they cease to force them to speak a language which was foreign to their thoughts?

* It is a fact perfectly familiar to all who are acquainted with the History of the Jews, that they were divided into twelve tribes, and therefore there is a peculiar propriety in the expression, as applied to them.

† Edward's Sermon, p. 24.
It must be carefully observed, by the judicious and attentive Reader, that the Son of Man coming, in this verse, evidently signifies the coming of the Messiah; for, otherwise, our Lord's cautions, so repeatedly made, to beware of deceivers who should assume that character, must have been absolutely unintelligible to the Disciples: Nor can it be disputed, without disputing the strongest historical evidence, that the Jews believed their Messiah, whenever he should appear, would be a mighty deliverer, who should conduct them to conquest and to empire. This was the sign of the Son of Man, or of the coming of the Son of Man, as the Messiah, which they so anxiously expected, and, without which, all other proofs of the Messiahship of Jesus were, in their estimation, useless. But Jesus, in the verse under consideration, tells them that when the calamities described in the preceding part of the chapter, and particularly in the preceding verse, should come upon them, they should then see the true sign of the Son of Man coming, not as they expected, as a mighty conqueror—but in the clouds of heaven, to execute vengeance upon them.

This language, as has already been hinted, the judicious Reader is requested particularly
larly to observe, is not our Saviour's—but like that in the preceding verse, is evidently borrowed from antient prophecy, which, as Jews, was perfectly familiar, not to the Disciples only, but to the whole nation, particularly as they understood it, in a sense the most favorable to their worldly and ambitious expectations. And our Lord, with singular propriety, appears to have used the language of the Prophet Daniel upon this occasion; for it evidently describes the very same event, namely, the coming of the Son of Man, or of the Messiah, and was extremely well calculated, when they should see the destruction of their country, to convince them how much they had mistaken the nature of the Messiah's character. Dan. vii. 13. I saw, says the Prophet, in the night, visions, and behold one like the, or a Son of Man, the very expression so constantly used by our Lord, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the antient of days, and they brought him near before him, and there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages, should serve him.*

From

* The Jews, says Dr. Gerard, mistook the sense of this prediction: they seem to have concluded from it, that the Messiah would come down from heaven in visible glory, in
From this passage of the Prophet Daniel, it appears evidently that the coming of the Son of Man, or of the Messiah, which he manifestly, in these expressions, foretells, was to be in clouds, or in the clouds of heaven. Very pertinent is what the ingenious Dr. Gerard observes, upon the use of this phrase—"The Jews," says he, "could scarcely fail to perceive, that coming in the clouds of heaven, implied executing judgment; for the expression is used several times in their own scriptures, and always means no more than this; they notwithstanding strained it to a literal sense, to the meaning of a visible appearance in Daniel's prediction; and though they understood it to imply the execution of judgment, yet it was only upon their enemies, not upon themselves. But Jesus informed them that it did not here, any more than in other passages, denote a visible appearance; that it meant simply the execution of a temporal prince, put himself at their head, and lead them forth to conquer all their enemies, and to erect an universal empire: and whenever they asked a sign from Jesus, their meaning was, that he should appear in this very manner. Indeed they had come to reckon such an appearance so proper and determinate a mark of the Messiah, that it was a common periphrasis for his name. See Gerard's Diff. p. 184."
of judgment, and that the Jews them-
"elves were the objects of that judgment.
"A sign, says Jesus, has frequently been
"asked of me; I will now tell you what
"sign ought to have been expected: if the
"Jews had known what it is, they would
"not have been so solicitous for it: it is
"very different from what they suppose it
"to be:—the whole Jewish nation shall be
"utterly dissolved by the severe vengeance
"of God: this is the sign of the Son of Man,
"which shall appear in heaven; for this is
"all that Daniel means by the Son of Man
"coming in the clouds of heaven, in the
"passage on which they found their ex-
"pectation of a sign. On this occasion,
"then, Jesus not only assured them that
"the sign which they looked for would
"not be given, but also pointed out where
"their mistake lay, and explained the true
"meaning of the prophecy on which they
"founded it." See Gerard's Dissertations,

p. 203.

To add to the evidence that Dr. Gerard
has given the true meaning of the Son of
Man coming in clouds, or in the clouds of
heaven, it must carefully be observed, that
it was a direct and explicit answer to the

question
question of the Disciples, in the beginning of the chapter under consideration—What, said they shall be the sign of thy coming? Why, says our Lord, then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven—the Son of Man coming, not in the splendor of victory, and with the trophies of conquest, but in clouds, in the execution of those judgments which, in the preceding part of the chapter, he had told them were coming upon their country.*

* Our Saviour's refusing a sign when it was demanded, has been, says Dr. Gerard, a great subject of objections, and has particularly been alleged as a proof that he was unwilling to give all the evidence of his mission which he might have given, or to satisfy the understandings of men. The Pharisees, it is said, tempting him, asked a sign; that is, some testimonial of the truth of his declared mission: And what did this request produce? Why, he sighed deeply at their pervercity, who were so hard to be convinced, and filed them a foolish and adulterous generation for their presumption. Now this desiring a rational evidence for their Discipleship, the seeking after a sign, as the scripture terms it, had, if he had indeed appealed to their understandings, been so far from any thing criminal or blame-worthy, that it had been in all reason their indispensible duty; whereas it was, it seems, in faith, an unwarrantable, presumptuous, and wanton curiosity. The coming defirous to canvass the evidence, though from no other principle perhaps, originally, than that of gratifying a light curiosity, were, one would imagine, a turn of mind to be favourably entertained, and carefully cherished in a novice, by any who was solicitous to gain protelytes by such means, and conscious of having any thing
It there is satisfactory evidence, from the comparison of our Lord's language in these two verses, with that of the prophecies of the Old Testament, that he plainly borrowed it from them, it will from hence naturally and necessarily follow, that the Disciples of Jesus could not possibly understand him in any other sense, than as describing temporal calamities, and temporal calamities only, in opposition to the opinion which they had hitherto uniformly entertained, of his coming to render them victorious over all their enemies. It is, indeed, difficult to imagine how our Lord could have

"thing of the kind to produce to him. But, on the contrary, we find our Master ever disclaiming, with the severest resentment, all followers of that complexion; and no temper checked and discouraged, with so constant an aversion, as this of, as it is opprobiously termed, seeking "a sign."

This objection, says Dr. Gerard, almost refutes itself, though we take not in the peculiar nature of the sign which they demanded: The assertions that they asked only some testimonial of his declared mission—that they desired a rational evidence that this was the disposition which Jesus held criminal—are all so directly contradictory to the real circumstances in which the demand was made, that they can scarce be imputed to other principles than want of candour and an intention to mislead. From these circumstances it is plain, that far from being possessed of this laudable temper, they were not impelled to make the de-

* Christianity not founded on Argument, pp. 38, 49.

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have expressed himself, so fully and so effectually to the purpose, upon so delicate and disagreeable a subject, as by the adoption of a language with which they were so well acquainted, and the authority of which they could not possibly dispute! To suppose, on the contrary, that these verses are descriptive of the final judgment of the world, is indeed violently to sever them from their manifest connection with the preceding and subsequent context—to violate all the rules of probability and just criticism, and to charge the Evangelical Historians with such a confusion of ideas, and such a perversion

mand, even by a principle so little blameable as light curiosity, but were actuated by perverseness and prejudice, which had already made them withstand the clearest evidence, and the greatest miracles, and which it was in vain to expect to conquer by working more miracles: It was therefore as reasonable to refuse to work more, as it is, not to persist in reasoning with a man who shows that he reasons only for the sake of contention, without any concern to discover the truth. But when we recollect what was the sign which they desired, the objection is even absurd. It was a sign which they were led to expect, only by their false notions of a temporal Messiah: it was absolutely inconsistent with the truth of the Messiah's character—to have given it, would have been to become such a deliverer as the Jews expected: It was therefore impossible that it could be given. Instead of giving it, it was proper to affirm expressly, as Jesus did affirm, that it never would be given, and that it did not belong to the Messiah justly conceived. See Gerard's Dissertations, pp. 186-190.
of language, as would indeed render them utterly unworthy of any regard; for as the learned University Preacher has very justly observed, "whenever the same word is used, in the same sentence, or in different sentences, not far distant from each other, we ought to interpret it precisely in the same sense, unless either that sense should involve a contradiction of ideas—or the Writer expressly informs us, that he repeats the word in a fresh acceptation."

How far this most excellent rule of sound criticism has been adhered to, in the examination which has been made, not of the preceding part of this chapter only, but of the whole of the very important doctrine concerning the coming of Christ, the judicious Reader must judge for himself. If the smallest deviation from it can be detected, in any one of the passages which have been reviewed, there will be just ground for suspicion, either of the subject not having had justice done it, or of the goodness of the foundation upon which the whole of the reasoning, in the preceding pages, is built; for so far, at least, as the connection of a discourse is concerned, nothing can possibly justify a departure from a rule which
which must have the approbation of every ingenuous mind!

If the judicious Reader is thoroughly satisfied, from the preceding arguments, of the close connection of the twenty-ninth and thirtieth verses of the chapter under consideration, with the preceding part of it, and particularly with the questions of the Disciples, he will probably have little difficulty in believing that this connection is continued in the following verse, even though no farther evidence of such a connection could be produced; which, however, as will presently appear, is very far from being the case. v. 31. And he (the Son of Man) says the Evangelist, shall send his angels, or rather his messengers, as the Greek word properly signifies, and as it is translated, Mark i. 2. vii. 24. with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

If this verse be, as some suppose, descriptive of the preservation of the elect, in the midst of the calamities which were coming upon the Jewish nation—it is, perhaps, not unworthy of remark, that this is not the only intimation of such a pre-
preservation in this chapter; for in the thirteenth verse it is said, be that shall endure to the end, i. e. shall continue faithful to me as the expected Messiah, till the end cometh, the same shall be saved. In the twenty-second verse it is said, that except those days, viz. the days of tribulation, should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but adds the Evangelist, for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened. St. Luke says expressly, When ye see these things, the calamities which he had before been describing, begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

But though it appears plainly from hence, that the faithful adherents of the Messiah were to expect deliverance from the calamities which were impending on the Jewish nation; yet the judicious Reader may perhaps be inclined to think it more probable, that as the two preceding verses are descriptive of the total destruction of the Jewish state and government, and of the complete abolition of the Mosaic institution, the Evangelist intended to point out, under the character of angels or messengers, the sending forth his Apostles and other missionaries, to announce, throughout the world,
world, the glad tidings of the kingdom of heaven, or of the Messiah, and to make converts to the Religion which, under that character, he was about to establish. This sense seems to be strongly confirmed by the fore-cited passage of the Prophet Daniel, which connects the coming in clouds, with there being given to the Messiah, dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, which necessarily supposes the use of all proper means, the sending of angels or messengers, to gather persons from the four winds, from every quarter of the globe, to become the subjects of his kingdom. This connection seems to be perfectly natural, and agrees most exactly with the whole course of the preceding argument.

Which ever of these interpretations the judicious Reader may think the most deserving of preference, the connection will thus far, at least, be preserved unbroken; and from the examination which has now been presented to him, of this part of the chapter, and particularly of the twenty-ninth, thirtieth, and thirty-first verses, will be seen, in a strong point of view, the justness of the observations of Sir Isaac Newton and of Bishop Warburton, upon the figurative
relative language of prophecy, as describing
temporal calamities. The former observes
that "in sacred prophecy, the darkening,
finishing, or setting of the sun, moon, and
stars, is put for the ceasing of a king-
dom, or for the destruction thereof, pro-
portional to that darkness." The latter
says, what every Reader of judgment and
taste cannot but be highly pleased with,
as at once both elegant and just! that
"this language was borrowed from the
antient hieroglyphic writing—the sun,
moon, and stars, were used to represent
states and empires, kings, queens, and
nobility, their eclipses and extinction,
temporary disaters and entire overthrow,
&c. So in like manner the holy Prophets
call kings and empires by the names of
the heavenly luminaries—their misfor-
tunes and overthrow are represented by
eclipses and extinction: Stars falling from
the firmament are employed to denote
the destruction of the nobility, &c. In a
word, the prophetic stile seems to be a
speaking hieroglyphic. These observa-
tions," the Bishop adds, "will not only
assist us in the study of the Old and New
Testament, but likewise vindicate their
cha-
character from the illiterate cavils of modern libertines, who have foolishly mistaken that for the peculiar workmanship of the Prophet’s heated imagination, which was the sober and established language of their times, and which God and his Son condescended to employ, as the propereft conveyance of the high mysterious ways of Providence, in the Revelation of themselves to mankind.” See Warburton’s Divine Legation, vol. ii. book 4. sect. 4.

If the evidence which has now been laid before the Reader, that the whole of the predictions in the preceding part of this chapter, relate solely to the calamities which were coming upon the Jewish nation, be deemed sufficient, the following verses cannot fail, in the strongest manner, to confirm this sense; and they will, at the same time, afford some farther striking and unequivocal proofs of the genuine benevolence and humanity of our Lord’s character, in interweaving with the awful denuntiations of the utter extinction of the Jews as a nation, the strongest assurances of his coming as the Messiah. How peculiarly necessary these assurances were, after such an affecting picture
picture of the effects of the divine vengeance, may be easily imagined! v. 32. Now, when these things which he had before been describing, in terms so awfully grand, are coming to pass, learn a parable of the fig-tree: * When its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. St. Mark's expression is very little different from that of St. Matthew, ch. xiii. 29. So ye, in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors! If there is any ambiguity in the use of the pronoun It, in these two passages, that ambiguity will happily be removed by comparing them with the parallel passage of St. Luke, ch. xxi. 31. So likewise ye, when ye see these things, the things which he had just been relating, come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

Here is so marked a condescension to the prejudices and peculiar sentiments of the Disciples, relative to the coming of the Messiah, that it is truly wonderful, after having

* The opening of the parable, as it stands in St. Luke, shows that Christ did not instance in the budding of the fig-tree only, but that of all the trees, as a sign of approaching summer. Townson's Discourses, p. 48. 8vo. edit.
compared these passages together, how they could possibly have been mistaken, or that any meaning but that of the coming of Jesus, in the character of the Messiah, should be affixed to them; especially as this was the primary object of the enquiry of the Disciples—When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming? But the learned University Preacher, in a note referring to this very passage of St. Luke, quotes Dr. Sykes, as very readily allowing, that "by " the kingdom of God we are here to understand, its glorious state and perfection " in a future world." And what is particularly remarkable, the learned University Preacher has peremptorily asserted, that "any other interpretation would be ut-" terly groundless." See Edwards's Sermon, p. 33. It must not, however, be forgotten by the judicious and attentive Reader, that the foundation of the reasoning which hath been adopted throughout the whole of the preceding pages, and which has never, for a moment, been lost sight of, is the language which our Lord originally made use of, upon his entrance on his public ministry, namely, that the kingdom of heaven, or of God, was at hand; and the most unequivocal and satis-
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Satisfactory evidence has been laid before the Reader, that, in the estimation of Christ's own Disciples, his kingdom was not yet come, in the sense in which they expected it to come! Nay, in this very chapter under consideration, and in the parallel chapters of Mark and Luke, Christ thought it absolutely necessary, again and again to caution them against deceivers, who should assume the character of the Messiah. How then, it may surely, with the utmost propriety, be asked, was it possible for the Disciples to understand him, in the sense here contended for by these learned Divines? But the confutation of this very absurd opinion, so injurious to Christianity, lies within a still narrower compass, and will, it is presumed, thoroughly satisfy the dispassionate enquirer, that they have totally mistaken the meaning of this passage; for if there was no other evidence of this, the verse immediately following would, it is apprehended, be fully sufficient for the purpose; especially when it is remarked, that it has the concurrent testimony of both the other Evangelists. v. 34. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things, of which the coming
OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD was certainly one be fulfilled. And, as if they all thought this declaration was not sufficiently strong, and they were determined it should make the strongest impression which language could convey, they add—Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Of what use is language, if such expressions must stand for nothing!

The late Bishop Newton was so strongly impressed with the emphasis of this language, that he thus forcibly expresses himself upon this subject. "It is to me a wonder how any man can refer part of the foregoing discourse to the destruction of Jerusalem, and part to the end of the world, or to any other distant event, when it is here said, so positively, in the conclusion—All these things shall be fulfilled in this generation. It seemeth as if our Saviour was aware of some such misapplication of his words, by adding yet greater emphasis to his affirmation, v. 35. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

It is truly astonishing, that the learned Bishop, having thus strongly expressed his surprize that any one could refer part of the
the foregoing discourse to the destruction of Jerusalem, and part to the end of the world, or to any other distant event, should himself, presently afterwards, assert that some of these passages, particularly verses twenty-nine, thirty, and thirty-one, in a figurative sense, may be understood of the destruction of Jerusalem, but that, in a literal sense, they can be meant only of the end of the world; for nothing can be clearer than that the Prophets, in a thousand instances, and after them our Saviour, speak in a metaphorical, without in the least regarding the literal, sense of their expressions: And that they did so, in the passages here referred to, is plain, from the comparison of them, which has been laid before the Reader; for there is not the smallest reason for supposing that they had any view to the end of the world and the general judgment, and that our Saviour himself had no such view, his declaration that it was among the things which were to happen in that generation, is, if any thing can be, a decisive proof! for this expression will have equal force, whether these verses are understood figuratively or literally, and will equally militate against the Bishop's assertion!

Again,
Again, the same learned Prelate says, "the consistence and connection of the discourse oblige us to understand it, as spoken of the destruction of Jerusalem; but, in a higher sense, it may be true also of the time of the end of the world, and of the general judgment." But surely the consistence and connection of a discourse are the only true criteria of the meaning of any Writer, and to adopt a meaning which is not supported by these, is to do no honor to the sacred Writers; but, on the contrary, to introduce a confusion which must be highly prejudicial to the interests of truth!

With a like strength of language with that of Bishop Newton, Dr. Macknight, in his Harmony of the Evangelists, has observed, that "our Lord has forbidden us to understand any part of this prophecy primarily of the destruction of the world, having connected all its parts in such a manner, that the things foretold, whatever they are, must have happened in close succession. For any interpreter," he adds, "to correct Christ's language here, and say that, in the twenty-ninth verse, immediately after, signifies two or three thou-
"thousand years after, and that, in the "thirty-fourth verse, all these things, signifies "only some of them, is a liberty which "cannot safely be taken with his words." But why, it may be asked, did Dr. Macknight, in this very impressive passage, insert the word *primarily*; for his reasoning will surely apply as pointedly against a secondary, as against a primary application, which he, so justly, thinks improper and unsafe; for it will still remain true, that our Lord has connected all the parts of this prophecy in such a manner, that the things foretold, whatever they are, must have happened in close succession, or in that generation.

It certainly is not a very pleasant office to animadvert upon the inconsistencies of Writers of such eminence in the literary world, who have so meritoriously distinguished themselves in the Christian cause; but it must be remembered, that men of great note, when they fall into mistakes, may, by the sanction of their names, stamp a degree of credit, even upon error, which may be of the most serious consequences to the interests of truth. This seems, but too plainly, to have been the case in the present instance; for even Mr. Kett, the latest writer
writer upon the subject of the prophecy contained in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and the parallel chapters, says, "By the parable of the fig-tree, our Lord assures his Disciples, that the signs immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, should be so plain, that the most common attention to passing events would enable them to see, and to avoid the impending evils which he had as plainly foretold; and immediately adds, "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled. These words therefore seem obviously restricted, in their primary sense, to the numerous circumstances which he had most accurately described as signs of that event in which his Disciples felt themselves peculiarly, nay personally, interested." And yet Mr. Kett has asserted, as has already been noticed, after having quoted St. Mark's account, that "the parallel passages of Matthew and Luke, plainly indicate that this enquiry (of the Disciples) respected the destruction of Jerusalem, the second coming of our Lord, and the end of the world—events," says he, "which they possibly expected to happen to-
"together, and to which the reply of our Lord evidently refers." What can be termed inconsistencies, if these are not?

Mr. King, the Author of Morfels of Criticism, in order, as it should seem, to avoid the difficulty which these Writers, and particularly the two former, felt so forcibly to oppose the interpretation of our Lord's prophecy of any other event than the destruction of Jerusalem, has given a different meaning to the word generation, in the thirty-fourth verse, "In its true etymological signification," he says, "γενέα means, surely, much rather, this race of mankind, or this mode of men existing upon earth, in the present life, than this one particular generation, according to the vulgar acceptation." But, with all due submission, the original words age or generation, as Dr. Whitby has well observed, never bear any other sense, in the New Testament, than the men of this age. Thus Matt. xi. 16. To whom shall I liken γενέα τῶν ἁντιθέων the men of this age? ch. xii. 42. The Queen of the South shall rise up in judgment μετὰ γενέας ταύτης, with the men of this age; and verse 45. So shall it be τῇ γενέα τῇ φωνή, with the wicked of this age. Mark viii. 12. τῇ γενέα αὐτής, Why do the men of this age seek
seek a sign? No sign shall be given to the men of this age. But the passage the most remarkable to this purpose, is Matt. xxiii. 36, where Christ had been denouncing heavy woes upon the Jewish nation, and therefore could only be applied to the judgments which were coming upon them at the destruction of Jerusalem. All these things shall come upon the men of this age; which, the attentive Reader will observe, is almost exactly the same expression with that in the verse under consideration!*

"But," says Mr. King, "if the words must really be taken (as usually understood by Commentators) to signify the aggregate of the persons then living, it is difficult, and almost impossible, to say what could be deemed the generation, considering the constant succession which there is of the human species, in every even the shortest period of years. Who were the persons, and at what age of life are we to begin to reckon, with regard

* If the expression in the one instance means the men of the age to whom our Lord addressed himself, no reason can possibly be assigned why it should not be so applied in the other!
to those who were to form the generation that was not to pass away till the destruction of Jerusalem?" What is all this but mere sophistry, and an endeavour to render obscure, what every one of common sense and common understanding has a perfectly accurate idea of? If, on the contrary, Mr. King's definition of the meaning of the word generation be adopted, what kind of an answer to the question of the Disciples, when shall these things be, does this thirty-fourth verse contain? This race of men, or this mode of men's existing upon the earth in the present life, shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled. Did this require so solemn an affirmation as the following, to make it credible? Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away!*

Upon this unnatural, not to say absurd, interpretation, does Mr. King rest his conclusion, that "our Lord therefore, by these words,

* A Writer in the Theological Repository, whose signature is Idiota, says, "Why should not the word (generation) be taken in its usual sense, in the passage in question, as, in that signification, it contains a plain answer to the question of the Disciples; but, if it be interpreted of the Jewish nation, it conveys no answer at all! The nation of the Jews shall not perish till all these things are fulfilled.
"words, surely must have intended some-
"thing more;" (than the destruction of Jeru-
salem) "even to assure us, he would come
"again during the continuance of the earth in
"its present state; and to distinguish that
"coming from the end of the world, concern-
"ing which he was immediately going to
"speak in the third place.*

But perhaps there is no instance, in the
annals of Christian Literature, of the diffi-
culties in which learned men find them-
selves involved in considering this prophecy
of our Lord, as relating to different events,
more remarkable than that of Mr. Hough-
ton, the ingenious Author of two Sermons
upon this subject; for having pointed out
some differences in the accounts of the
Evangeliasts, which, however, as will appear
hereafter, exist only in his own imagination,
he says, "From these differences among
the Evangeliasts, it is evident that they
spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem and

" filled—What answer is this to the enquiry of the Disci-
"ples—When shall these things be? v. 33. Our Saviour in-
timates that some of the Disciples should live to see the
signs and fore-runners of his coming. Now what con-
"nection has the continuance of the Jewish people, with
"the Disciples seeing the signs and fore-runners of that

* Morsels of Criticism, p. 272.

" of
of the end of the world promiscuously,
and consequently, that they considered
these two periods as one and the same.
But this," says he, "will appear in a
still stronger light, from one part of our
Saviour's discourse, in which they all
agree. Immediately, says Matthew, after
the tribulation of those days, shall they see the
Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven,
with power and great glory! And he shall
send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet,
and they shall gather together his elect from
the four winds, from one end of heaven to the
other; expressions perfectly corresponding
to those used in the next chapter, where
there can be no doubt that it is the day
of judgment which is spoken of—When
the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and
all the holy angels with him, then shall be sit
upon the throne of his glory, and before him
shall be gathered all nations. But when we
imagine that we have been hearing of
the last grand catastrophe of nature, it is
added, Verily I say unto you, this generation
shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.
In the same manner Mark and Luke,
while evidently discoursing of the calamities of the Jews, seem to rise, by a sudden
tran-
transition, from the period of the Jewish state, to that of the world itself, and describe the coming of our Saviour in terms nearly similar, and equally sublime; yet all, with one consent, refer the whole to that present generation."

This seems to be a faithful representation of the difficulties and embarrassments which are inseparable from the application of our Lord's prophecy to different events, and they are such as might be imagined, of themselves, sufficient to alienate the minds of all thinking men from an interpretation so replete with absurdities! Very different, however, is the conclusion which this Writer draws from this subject.—"Our Saviour's predictions," says he, "are no ambiguous oracles—contain no general and vague description—no obscure language, which may be applied to almost any event, and admits of a thousand artful explanations—but present us with the most perspicuous, accurate, and even pictorial delineation of scenes which were afterwards displayed before the eyes of innumerable multitudes, at the very period which he had likewise distinctly specified."†


The
The difficulties which Mr. Houghton appears so acutely to feel, in reviewing this important subject, necessarily lead him to the same conclusion with Mr. Kett and Dr. Priestley; the former of whom says, that the Disciples possibly expected the events predicted by our Lord were to happen together: the latter, that our Saviour's prophecy was delivered in answer to a question put to him by his Disciples, which respected both the events, on the idea of their being co-incident.

In like manner Mr. Houghton asks—

"What then can we infer from such lofty descriptions, consisting of images so applicable to the general judgment of the world, which are, notwithstanding, limited to that present generation, and consequently incapable of representing any thing beyond the period of the destruction of Jerusalem; but that the Writers had associated both ideas together in their own imagination!"*

If, from the examination which has been presented to the Reader in the preceding pages, he should be inclined to believe that the evidence is sufficient, that our Lord

* Houghton's Sermons, p. 227.
confined his prediction to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to that only, he cannot fail to feel a sensible satisfaction, to be relieved from difficulties which cannot but have an unfavorable influence upon the mind; for however men, in their zeal for Christianity, may attempt to gloss over these difficulties, and even to turn them into arguments for the truth of Christianity—yet these attempts will be fruitless, and leave suspicions, even in their own minds, which must have an unfriendly influence on the cause of truth!

It cannot but be deserving of attention, in the midst of the embarrassments and perplexities which these Writers have so strongly discovered, arising from the strong language of our Saviour, that all the things which he had before been describing, were to happen in that generation—that all of them, Mr. King excepted, so far as they are consistent with themselves, admit that our Lord alludes solely to the destruction of Jerusalem. This, indeed, cannot be denied, without denying the plainest evidence, without totally disregarding the whole connection, without in short grossly offending against all the rules of language! With this de-
destruction our Lord constantly connected the coming of his kingdom; and he here asserts, in plain and unequivocal language, that when they saw these things come to pass, they would perceive the approach thereof, by the signs which he had pointed out to them, with as much clearness as they would perceive that summer was nigh by the trees putting forth leaves. v. 32, 33. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

But though our Lord here asserts that the time was hastening on, for the completion of his prediction, and though he told them it would happen in that generation, yet beyond that, he goes on to assure them, their knowledge did not extend. The exact moment, or period, when this judgment should be executed, he tells them, lay hid in the bosom of the Father. v. 36. Of that day and hour knoweth no man—no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. St. Mark's words are, ch. xiii. 32. neither the Son, but the Father.*

* Ambrose, in his Treatise de Fide, says Bishop Pearce, says, veteres non habent codices Graeci, quod nec filius scit; which
St. Luke, it is remarkable, hath nothing parallel.*

It must be acknowledged, that the current of the opinion of the learned is, that our Lord speaks here, not of the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, but of that still more awful event, the day of final retribution. But if it hath been satisfactorily proved, that our Lord had hitherto but one object in view, viz. the destruction of Jerusalem, and the consequent erection of the Messiah's kingdom—may it not, with becoming deference, be asked, whether he can be thought to have been so loose and inaccurate a reasoner, as to have made so sudden and abrupt a transition as this opinion supposes? Can it be imagined that he should break through the fundamental rules of sound reasoning, by apparently referring to something which he had said before, and which he had so positively asserted, was to

which is the same as to say, that the words οὐδε οὐδὲ were not found in ancient Greek MSS. of his days, in those at least which he had seen; but at present they are found in all of them. See Bishop Pearce's note on Mark xiii. 32.

* Mr. Kett quotes this passage thus: Of that day and hour (when the heavens shall pass away) knoweth no man, &c. And in the note below, he speaks of it as "a distant day and hour when the heavens and the earth shall pass away."
happen *in that generation*, when, in reality, he was beginning a new subject, and pointing out an event which was not to happen till many thousands of years had passed away?

Mr. Edward King, the Author of Morsels of Criticism, so often mentioned in the preceding pages, in commenting upon this thirty-sixth verse, says, "We need not hesitate to affirm, that to apply these words to *the destruction of Jerusalem* (which was to happen while some of the persons who heard the words were still living) must be very strange and improper indeed; since we know that it was our Lord's professed intention, that such of the Jews as believed and remembered his words, should be effectually warned, and should escape and save themselves by flight: and do moreover know, that they actually did take the warning and do so."*

This reasoning of Mr. King, however plausible it may, at first sight, appear, will not, on a close inspection, be found to have the smallest force in it; for where, it may be asked, was the strangeness or impropriety of our Lord's saying, even of that event

* Morsels of Criticism, p. 274.
which he wished his Disciples to guard against, and to escape from, *Of that day and hour knoweth no man.* They had asked him, and he had told them, very frankly and fully, what the signs and tokens of that awful catastrophe would be! To this he gave them a general answer, in the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth verses, attended with the most solemn assurances which the power of language could convey, that it would be in that generation; but, says he, in the verse immediately following—Of the precise day and hour when it shall happen, I have nothing to inform you—that is not necessary to your safety—you have sufficient information of the means of escape, if you will make a proper use of them! I tell you therefore to watch, and for this reason especially, because you know neither the day nor the hour when it shall be! So far is this from strangeness or impropriety, that a better, or a more natural argument for watchfulness, could not possibly have been suggested, by the most sagacious reasoner; for had they known the precise time when that event was to have happened, where would have been the necessity for watchfulness? In that case, they would only have had
had to remember the time which he had fixed for its accomplishment, and they would have been sufficiently prepared for avoiding the impending danger.

Dr. Priestley, in his Fast Sermon before quoted, thinks this very passage, of that day and hour, refers to the present times, and to the events which are now passing in the world, as preparatory to what Mr. Kett, as it should seem, calls the second coming of Christ. But Mr. King says, that "to apply these words to our Lord's second coming as their sole, final intention, seems also no less strange," viz than he thinks it is to apply them to the destruction of Jerusalem: "when throughout the prophecies both of the Old and New Testament, so many notices are given to us that there is a period fixed, about which time this second great advent is to be expected: and when moreover both those great Prophets, Daniel and St. John, even give us certain limits and numbers, by means of which, those who are skilful in understanding the words of prophecy, may be enabled to form some very near guesses, and well grounded expectations."* Mr. King therefore con-

* Morsels of Criticism, p. 274.
cludes, that "the words of this thirty-sixth verse must surely therefore, in their ultimate and most important designation, refer to some other great event, which great event must needs be, what the Disciples indeed originally meant to enquire after; namely, the end of the world,* or the end and perfecting of the day of judgment, or the total destruction of the present scene of things on earth; which, we may from hence infer, was so far from being connected, either with the destruction of Jerusalem, or with the second coming of our Lord, that (although it be an event which is really to come to pass) yet it is indeed at so vast a distance, that even the angels of heaven, who excel in knowledge, cannot at present limit the period." Morfels of Criticism, p. 275.

When learned men are regardless of the connection and occasion of the discourse, and set at nought all the rules of grammatical construction, the language of Scripture will become as pliant and accommodating as will suit any hypothesis, however absurd.

* It is remarkable that St. Luke has an expression precisely of the same import, when describing this very calamity, ch. xxi. 35. that it should come as a snare upon all that dwelt on the face of the whole land.
absurd, or however contrary to the true sense of Scripture which they may choose to adopt. And that both Mr. King and Dr. Priestley have been too guilty of this, in the present instance, cannot be rendered more obvious, or more satisfactory, than by stating our Lord's argument, in the verse under consideration, at full length, as it stands in its connection in the chapter itself!

Let it but be recollected, that the question of the Disciples was—When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming? and the connection will be abundantly evident. Our Lord's general answer to this question is in the thirty-fourth verse—This generation shall not pass, till all these things, the things of which he had before been speaking, shall be fulfilled. And, to confirm the certainty of this prediction, he adds, in terms the most energetic, v. 35. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. In the verse immediately following, it is said, v. 36. Of that day and hour, when these things shall happen, (for that is plainly the elipsis to be supplied, otherwise here is a relative without an antecedent, or in plainer terms, an apparent reference to something which was said before, when,
in reality, it has no relation to it) Of that
day and hour knoweth no man; no not the angels
of heaven, but my Father only. In the thirty-
seventh verse, the connection is still carried
on with a precision which would do honor
to the closest reasoner. Ye know, faith our
Lord, neither the day nor the hour when
the Son of Man cometh—but this know,
that as the days of Noab were, so shall also the
coming of the Son of Man be; that is, sud-
denly, and in a moment when they thought
not of it.* This last expression, used by the
Evangelist, suggests an additional argument
for the sense here contended for, and in-
deed appears to be absolutely decisive; for
the coming of the Son of Man uniformly
means, in the preceding part of the chapter,
and in some other very remarkable passages,
the coming of the Messiah; in some of which,
it is explicitly asserted, that his coming
would be in that generation. Matt. xxiv. 27.
As the lightning cometh out of the east, and

* With the suddenness of the coming of the Son of Man;
mentioned by St. Matthew, the account of St. Luke har-
monizes very exactly; for, says he, ch. xxi. 35, that day shall
come upon you unawares; for, he adds, in the following
verse, as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face
of the whole earth, or rather of the whole land, viz. of the
whole land of Judea, which, in the twenty-first verse, he
had particularly mentioned by name.
They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven. Matt. x. 23. Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come. xvi. 28. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. The resemblance of the coming of the Son of Man, in point of suddenness, to the state of things in the time of Noah, is farther illustrated in the following manner, in the verses next ensuing. v. 38, 39. For, as in the days which were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away—so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. v. 40, 41, 42. Then, at that time, shall two be in the field—the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill—the one shall be taken and the other left.

The conclusion which the suddenness of this event naturally led to was, that they should be as guarded against surprise, as those who were before the flood ought to have been, if they wished to avoid being swept
swept away by it. Our Lord evidently con-
idered it in this light.—He therefore, with
singular propriety, adds, v. 42. Watch there-
fore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth
come: but know this, that if the good man of
the house had known in what watch the thief
would come, he would have watched, and would
not have suffered his house to have been broken
open. Therefore be ye also ready; for in such
an hour as ye think not (for they knew neither
the day nor the hour) the Son of Man cometh.

The whole of this argument is so evi-
dently an exhortation to watchfulness for
the coming of the Son of Man, that it can-
not be disputed; and as by the coming of the
Son of Man is evidently meant the coming of
the Messiah, the inference will naturally and
necessarily be, that it is a continuation of
our Lord's answer to the question of the
Disciples—When shall these things be, and
what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the
end of the world, or age?

Were there no other evidences than what
has now been laid before the Reader, that
the whole of this chapter, and particularly
the thirty-sixth and following verses, relate
solely to the destruction of Jerusalem ex-
clusively, both of a second coming and of the
end of the world; it would, it may be presumed, be fully sufficient to satisfy every unprejudiced and impartial enquirer! But, besides this, there is some collateral evidence of no trifling value, which must not be overlooked, particularly as it will afford a favorable opportunity of considering the meaning of some other passages which appear to have an immediate and direct relation to the main object of this work.

This collateral evidence is contained in the seventeenth chapter of St. Luke, which it is of the more importance to attend to, as it has been asserted, that in this chapter we find almost the same expressions applied, not to the period in which Jerusalem should be destroyed, but to the day in which the Son of Man should be revealed. And that by this revelation of the Son of Man, we are to understand the period of his coming to judge the world, appears from its being introduced in the same manner, and illustrated by the same comparisons that are used by Matthew, when speaking of the day which no man knoweth, but which is known to God only.*

* See Houghton's Sermons, p. 224.
This assertion is strictly true, that the revelation of the Son of Man is introduced, at least nearly, in the same manner, and illustrated by the same comparisons, that are used by Matthew, when speaking of the day which no man knoweth, but which is known to God only; but whether the period of his coming to judge the world is to be understood by the language of the Evangelist, in this chapter, will admit of some doubt, and can only be determined by a patient investigation of the question of the Pharisees, and of the answer which our Lord gave to their question.

The question of the Pharisees, together with our Lord's general answer to it, is thus stated by the Evangelist, ch. xvii. 20. And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said—The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say—Lo here, or Lo there—for behold the kingdom of God is within you.

If the meaning of the question of the Pharisees is to be determined by the known and acknowledged sentiments and prejudices of the Jewish nation, there cannot possibly be any doubt that their enquiry was when the kingdom of the Messiah would be
be set up. Could this be doubted, the twenty-first verse, just repeated, would afford the fullest satisfaction that this is the fact; for this very language is used in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and most certainly was intended as a caution against being drawn away by the arts of deceivers, when the approaching calamities which our Lord had predicted would lead many to assume the character of the Messiah. v. 23. Then if any man shall say unto you—Lo here is Christ, or there, believe him not; for there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets.

To give any farther proof that the question of the Pharisees related to the coming of the Messiah, would be to fatigue the Reader unnecessarily, after what has been so often repeated! It will be more to the purpose to compare the arguments of the two Evangelists together, where they are similar, that the judicious Reader may be able to perceive, in the clearest manner, that they both describe one and the same event, particularly as that event is connected with the coming of the Messiah! That this may be seen to the greatest possible advantage, they are here presented to the Reader’s view, in two opposite columns.

The
The questions of the Disciples were, Matt. xxiv. 3.

When shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

The answer in St. Matthew is, v. 27.

As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west—so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

St. Matthew's cautions against deception are, v. 23. 24. 25.

Then if any man shall say unto you—Lo here is Christ, or the Messiah, or there, believe him not; for there shall arise false Christs and false Prophets, &c. Behold I have told you before.

The demand of the Pharisees was, Luke xvii. 20.

When the kingdom of God should come?


As the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven—so shall also the Son of Man be in his day.

St. Luke's cautions are, v. 20. 21.

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say—Lo here or lo there—for behold the kingdom of God is within, or among, you. And he said unto the Disciples—the days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it.
The suddenness of the coming of the Messiah is thus expressed, Matt. v. 37. 38.

As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be; for in the days which were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

Matt. v. 17. 18. 40. 41.

Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Then shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left.

Two women shall be

The like suddenness of the coming of the Messiah is expressed by St. Luke, v. 26. 27. 30.

As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be when the Son of Man is revealed.

Luke, v. 31. 34. 35.

In that day, he who shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back!

I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed, the one shall be taken and the other left.
grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left.*

Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left.

v. 28.
For wherefoever the carcasa is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.

v. 37.
Wherefore the carcasa is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

From this comparison, various observations very naturally arise, which seem strongly to confirm the reasoning which has been adopted, in the examination of the twenty-fourth of St. Matthew, and the parallel chapters of Mark and Luke.

The first observation is, that both the Disciples of Jesus and the Pharisees, being Jews, had the same prejudices, and the same expectations; their enquiries very naturally turned upon the same subject, viz. upon the coming of the Messiah; which as naturally led our Lord, in both instances, to caution them against deceivers who should assume that character. This is suf-

* Mr. Kett appears very unwarrantably to have applied these verses to a period which is still future. vol. ii. p. 254.
ficiently manifest from their several questions; but this observation has already been anticipated, and nothing more is necessary to be added about it.

A second observation which arises from this comparison is, that it appears with great force of evidence, that the coming of the Son of Man, the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed, and the seeing one of the days of the Son of Man, are only different forms of expression, all signifying the coming of the Messiah; for the day when the Son of Man, the Messiah, should be revealed, and the seeing one of the days of the Son of Man, were the very objects of their most ardent wishes, and what led them to put the question to Jesus when the kingdom of God should come?

These expressions however, it must be observed, though synonymous in their general signification, must be understood differently, according to the different views which were entertained of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom. In the sense in which the Jews understood his coming, our Lord tells them, v. 20, that the kingdom of God should not come with observation; probably meaning by that expression, that it should not come with marks of worldly splendor and
and glory, which would portend great national prosperity, and that they should desire to see one of such days of the Son of Man, but should not see it. Upon the contrary, he connects his coming with their destruction, as is abundantly evident, from the comparisons which he makes use of in both the chapters. Luke xvii. 26. *As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man.* Matt. xxiv. 37. *As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.* The other comparison in St. Luke is peculiar to him, but precisely to the same purpose with the former. v. 28. *Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, &c.* Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man, the Messiah, is revealed.

Here the judicious reader is requested particularly to observe, that St. Luke, in mentioning the state of things in the time of Noah, says, *So shall it be in the days of the Son of Man.* But, in mentioning that of Lot, he says, *Even thus shall it be when the Son of is revealed.* What better evidence can possibly be desired to shew that these different forms of expression are synonymous, and that they plainly intimate that the destruction of Jerusalem would fully reveal to them what
what they were so loth to own, namely, that they had totally mistaken the true nature of the Messiah's character. This seems evidently to be what our Lord meant by his declaration in the twenty-fourth verse, particularly as it is connected with the preceding verses; for as the lightning that lightneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven—so shall also the Son of Man be in his day. The like assertion, in the same connection, is observable in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, v. 27. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west—so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

The judicious Reader will be pleased to observe farther from this comparison, that in the seventeenth chapter of Luke, the Historian applies the cases of Noah and of Lot, as resembling that of the Jews, in our Saviour's time, in point of suddenness and careless security, notwithstanding the near approach of such dreadful calamities. Now, it is particularly worthy of remark, that in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, the Historian introduces the example of Noah, in immediate and close connection with our Lord's declaration in the thirty-sixth
sixth verse—Of that day and hour knoweth no man. v. 37. But, as the days of Noab were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.

What better evidence can possibly be wished for, even if there was no other, that the day and hour there mentioned, has a direct and exclusive relation to the things which were to happen in that generation? But when to this it is added, that the whole connection necessarily requires it to be so applied, and that to apply it to any other distant event, would be to violate all the rules of language and of sound reasoning, it may fairly be concluded, that this, and this only, can be the true meaning of that much controverted passage; for as the learned University Preacher has very justly observed, "To suppose that, " at the thirty-sixth verse, the day of judgment is introduced as a period distinct " and distant from the subversion of the " Jewish polity, is to suppose either that our " Saviour prophesied, or that the Evangelist " wrote, without any regard to propriety or " connection." See Dr. Edward's Sermon, P. 23.*

* After having composed what has been here advanced upon the thirty-sixth and following verses, and turned to Bishop Newcome's notes on his Harmony of the Gospels, it
From this extensive view of the meaning of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and the parallel chapters of Mark and Luke, in conjunction with the seventeenth chapter of the last of these Evangelists, the judicious Reader, it may be presumed, will form a tolerably accurate judgment of the assertion of Mr. Kett, that the enquiry of the Disciples respected the destruction of Jerusalem, the second coming of our Lord, and the end of the world, and that they were events which they possibly expected were to happen together, and to which the reply of our Lord evidently refers! He will see how injurious the inference of Mr. Houghton, from the seventeenth of Luke, it afforded the most lively satisfaction to find his view of the subject in perfect harmony with that which is here presented to the Reader. § 118, 119. "There can," says he, "be no doubt but that Luke, ch. xvii. 22-37, refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. Observe v. 31, 34, 35, 36, 37; and compare v. 31 with Matt. 17, 18, and with Mark xiii. 15, 16. Therefore Matt. xxiv. 37-41, which is parallel throughout to this passage of St. Luke, refers likewise to that event. Afterwards St. Matthew continues the same subject, as appears from comparing ch. xxiv. 42: ch. xxv. 1, 13, 14." It is singularly agreeable to have the suffrage of so excellent a judge, upon this highly controverted subject, as Bishop Newcome! Indeed it is difficult to imagine how the evidence of the true meaning of these passages, here given, can be controverted! And thus, as Bishop Newcome has observed, "all the accounts of the destruction of the Jews by the Romans, harmonize exactly."
quoted p. 200. to the interests of Christianity, must necessarily be—"that the Evangelists "spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, and "of the end of the world, promiscuously, "and consequently that they considered "these two periods as one and the same."*

It seems proper to observe, before this part of the subject is closed, that in pointing out the inconsistencies and inconclusive reasonings of the several Writers who have past in review in examining the true meaning of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and the parallel chapters of Mark and Luke, not the most distant idea of giving offence to any of them has been entertained; but purely a desire of doing justice to the sacred Writers. The sentiments which have been here adopted, as containing the true sense of scripture, are open to a like freedom of enquiry, and if they will not stand that test, they are not worth contending for. In a firm belief that the view which has here been given of these chapters will stand that test, all that is requested from those who may think differently is, not to be treated with less liberality than they have themselves experienced!

* See Houghton’s Sermons, p. 225.

From
From the very long and critical examination of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, in conjunction with the parallel chapters in the other Evangelists, which hath, with the strictest regard to the connection, been presented to the Reader, there seems to be the strongest reason for believing that they all relate solely to the destruction of Jerusalem, which our Lord, with the utmost propriety, connected with the coming of his kingdom, as that event would, to all succeeding ages, be an authentic evidence, that the Jews had totally mistaken the nature of the Messiah's character.

It will probably afford peculiar satisfaction to the judicious and attentive Reader, to be able, with precision, to trace the connection between this and the following chapter, and to ascertain the design of the parables which are contained in it. This seems to be necessary, to correct a material defect in a former work, entitled An Illustration of various Passages of Scripture;* for to say the truth, the importance of that connection was not then sufficiently perceived, and of course was not considered

* Published in the year 1789, by the Author of this Work.
as entering into the plan of the work. It now, however, appears in a very different light, and it is with peculiar satisfaction that the following view of its meaning is here presented to the Reader.

The learned University Preacher has very properly observed, that "the beginning of the twenty-fifth chapter is closely united with the former, by the particle THEN, and that the fourteenth verse is firmly united with the beginning, by the particle FOR." He adds—"and should the most subtle and inventive genius endeavour to accommodate the remaining portion to any other event than the great day of retribution, he will soon perceive the rashness of his undertaking." pp. 24-5.

It is by no means intended to controvert anything that the learned University Preacher has here said. On the contrary, it will be found, upon examination, that the connection between the two chapters is abundantly evident, not only from the use of the particle THEN, in the beginning of the chapter, but from the nature and design of the parable of the ten virgins, which was to urge the necessity of that watchfulness which had so earnestly been inculcated
in the preceding chapter. No other proof of this can be necessary, than the language which is used in both the chapters; for in the twenty-fourth chapter, the conclusion from the thoughtless security of the Jews in the time of Noah, as applied to those who lived in the time of our Saviour, is thus expressed in the forty-second verse. *Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* And the necessity of this watchfulness is illustrated in the stile of parable, from thence to the close of the chapter. In the following chapter, the duty of watchfulness is farther illustrated in the parable of the ten virgins, whose duty is represented to have been, to be in a constant state of watchfulness, for the coming of the bridegroom. And, in the conclusion of the parable, the application is made to the subject of the preceding chapter, almost in the very words which had been used in the forty-second verse. v. 13. *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.*

It being clear from hence that the watchfulness inculcated in the preceding chapter, is farther urged in the twenty-fifth chapter, the question is, for what they were to watch?
To ascertain this with precision, the Reader is again requested to recollect, that the enquiry of the Disciples was—*What shall be the sign of thy coming, that is, of the coming of the Messiah, or of the kingdom of God.* This is demonstrably the meaning of their question, from our Lord's answer—*When ye see all these things come to pass; know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.*

This approach of the kingdom of God, he here manifestly connects with the destruction of Jerusalem, the signs of which he had, in the course of his answer, fully pointed out, in order that they might be able to discern when it should take place. But, in the thirty-sixth verse, he tells them expressly, in order that they might be in a constant state of watchfulness for it—*Of that day and hour knoweth no man.* When therefore, the Evangelist says, in the first verse of the twenty-fifth chapter, *The kingdom of heaven is like unto ten virgins,* the meaning most evidently is, the coming of the kingdom of heaven is like the coming of the bridegroom, for whom the ten virgins were to be in a constant state of watchfulness, to be ready to receive him.

The judicious Reader is requested here particularly to observe, that when the Disciples
ples were, in the preceding chapter, directed to watch; it was in these words. v. 44. Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh; but here the Evangelist changes the form of the expression, and instead of saying the coming of the Son of Man, he says, the kingdom of heaven is like unto ten virgins. But that the meaning of the phrase the kingdom of heaven might not be misunderstood, and that it might be rendered perfectly clear, that the expressions—the Son of Man and the kingdom of heaven, were precisely of the same signification, the Evangelist again changes the form of the expression, and, instead of saying, as he had done in the first verse, the kingdom of heaven, he has again recourse to the use of that phrase which he had so often repeated in the course of the History, and particularly in the preceding chapter, v. 13. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.

If these remarks are just, there will be little difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of the fourteenth verse, which the learned University Preacher has observed, is so firmly connected with the beginning by the particle For; for as the Disciples, in the
preceding parable, as well as in the close of
the preceding chapter, were directed to
watch for the kingdom of heaven, or for the
coming of the Son of Man, an additional
motive for watchfulness for this kingdom is
assigned, in the beginning of the next para-
ble; for he, viz. THE SON OF MAN, is as a
man travelling into a far country, who called his
own servants, and delivered unto them his goods:
And unto one he gave five talents, to another two,
and to another one—to every man according to his
everal ability, and immediately took his journey.

When it is considered that the whole of
the long discourse in the twenty-fourth
chapter, was delivered only four days be-
fore our Lord's crucifixion, in consequence
of the enquiry of his Disciples about the
coming of the Messiah's kingdom, that he assured
them it would come in that generation—that
he connected that coming with the de-
struction of Jerusalem, or with the dissolution
of the Mosaic economy—and particularly that
he directed them to be in a constant state
of watchfulness for its coming—when all
these things are fully and impartially con-
sidered, it will perhaps appear by no means
improbable, or unnatural, to suppose that
our Lord here directed his Disciples to at-
tend
tend to the importance of their new situation in a moral and spiritual view, rather than to those temporal and worldly objects which they had so constantly connected with the coming of the Messiah's kingdom, and which, beyond all doubt, at this very time, engrossed their thoughts.

The judicious and intelligent Reader is requested particularly to observe, that the resemblance of our Lord to the man travelling into a far country, is particularly striking, in these three respects—first, in his ascension into heaven; for there doth not appear to have been any part of his History to which his travelling into a far country is at all applicable, but that; and if that is the only one in which this resemblance can be traced, it will be a strong presumption that it is the true one. Secondly, in his return after a long absence, or at some far distant period, viz. from heaven, agreeably to the declaration of the angels at his ascension, Acts ii. 11. This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. And thirdly, in his reckoning with his servants, as the traveller with whom he is compared in the parable had done with his own servants;
or, in other words, in his calling all men to an account for their conduct during his absence.

Upon all these accounts the analogy between our Lord and the traveller appears to be most striking, and the parable seems to have been admirably fitted to the great purpose which Jesus appears to have had, all along, more immediately in his view, namely, to correct, in the most gradual and gentle manner, the prejudices of his Disciples concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, to unfold to them the various events which were to happen to himself, as they were able to bear them, and in this manner to draw their attention to his coming, not as they had imagined, as the founder of a worldly and temporal kingdom, but of a kingdom of righteousness, a moral and religious system, the advantages of which they would hereafter be accountable for, during his absence.

The first part of the parable appears to represent the conduct of the traveller with respect to his own servants, to whom he distributed different talents—to one five, to another two, and to another one, according to their several abilities. And having thus settled
settled his domestic concerns, and given them a strict injunction, like a wise and prudent master, to improve their several talents, or, as the Evangelist expresses it, to occupy, till he returned, he straightway took his journey.

When the traveller, after a long absence, had fulfilled the purposes of his journey, he, on his return, called together his servants, to know how they had improved the talents committed to their trust! The result of the enquiry was, that he who had received five talents, had gained other five—he who had received two, gained two more—but he that had received only one, had neglected to improve his talent; in consequence of which, the two former were rewarded according to their respective improvements, while the slothful servant was doomed to punishment for his neglect.

Such was the reckoning, and its consequences, of the traveller with his servants, which, it must be observed, appears to have turned wholly upon the principles of worldly interest, not, however, without a strict regard to the rules of justice and equity!

To the traveller’s reckoning with his servants is contrasted that which our Lord
is supposed to take with his servants, which is represented as being conducted upon very different principles; the enquiry evidently turning upon improvements of a very different nature. To understand this part of the parable, the observation already made must be repeated, that, in the thirteenth verse, the parable of the ten virgins concludes with a direction to watch for the coming of the Son of Man, or of the kingdom of heaven, by which is evidently meant the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh. The reason for this watchfulness is assigned in the verse immediately following; for He, the Son of Man, is as a man travelling into a far country. The particle For, therefore, in the beginning of the parable, in connection with the declaration that the Son of Man is as a man travelling into a far country, seems evidently to shew, that this kingdom for which they were directed to watch, was to be the scene for their improvement, and that their conduct in it, during the absence of their Lord, would be the subject of a future reckoning, which would determine their final condition, either of reward or punish-
punishment. v. 31. When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, &c.

Such is the outline which is here offered to the Reader’s attention, of the grand object of the parable of the traveller, from the thirteenth to the thirty-first verse, and of its application from thence to the close of the chapter; which, in this view, appears to constitute, not two parables, as has generally been supposed, but only one. It is his province to give it a fair and impartial consideration, and to examine whether it will stand the test of sound criticism. The interpretation originated in a close attention to the chapter itself, in connection with that which immediately precedes it, without any regard to the opinions which have hitherto been prevalent upon the subject, and, at the same time, without the smallest desire or affectation of singularity. If it is deserving of any attention, it is principally on account of its simplicity, and its quadrating with that gentle and easy manner of communicating divine truth, which so remarkably distinguished our Lord’s discourses from those of all other men.
men: And it seems to have been peculiarly well timed, after he had, in so full a manner, answered the questions of the Disciples, respecting the coming of the Messiah, which they were then so anxiously expecting, and after he had so particularly pointed out the signs of its approach; for which they were so repeatedly directed to watch!

It is one advantage of this interpretation, that it seems effectually to obviate an objection of Mr. Evanston, in his Dissonance of the Gospels, against this parable of the talents, which he terms "a very awkward and faulty imitation of the parable of the pounds," in the nineteenth chapter of St. Luke. "In the latter," says he, "our Saviour is represented as distributing the advantages of light and knowledge distributed in his Gospel, in the same equal proportion, to all his followers, of every rank and degree, as is strictly the case, because his precepts and religious instructions are equally intelligible to all: but since the natural powers and abilities of men are very different, his servants are described as making different degrees of improvement of those equal advantages, except one, who corresponding to those per-
persons who having been instructed in the religion of Jesus Christ, reject it as the unwarranted imposture of an artful and unjust man, refused to make any use of them at all. The pretended Matthew, on the contrary, makes him distribute his talents in the most partial, unequal manner; one only to one of his followers, twice as many to another, and five times as many to a third, as he himself expresses it, to every man according to his abilities, as if the religious instruction of the Gospel, so peculiarly preached to the poorest and most illiterate, was not equally intelligible to men of all capacities and degrees."

But, if the view which has here been given of the parable of the traveller, from the thirteenth to the thirty-first verse, be just, Mr. Evanston has totally mistaken its meaning; for it appears to relate only to the conduct of the traveller towards his own servants, by way of contrast, as well as resemblance, to that which our Lord had observed to his servants. No solid objection therefore can be made to the traveller's having distributed talents to his servants in proportion to the abilities which they were

* See Evanston's Dissonance, p. 179.
supposed to possess; for this is the common practice of mankind, and that upon principles of the most perfect equity and justice. If, indeed, in calling his servants to an account, the traveller had demanded as much from the man to whom he had given two talents, as from the man to whom he had given five, there would have been just ground for censure of such a representation; but this, most evidently, is not the case: Upon the contrary, the traveller is represented as equally satisfied with him who had gained two talents, as with him who had gained five, though their rewards, as in all human affairs is always the case, were unequal; and as dissatisfied with him who had received but one talent, only because he had neglected to improve that one. If this representation had been made, even of the supreme Lord of the universe, which however does not appear to have been the case, it would have been difficult to have found fault with it; for that he doth distribute talents to mankind in unequal proportions, no one, it may be presumed, can entertain a doubt.

It is true indeed there is some difference between the two representations, as stated by
by the two Evangelists; but it is evident, on the slightest inspection, that they were delivered upon quite different occasions, and why our Lord should have been tied down to one exact mode of representation, it would perhaps puzzle even Mr. Evanson to assign a reason for! There seems, however, to be some room for suspicion, that even this parable of the pounds, in the nineteenth of Luke, has not been rightly understood, when he affirms that our Saviour is represented as distributing the advantages of light and knowledge, displayed in his Gospel, to all his followers, of every rank and degree, in equal proportions.

It may not perhaps be unacceptable to the Reader, to state the particular occasion upon which it was delivered, and to endeavor to discover the principal design of the parable of the pounds. Upon the conversion of Zaccheus, the Historian represents Jesus as repairing to his house, which gave great offence to the Jews; for when they saw this, they all murmured, saying that he was gone to be a guest with a man that was a sinner. Then follows the noble resolution of Zaccheus, which at once evinced the sincerity of his repentance, and his sorrow for
for his past misconduct, as well as his determination to regulate his future life by the principles of integrity and benevolence. v. 8. And Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. This declaration on the part of Zaccheus, produced another on that of Jesus, containing a most comfortable assurance of his acceptance, and an assertion that it was the great design of his ministry to assure pardon to such as were of Zaccheus's description! v. 9, 10. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. The Evangelist then adds, that as they, i.e. those who had murmured at his becoming Zaccheus's guest, heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

There seems to be good reason, from this view of the occasion of the parable, and particularly of the reasons assigned for its being delivered, for thinking that the un-
believing Jews were the persons for whom it was principally intended. The first reason here assigned for the delivery of the parable was, that he was nigh to Jerusalem. This seems to be very emphatically explained in the fourteenth verse; for having distributed his property among them, with a recommendation to improve it, it is laid his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us; and such precisely was the conduct of the citizens of Jerusalem, to which place he was then going! The other reason assigned for the delivery of the parable is, that they, i.e. the Jews, thought the kingdom of God, or of the Messiah, should immediately appear. This seems to be what the parable has a principal reference to; for a peculiar stress is evidently laid upon the case of the man who had kept his pound laid up in a napkin, as more especially applicable to the Jewish nation, who had miserably neglected the advantages which they had enjoyed under the Mosaic dispensation. The consequences of this neglect are strongly marked in the parable, in the sentence which the nobleman passed upon the person who had not im-
improved his pound. v. 24. Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, that unto every one that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. Then follows the application of the parable to the particular case of the Jews, to which he had especially referred, in the beginning of the parable. But those mine enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring him her and slay them before me. How emphatically does this apply to the Jewish nation, and how strongly does it mark the propriety of the remark of the Historian, that he spake the parable because he was nigh to Jerusalem; for in the forty-first verse it is expressly said, that when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee
thee one stone upon another, because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation!*

With respect to the general turn of the two parables, it evidently appears that different talents are admitted by them both. In the one case, the lord is represented as forming his own judgment of the respective talents of his servants, and as distributing his property to them in such proportions as those talents required. In the other case, equal portions of the nobleman's wealth are distributed, and the difference of their talents is left to be ascertained only by their respective improvements! He must be a very fastidious Critic indeed, who will find fault with either of these representations on account of these differences; and a very hasty one, who will assert that the one is a faulty and awkward imitation of the other!

From the examination of the two very important and interesting chapters, viz. the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of St. Matthew, the Reader's attention is very naturally

* The Reader will not consider this as a full illustration of the meaning of the parable of the pounds; but enough seems to have been said to prove that Mr. E. has mistaken the design of it, as well as of that of the talents. If he refers again to Mr. Evanson's observations upon them, he will perhaps form a better judgment whether they are well founded!
directed to the concluding scene of our Lord's life, when he was arraigned before the Jewish High Priest, as an Impostor who had assumed the great and important character of the Messiah, without possessing any of those characteristic marks of the Messiah-ship which they had affixed to it. On the contrary, his then degraded and humble situation could not possibly, in the eyes of the Jewish Rulers, bear the most distant resemblance to the character of the Messiah; for, as has been often observed in the course of this work, they constantly expected that he would rescue them from the galling yoke which they were then under to the Romans, and render them the victorious conquerors of the world!

When the witnesses who appeared against him, upon this truly awful and solemn occasion, had delivered their evidence, such as it was, the High Priest, addressing our Lord, asked him what he had to say in his defence, Matt. xxvi. 62. *Answerest thou nothing!* *What is it which these witness against thee?* But Jesus, according to the expressive language of the Evangelist, *held his peace,* and nothing, as it should seem, could prevail upon him to break silence, but the solemn
solemn adjuration of the High Priest. And the High Priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, or the Messiah, the Son of the living God. To this adjuration our Lord, with great and becoming dignity, replied—thou hast said; or, as it is in Mark, ch. xiv. 62. I am, i.e. I am the Christ, or the Messiah; to which he immediately added, Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power; or, as it is in Luke, of the power of God, and coming, not as you vainly imagine, with worldly pomp and splendor, to indulge your aspiring and ambitious views, but, in the clouds of heaven! As if he had said—The calamities which I have foretold, under the expression of coming in the clouds, will soon begin to take place, which will fully manifest how much you have mistaken the true nature of the Messiah's character! St. Luke says, that this declaration on the part of Jesus, produced another question from the Jewish Rulers, which is not noticed by St. Matthew, nor by St. Mark. Luke xxii. 70. Art thou then the Son of God, i.e. Art thou the Messiah, plainly intimating in what sense they understood his assertion, that they should
should see him coming in the clouds of heaven, and sitting on the right hand, or cloathed with the power, of God.

This answer of our Lord to the questions of the Jewish Rulers, the judicious Reader is requested particularly to observe, is exactly the same with that language which he had before made use of, in the thirtieth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of this Evangelist. They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. In examining the meaning of that passage, it was observed that this language was borrowed from the Prophet Daniel, when confessedly describing the coming of the Messiah, and that the constant signification of the phrase coming in clouds, was the execution of judgments. But whatever obscurity may have been supposed to exist in this passage of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, in consequence of its connection, either with the preceding or subsequent context, that obscurity cannot, in the present instance, possibly exist; for no one can entertain a doubt, that the subject of the enquiry of the Jewish Rulers related to the coming of the Messiah, or whether Jesus sustained that character, as he
he most evidently was arraigned for assuming it falsely! If therefore there is any connection between the question of the High Priest, and the reply which our Lord made to it—if a person's meaning can be collected from the situation and circumstances of things at the time when he spoke these words, the meaning of Jesus could not possibly be any other than this—that though he was now in the hands of his enemies, degraded, contemned, and reviled as a notorious Malefactor and Impostor, for assuming the character of the Messiah; yet that the claim which he had made to it was justly founded, and as a proof that it was so, and that they had totally mistaken its true nature, they should soon see the power of the Almighty exerted in a most remarkable manner. They should see the Son of Man, the Messiah, coming, not in the manner in which they had expected him to come, but in the clouds of heaven; and the vengeance which they had falsely imagined was to be inflicted upon their enemies, would be executed upon themselves! Such a declaration as this, must have been a very severe and cutting one to them! It was as if he had said—You have been looking and longing, with the utmost
utmost impatience, for a person under the character of your Messiah, who should raise you to the highest distinction and pre-eminence among the nations of the earth, and to render you prosperous and successful beyond the example of all former times—you expect all the sensual gratifications which power or wealth can bestow—but these expectations will most assuredly be frustrated; for though I, who have now, in express terms, asserted my claim to the character of the Messiah, am the object of your utter contempt and derision—though I am, as one of your own Prophets foretold of me, despised and rejected by you—a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—though, in short, you see none of the characteristic marks of the Messiahship about me—yet you shall soon see how much you have been deceived; you shall see the Son of Man, the Messiah, sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

The effect which this declaration of our Lord had upon the Jewish Rulers, is an unequivocal proof in what sense they understood it; for, as was natural to be expected, their resentment was instantaneous, and their rage against him was immediately excited.
excited to the highest pitch of fury. Then, says the Evangelist, Matt. xxvi. 65. the High Priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy, what farther need have we of witnesses of his being an Impostor? Behold now ye have heard his blasphemy! what think ye? They answered, He is guilty, i.e. of a crime that by the Jewish law is deserving of death. Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophefy to us thou Christ, thou that pretendest to be the Messiah, who is he that smote thee? What greater proofs of rage and indignation could they possibly discover, or how, in a stronger and more forcible manner, express the extreme grief which the very idea of the disappointment of their worldly views produced upon their minds? No wonder that, in such circumstances, they should pursue him with the most unrelenting malice, and that nothing could possibly satiate it but his blood. It is not fit that he should live! Away with him—Crucify him, crucify him, was the universal cry. Not this man but Barabbas! No crime, in their estimation, could equal that which deprived them of hopes and prospects so dear to their hearts, and so
flattering to their pride, and which presented to their view nothing but scenes of horror and desolation—of misery and ruin!

When the Jewish Rulers had accomplished their bloody purpose, by putting Jesus to an ignominious and cruel death, they thought they had completely proved him to be an Impostor, and that they had, most effectually, destroyed his pretensions to the character of the Messiah. Even his own Disciples, the constant companions of his ministry, the very men who had received a commission from him to announce the approach of the Messiah's kingdom, shewed, as was natural, in such trying circumstances, to be expected, no small anxiety at a fate so disastrous, and, as they seem to have imagined, so fatal to their hopes. We trusted, said they, that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel, who should have rescued us from our present degraded situation under the yoke of the Romans, and have raised us as a nation to the highest state of worldly prosperity!

In the midst of such distressing apprehensions, one only hope now remained, and that, as they seem to have imagined, almost a forlorn hope. Besides all this, this is the third
third day, the day in which he said he should rise again. Nothing could more strongly express the extreme anxiety, and the painful solicitude of the Disciples, with respect to the issue of an attachment which a few hours more was to produce, which was to decide the important, and, to them particularly, most interesting question—whether, in the person of Jesus, they had been following the true Messiah, or an Imposter!

The triumph of the enemies of Jesus was, however, but of short duration, and the painful suspense of the Disciples soon subsided; for, as one of them boldly asserted before the Jewish Rulers themselves, he whom they had crucified did God raise from the dead, and by his resurrection he was declared to be the Son of God, the Messiah, with power. They now no longer doubted, they no longer could doubt, that he was the Messiah! But as they still retained their original prejudices that the Messiah's kingdom was a temporal kingdom, hope very naturally revived in their minds, and the dying sparks of ambition were rekindled in their bosoms, which presently afterwards glowed with uncommon warmth, if not with a certain assurance, created by so astonish-
astonishing a display of the divine power in his behalf, that he would now declare himself as their Messiah, and in such a manner as would gratify their utmost ambition; for no sooner were the first emotions of surprize and astonishment, at the wonderful event of his Resurrection, subsided, than they immediately asked him saying, though with the most respectful reverence—Lord, wilt thou, at this time, restore the kingdom to Israel?

They probably, at this moment, recollected that he had told them, upon his giving them a commission to announce the approach of the Messiah's kingdom, that they should not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man, the Messiah, came; and afterwards, that there were some among his hearers who should not taste of death till they saw the kingdom of God come with power; and now that they saw such a glorious display of power in his Resurrection from the dead, they imagined, and not without reason, judging, as they did, from their own prejudices, that the time was now come when he should openly declare himself under the character of the Messiah!

The extraordinary display of power in the Resurrection of Jesus, could not fail to make
make the deepest impression on the minds of the Disciples. It sufficiently secured their belief in the integrity of his character, and their persuasion that he was the Messiah. Without therefore giving them the assurances of his coming, which the painful discoveries that from time to time he had to make to them rendered so peculiarly necessary, but which were now no longer so, his answer to them was as different as the circumstances were different. He did not now, as heretofore, give them any assurances of his coming within any given period; but he told them—"It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath kept in his own power.

This answer of our Lord appears to have been intended as an indirect reproof of their worldly mindedness, and is as if he had said—Have I been so long with you, communicating discoveries so manifestly contrary to all your expectations?—Have both you and myself been the objects of the most malevolent persecutions, which have ended in putting me to a violent death?—Have I told you, in the most direct and explicit terms, of the approaching defolation of your country, and do you still fondly
fondly cherish the liberation of it from the Roman yoke, and its restoration to the utmost degree of splendor and glory? What our Lord said to those who went with him to the village of Emmaus, seems to have been particularly applicable to the Disciples upon this occasion—*O fools and slow of heart, to believe all that the Prophets have spoken!* But in administering this indirect reproof of their worldly mindedness, our Lord does not lose sight of his usual condescension to their prejudices; for it is particularly remarkable, that even at this late period, he does not hint that no such kingdom as they expected should be set up—he only tells them—*It is not for you to know the times and the seasons!* 

So deep rooted were the prejudices even of the Disciples of Jesus, concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, that nothing could entirely eradicate them while he continued upon earth. But the Ascension of their Master into heaven in their presence, and the subsequent effusion of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, rectified their errors, and removed that mist from before their eyes which had so long hindered them from perceiving the true nature of his cha-
character. Thus the Historian relates that Peter, addressing his countrymen upon the latter occasion, boldly declares Jesus to be the Christ, or the Messiah, Acts ii. 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, or the Messiah.* Again, ch. v. 30, 31. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hung on a tree: Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And, at the close of the same chapter, it is said, that daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus, the Christ, or the Messiah.

From this change of language upon the subject of the coming of Christ, or of the Messiah, it may be inferred, not only that

* The effect of this discourse of Peter, of which this declaration was the conclusion, is thus described by the Historian, v. 37. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles—Men and brethren, what shall we do? To which Peter replied, v. 38. Repent, and be converted, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call; and with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
the Disciples had changed their sentiments respecting the nature of the Messiah's kingdom, but that the Resurrection of Jesus was so well authenticated, that it could not possibly be disputed. It can hardly be supposed, when human nature is fairly considered, that the Jews could have borne such repeated charges, with every mark of detestation and abhorrence of that infamous transaction, of their having crucified him, if they had any possible means of refuting it! If, on the other hand, it could for a moment be imagined that Jesus still remained under the dominion of death, what a hardness of front, if the expression may be admitted, must the Disciples have been endowed with, to have proclaimed, within a very few days of his death, and in the very city where he was crucified, that he was risen from the dead, and that, not before a few, who might be supposed to be in their interest, but before the Jewish multitude—nay, before the Jewish Rulers themselves? Let those who are best conversant in the arts and artifices of mankind, produce an instance of effrontery like this, or a case which was so likely to overwhelm the authors with obloquy and disgrace, upon the supposition that there
there was no Resurrection! The Jewish Rulers, it is true, took offence at the boldness of these men, and endeavoured to put a stop to their progress; but they took no steps to invalidate their testimony, nor adopted any measures to crush the rising Religion, but what involved them deeper in guilt, and fully evinced their consciousness that what they asserted was not to be confuted! The conduct of the Apostles, on the contrary, seems to have been the natural effect of integrity, and a consciousness of the truth of what they asserted; for when the Jewish Rulers had commanded them not to speak at all, nor preach in the name of Jesus, nothing could be more noble than the answer which they gave to this injunction—Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken to you more than to God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

It may be thought extraordinary, that men who had retained their prejudices concerning the nature of the Messiah’s kingdom throughout the whole of their Master’s life—who had in vain been informed of events which were totally incompatible with
all their ideas upon the subject, should, all of a sudden, renounce those prejudices, and appear to be convinced, not only that Jesus was the Messiah, but that he had given sufficient proofs that he was so! But, independent of the advantages which they gained from the descent of the Holy Spirit—their hopes of his coming, in the manner in which they expected him to come, were totally destroyed by his Ascension, which probably awakened their attention to what he had taught them concerning his personal sufferings, which they had just seen fully verified—to what he had foretold concerning the destruction of Jerusalem—and, above all, to that stupendous proof of the truth of his character, his Resurrection from the dead. This great event very naturally induced them to believe that their utmost hopes were about to be realized; for after this they could no longer doubt, whatever difficulties might present themselves to their minds, as to the accomplishment of their favourite object, that he was the Messiah. But when Jesus was removed from them, they felt, probably in a very strong manner, the vanity of their expectations; yet they could not disbelieve the integrity of his cha-
character, in whose behalf so signal an attestation had been given—they therefore, agreeable to the directions of their divine Master, tarried at Jerusalem, waiting for the promise of the Father, and for those instructions which that promise included, with a determination to regulate their conduct by those instructions. To this they were strongly encouraged by the parting words of their beloved Lord—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 Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

The Reader hath now before him the great outline of the scripture doctrine of the coming of Christ, which hath been the occasion of so much offence to Unbelievers, and of perplexity to Christians, and to those too of the most distinguished eminence in the Christian world. In the investigation of this important subject, the closest attention has been given to the connection and occasion of the several passages which have been examined, in which the same undeviating sense has been most clearly and unequivocally established, founded upon our Lord’s original language, when he began
began his ministry, that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. This language, it has been demonstrated, was thoroughly understood by every description of people to whom it was addressed, to mean the approach of that kingdom which the antient Prophets, and particularly the Prophet Daniel, had foretold was about that time to be erected. And as it was the peculiar province of Jesus, as the Messiah, to disclose to them the nature of that kingdom, it has been observed, that in unfolding the principal events which were to take place in the course of his ministry, and which, in a greater or less degree, were to affect his Disciples, himself, and his country, he constantly adhered to the same language, keeping always in view that of the Prophet Daniel, from which it was originally borrowed. Lastly, it has been observed, that in informing them of these events, our Lord had a constant regard to the prejudices and prepossessions of his Disciples, by communicating them in a gradual and gentle manner, as they were able to bear them, and as times and circumstances permitted!

From this examination, various observations very naturally arise, which it will be of great importance particularly to attend to.

The
The first observation to which the judicious and intelligent Reader, who has attended to what has been advanced upon this very interesting and important subject, will immediately give his most cordial assent is, that the language which our Lord so constantly made use of with respect to his coming, was rendered absolutely necessary by the circumstances of the times, and particularly by the prejudices which all descriptions of Jews had imbibed concerning the nature of the Messiah's kingdom.

Had our Lord, for instance, told his Disciples, when he gave them a commission to announce the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, that it was come, or that he himself was the Messiah, they would, nay, they must, with the prejudices which they had about them concerning the nature of his character, have demanded what they conceived to be the proper proofs of the Messiahship; such proofs as were not in the power of Jesus to give, and such, indeed, as were in direct contradiction to its real nature, and upon failing to give those proofs, they must have deserted him. Had he not, on the contrary, upon that occasion, assured them that they should not have gone over the cities of Israel till
the Son of Man came, they would have wanted that necessary support and encouragement of their expectations, which could alone keep them faithful to him, till time should give them jüster ideas of the nature of his character! Again; had not our Lord damped the ardor of his Disciples, when they had acknowledged that they believed him to be the Messiah, by unfolding to them the sufferings and death which awaited him from the hands of his countrymen; which were so totally incompatible with all their ideas of the nature of the Messiah's character, that they could not comprehend what he meant, they would, in all human probability, have then demanded, as they actually did after his Resurrection from the dead, when he would restore the kingdom to Israel. But by informing them of these circumstances, he so effectually repressed their ambition, that, at the close of that discovery, he found it absolutely necessary to assure them that, notwithstanding all this, there were some of those who were then present who should not taste of death till they saw the Son of Man coming in his kingdom. Nay, in the latest period of his life, when he foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, our Lord found it equally
equally necessary, both to guard them against false Chrifis and false Prophets, and likewise to give them the strongest assurances of his coming, and in that generation. This was, in fact, the only alternative which the circumstances of the times, and the prejudices of his countrymen, admitted; for no other method was left to him of gaining a hearing upon a subject, which so much engrossed their thoughts, and about which they discovered so lively an anxiety. Besides, it is not unworthy of notice, that our Lord was compelled to adopt this language, by the enquiries of the Jews about the coming of the Messiah, or of the kingdom of God. The instance recorded in the seventeenth of Luke, when the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God should come, is a very remarkable one; in which he told them that it would not come in the manner in which they expected it would come, viz. with observation, i. e. with external glory and splendor, as a worldly kingdom, but that, nevertheless, the time was coming, when the Son of Man, the Messiah, would be revealed —when the nature of his kingdom would be demonstrated to be very different indeed from what they imagined!
Unbelievers may see, or affect to see, a striking impropriety in the use of this language of our Lord, and particularly in his connecting his coming with the destruction of Jerusalem, and may think it necessary that a personal appearance, at that period, should be clearly made out, in order to a thorough vindication of his character! But why is this necessary? It is evident, beyond all dispute, that the coming of the Messiah was the grand object of expectation, on the part of the Jewish nation, and on that of Jesus, to give them just notions of its nature; the latter asserting, in the plainest terms, the approach of the kingdom of heaven, by which every Jew understood him to mean the coming of the kingdom of the Messiah. To prove that he himself was the Messiah, he gave them the strongest proofs that the laws of nature were completely at his command, by healing the sick by his bare word, by restoring limbs to those who wanted them, and by the greatest exertion of power of which mankind have any conception, viz. the restoring the dead to life: Yet still they refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, until they should see such signs of his sustaining that character as they had affixed
affixed to it, and nothing, it should seem, could convince them of this their capital mistake, but the utter ruin which he had predicted was coming upon them, and which, in their calamities, they afterwards saw fully verified. Now, says Jesus, ye shall see in these calamities the dissolution, instead of the prosperity, of your nation, and that consequently you have totally mistaken the nature of the Messiah's character. You shall see that the language of your own favourite Prophet Daniel, of the coming of the Son of Man in clouds, is not applicable, as you proudly imagine, to your enemies, but to yourselves. This seems to have been all that he meant to assert, all, in fact, that he did assert, and all that the Jews could have supposed him to assert by the use of these expressions.

A second observation, arising from the preceding view of the doctrine of the Evangelists, concerning the coming of the Messiah is, that it doth not depend upon any preference which may be given of one Historian to another; for they all uniformly agree in giving the same representation of the subject, upon those leading occasions in which our Lord was more peculiarly called upon;
to give such assurances of his coming as the discoveries which he had to make to them necessarily required! This is particularly remarkable in the case of the Disciples of Jesus acknowledging him to be the Messiah. In Matthew, Mark and Luke, the same train of reasoning is adopted, and they all conclude with the same decisive and unequivocal assurances of the coming of the kingdom of God, i.e. of the Messiah. In the case of our Lord's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, they all unite in stating that those predictions originated in the enquiry of the Disciples about the coming of his kingdom, and they all concur in the same assurances of the coming of the Son of Man, i.e. the Messiah, in that generation. In the other case, that, to wit, of our Lord's giving his Disciples a commission to announce the glad tidings of the kingdom of heaven, they all agree in stating the fact; but in St. Matthew, the directions of our Lord for the regulation of their conduct, and his foretelling the ill treatment which they should meet with in the exercise of their function, are much more diffuse; but nothing is to be found there, but what is extremely natural and proper to have been de-
delivered upon such an occasion, and it cannot be denied, that the assurance which he then thought fit to give them, was extremely well timed, that they should not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man came. As was observed, in examining this part of the subject, such an assurance was, upon that occasion, particularly necessary, and it is highly probable, that if it had not been given, they would have forsaken him, notwithstanding the high regard which they entertained for the peculiar excellence of his personal character. In short, it carries upon the face of it every internal character of genuine History, and every mark of authenticity.

There are some parts of this History of St. Matthew which appear to have been found fault with, which, had they been considered with due attention, would have been found equally to confirm his credit as an Historian, as the chapter just mentioned. Of this kind are the sermon upon the mount, and the twenty-fourth chapter; which last is, in the fullest manner, confirmed by the testimony of St. Luke, in the seventeenth chapter, where the same comparisons are made use of, and applied particularly
particularly to the same occasion, namely, to the destruction of Jerusalem. Nor must it be forgotten, that the parable of the talents, which hath been called "an awkward and faultless representation of the parable of "the pounds," and, indeed, the whole of the twenty-fifth chapter, will ever do the highest credit, as well to the accuracy which is displayed in them, as to the judgment by which they appear to have been dictated!*

There are few men who can entertain a doubt that the Evangelical Histories, in their passage through a long series of ages, have sustained some injury, which may have been the occasion of corruptions, and of the use of some words which are known not to have belonged to the age when these Histories were composed. But it seems infinitely more natural to charge these corruptions to the faults of Transcribers, than to reject the Histories themselves; especially when, in the most important and essential respects, they mutually confirm and corroborate

* It has been observed by Dr. Campbell, that all antiquity seems agreed in the opinion that Matthew was, of all the Gospels, the first published, and he very properly adds—In a case of this kind, I should not think it prudent, unless for very strong reasons, to dissent from their verdict.
borate each other's testimony, and when, by the testimony of one Evangelist, matters of the highest credibility are related, which are omitted by the rest. With respect to those faults or additions, if such there should be, in any of the Evangelists, it is the province of sober criticism to ascertain them with precision, and to correct them; for, as Dr. Kennicott has very justly observed, "What was inspired by God, was committed to the care of men, and we must acknowledge that we have had this treasure in earthen vessels. We must acknowledge that these sacred books have not descended to us, for so many ages, without some mistakes and errors of the Transcribers. This the various readings remarked in the different copies, both of the Old and New Testament, evidently demonstrate." It is therefore the duty of all those who would know and be established in the truth," as the same learned Author goes on to observe, "who with the utmost veneration receive the books of Scripture as the word of God, are desirous of learning, by every rational method, what was originally recorded in them," to encourage such disqui-
quisitions.* This seems to be the more necessary, as an attack has been made upon the authenticity of three out of the four Evangelists; and as, amidst all the abuse with which it is mixed, there certainly are some observations which are worthy of the attention of the sober and impartial Critic.

With respect to the variations which are to be found in the New Testament, it must be observed with Dr. Bentley, that "it is a fact undeniable, that the sacred books have suffered no more alterations than common and classic Authors, and have no more variations than what must necessarily have happened from the nature of things." And it has been the common sense of men of letters, that numbers of manuscripts do not make a text precarious, but are useful, nay necessary, to its establishment and certainty. The result then of the whole matter is, that either all ancient books, as well as the sacred, must now be laid aside, as uncertain and precarious; or to say, that all the transcripts

* See Dr. Kennicott's First Dissertation on the State of the printed Hebrew Text of the Old Testament considered, pp. 7, 8, and 10.
"of sacred books should have been pri-
"vileged against the common fate, and
"exempted from all slips and errors what-
"ever. There is, in each of these maxims,
"such a gust of the paradox and perverse,
"that they equally suit with a modern
"Free-thinker's palate. I have too much
"value for the antient Classicks, even to
"suppose that they are to be abandoned,
"because their remains are sufficiently pure
"and genuine to make us sure of the
"Writer's design. If a corrupt line, or
"dubious reading, chances to intervene, it
"does not darken the whole context, nor
"make an Author's purpose precarious.
"Terence, for instance, has as many varia-
tions as any book whatever, in proportion
"to its bulk; and yet, with all its inter-
polations, omissions, additions, or glosses,
"(choose the worst of them on purpose)
you cannot deface the contrivance and
plot of one play—no, not of one single
scene; but its sense, design, and sub-
serviency, to the last issue and conclusion,
shall be visible and plain through all the
mist of various lections."*

* "Why," says the same learned Author, "must the
sacred books have been exempted from the injuries of
T
"time.
This last observation of the learned Author, appears to be particularly applicable to the subject of the preceding pages; for its sense and design, and subserviency to the last issue and conclusion, is visible, amidst all the difficulties and mists with which it can be supposed to be encompassed. The outline of the doctrine, as stated at large in the preceding pages, cannot possibly be mistaken, whether it is taken from St. Matthew, St. Mark, or St. Luke, and whether a precise and determinate meaning can be affixed to some particular passages or not.*

The truth of the scripture doctrine of the coming of Christ, or of the Messiah, therefore, doth not at all depend upon the question of the authenticity of this, that, or the other Gospel, or upon the perfect purity and freedom from error of any one of them!

* It must be observed here, that one passage connected with the subject of this work, has been omitted on account of its difficulty, namely, that Matt. xxiii. where, after our Lord had been denouncing judgments against the Jewish nation, he says—Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.
It is quite sufficient to the purpose of this enquiry, and indeed to the establishment of the truth of Christianity, that one of them be authentic. Most pertinent to this purpose are the remarks of Dr. Paley, in his View of the Evidences of Christianity, which are here, with peculiar pleasure, transcribed for the judicious and attentive Reader's deliberate perusal.

"If," says he, "any one of the four Gospels be genuine, we have not only direct historical testimony to the point we contend for, but testimony which, so far as that point is concerned, cannot reasonably be rejected. If the first Gospel was really written by Matthew, we have the narrative of one of the number, from which to judge what were the miracles and the kind of miracles which the Apostles attributed to Jesus. Although, for argument's sake, and only for argument's sake, we should allow that this Gospel had been erroneously ascribed to Matthew, yet, if the Gospel of St. John be genuine, the observation holds with no *

* To those who are at all acquainted with the four Evangelists, there will appear a striking difference with respect to the nature of their compositions, and the design which
"no less strength. Again, although the "Gospels, both of Matthew and John, "could be supposed to be spurious, yet, if "the Gospel of St. Luke was truly the "composition of that person, or of any "person, be his name what it might, who "was actually in the situation in which the "Author of that Gospel professes himself "to have been; or, if the Gospel which "bears the name of Mark, really proceeded "from him, we still, even upon the lowest "supposition, possess the accounts of one "Writer at least, who was not only con-
"temporary with the Apostles, but assoc-
"iated with them in their ministry; which "authority seems sufficient, when the que-
"tion is simply what it was which these "Apostles advanced."*

which they had in view. The learned and ingenious Dr. Thomas Townson has observed, that things are mentioned by John, about which the other Evangelists are silent, and that, till towards the conclusion, he scarcely takes notice of anything which they have related. The other Evangelists, on the contrary, are extremely similar in their narrations, particularly in the great outline of the doctrine of the coming of Christ. This will perhaps, with the judicious Reader, be a sufficient reason for passing over the Gospel of St. John, especially as there appears to be nothing peculiarly re-
quiring attention in that Evangelist.

* See Paley's View, vol. i. p. 150.
Mr. Volney, who, as hath before been observed, questions the very existence of Jesus Christ, with a like effrontery calls in question the authenticity of the Christian records. "It remains," says he, "to enquire of what authority are these records!" He then quotes Faustus, whom he terms one of the most learned men of the third century, as saying—"All the world knows that the Gospels were neither written by Jesus Christ, nor his Apostles; but by certain unknown persons, who rightly judging that they should not obtain belief respecting things which they had not seen, placed at the head of their recitals the names of contemporary Apostles!" But, if the authority of Faustus were of any value, in Mr. Volney's estimation, it might, one should have supposed, have been sufficient to convince him, both of the existence of Jesus and of his Apostles; for the affixing the names of men who had never existed, could not have given credit to their recitals! With respect to the assertion of Faustus, it is contradicted by all antiquity; so far, at least, as to prove that there did exist records of our Saviour's life in very early times, which were attributed
to the person or persons whose names they now bear. See Lardner's History of the Apostles and his Credibility. See also Dr. Paley and Mr. Evanson, the latter of whom admits, in the fullest manner, that St. Luke's Gospel was admitted by all antiquity, almost without an exception!

A third observation, to which the Reader's attention is requested, is, that it is of the utmost importance, in studying the Evangelists, that they be considered as Historians, and that the occasion and connection of the narration be closely and invariably attended to.

The advantages resulting from this mode of studying the Evangelical History, it may fairly be presumed, are sufficiently evident, from what has been advanced in the preceding pages; in which, in most cases, at least, no room has been left for doubt of the true meaning of the Historian. But the advantages of viewing the Evangelists in this light, have, most certainly, not been sufficiently attended to. The great Mr. Locke, with great good sense, long ago observed, that 'if the holy Scriptures were but laid before the eyes of Christians, in its due connection and consistency, it would not
not then be so easy to snatch out a few words, as if they were separate from the rest, to serve a purpose to which they do not at all belong, and with which they have nothing to do. But," says he, "as the matter now stands, he that has a mind to it may, at a cheap rate, be a notable champion for the truth; that is, for the doctrines of the sect that chance or interest has cast him into. He need but be furnished with verses of sacred Scripture, containing words and expressions that are but flexible, (as all general, obscure, and doubtful ones are) and his system that has appropriated them to the orthodoxy of his church, (of whatever denomination it may be) makes them immediately strong and irrefragable arguments for his opinion. This is the benefit of loose sentences, and Scripture crumbled into verses, which quickly turn into independent aphorisms. But, if the quotation in the verse produced, were considered as a part of a continued, coherent discourse, and so its sense were limited by the tenor of the context, most of these formidable and warm Disputants would be quite stripped of those which
"they doubt not now to call spiritual
"weapons, and they would often have
"nothing to say, that would not shew their
"weakness, and manifestly fly in their
"faces."

And, to the same purpose, the truly
learned and excellent Bishop of Landaff
says—"When men are desirous of forming
"systems, they are apt to collect together
"a number of texts, which, being taken as
"abstract propositions, seem to establish
"the point, but which, when interpreted
"by the context, appear to have no rela-
tion to it. There is no greater source of
error than this practice; it has prevailed
in the Christian church from the earliest
ages, and it still prevails. We owe to it
the corruptions of Popery, and that in-
finity of heresies which have so much de-
basèd the simplicity of Gospel truth, and
driven so many men of sense from em-
bracing Christianity. Every one who
will well weigh the subject, must perceive
the unfairness with which men usually
proceed in forming systems in theology.
By stringing together detached sentences,
an Ausonius may compel the chaste
Virgil to furnish materials for an in-
decent
"decent poem; and from the Bible itself, "a system of impiety might, by such "means, be extracted." See Bp. Watson's Charge, 1795, pp. 70-1.

It must appear to be utterly impossible to account for the numerous sects and parties into which Christians have been, and are still divided, but from such a mode of studying the New Testament, and perhaps there has not been a greater stumbling block to the belief of Christianity, than the numerous opinions which have been adopted concerning its nature. Tell us, say Unbelievers, what true Christianity is, and then we may be able to form some judgment whether it is worthy of our reception; but while such numerous and discordant views of it are given to us, we are utterly unable to judge which is the truth!

It is by no means intended to controvert Mr. Kett's position of a second coming of the Messiah, or that the time of that coming is portended by the truly awful circumstances of the present times! No doubt can possibly be entertained, by those who are conversant in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, that times are spoken of as yet to come, when Christianity will produce
duce much more beneficial effects on the happiness of mankind than it has hitherto done—when, to use the figurative language of prophecy, the mountains of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it, and when all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ! No person who seriously considers the past and the present state of the Jewish nation, and the signal prophecies which are upon record, in the holy Scriptures, concerning this singular people, can hesitate in thinking that they are marked out by Providence as living monuments of the concern which God has with the affairs of men, and of the truth of prophecy. But the proofs of these important truths are sufficiently numerous, without forcing into the service passages which have no connection with these highly interesting events.

Mr. Kett's quotation of Matt. xxiv. 29.
30. vol. iii. p. 253. cannot, perhaps, be reckoned of this number; because, as has been observed, he considers the second coming of the Messiah, as included in our Lord's prediction; nor yet those of the 40th and 41st
41st verse, which, in page 254, he quotes for the same purpose; though, if the view which has been given of that chapter, and particularly of these very verses, be just, they certainly have no relation to those times. But should there remain any doubt as to the signification of these passages, there can be none of the declaration of Jesus before the High Priest, which he quotes for the same purpose in page 268; for what connection can that declaration have with these times, viz. that they (the Jewish Rulers) should see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. The Evangelists Matthew and Luke seem particularly to have guarded against a misapplication of this passage to any far distant period; for the former says ἀπὸ αὐτοῦ ἀπόκειμαι ἀπὸ τοῦτο ἀπό τοῦτο, and the latter ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν from the present time! Besides, the coming in clouds, both here and in the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, most evidently means the coming to execute judgment, not upon the Gentiles, but upon the Jews. In neither view, therefore, do either of these passages appear to suit Mr. Kett's purpose, but rather contribute to injure, than to strengthen the force of his
his argument, independent of the injury which is done to the Scripture, by applying passages to events with which they are in no respect connected!

The baneful consequences of a misapplication of the meaning of particular passages of Scripture, to which, however, all men are more or less liable, without any bad intention, are signally manifest in the present instance; for Dr. Priestley has expressly said, page third of his Fast Sermon, delivered February 28, 1794, that "the mistake which the Jews were under, arose from their wholly overlooking the suffering state of the Messiah, and imagining that his first coming would be that mentioned by Daniel, in the clouds of heaven, and consequently that his kingdom would commence on his first appearance." But, in answer to this, it may be observed, that if his first coming was not in the clouds of heaven, why did he mention it to the Jewish Rulers? Why did he declare, in the closest connection with the destruction of Jerusalem, that his coming would be in the clouds of heaven? Why assert, even before the Jewish Rulers, at his trial, that his coming would be in clouds, and that from
from that very period such a coming would be manifest, if his coming in clouds had no relation to them? The Jewish Rulers, most undoubtedly, thought very differently of that declaration; for, as was observed, when examining into the meaning of that passage, they discovered all the marks of rage, at the very thought of the Messiah's coming in clouds!

Dr. Priestley's assertion that the Jews were under a mistake, when they imagined his kingdom would commence on his first appearance, is indeed so very extraordinary, that it must by no means be passed over, as the most serious consequences to Christianity are involved in it; for if the kingdom of Christ, or of the Messiah, did not then commence, what is to be thought of Jesus's declaration that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; or, of his assertion afterwards, that there were some with whom he was then conversing who should see the kingdom of God come with power? When Dr. Priestley intimates, page fourth, that this was not a proper kingdom, he could not surely have been aware of the consequences of such a distinction! He could not mean, by this remark, to insinuate that Jesus used a language
guage that was improper! for Jesus called it by the name of a kingdom, and asserted that it was to commence in that generation; and for Dr. Priestley to intimate that this was not a proper kingdom, is, indeed, to use a language that is, in the highest degree, unwarrantable!

Whatever improvements, or to whatever extent, may hereafter be made in the administration of this kingdom, or in its effects upon mankind; it is evident they must, if Christianity be true, be of the same nature, as a kingdom of righteousness, with that which was originally established by our Lord, and the only difference that can be supposed to take place at any future period, will probably be in the different and more extensive influence which it will then have upon the hearts and lives of men; when, as the Prophet speaks, the people shall be all righteous, and consequently the necessity of human laws and of human governments will then be superceded. But whether a second coming of Christ will take place—what commotions and calamities will precede this happy and most desirable change—or whether the awful events which are now passing in the world have any immediate relation to it—are con-
considerations which must be left to those who are conversant in the deep things of God, to enquire into—or perhaps to events themselves to unfold!

A state of things which shall supe rcede the necessity of human laws, and of human governments, considering the present situation of the world, must, to many, appear altogether improbable, and in vain to be expected! But if Christianity hath had the best effects upon individuals, no just reason can be assigned why its influence may not be extended and increased, and why even whole communities may not be sensible of that influence; why, in short, in some future period, it may not have all that influence which the holy Scriptures have, in such strong language, taught mankind to expect from it. Christianity, most certainly, has had different effects upon different nations, and upon different bodies of men, according as it has been more * or less.

* In one country the lower ranks in society are sober, industrious, and intelligent, in consequence of a better system of education than can be found at present to prevail in another, where the same description of people cannot be compared with them without forming conclusions much to their disadvantage. Were seminaries of education, upon a well digested plan, established in every town and village, no one can doubt that they would have a wonderful influence in forming.
less perfectly understood; and no one who is capable of taking the most cursory view of the present state of the world, can entertain a doubt that, in most countries of the world, it is very imperfectly understood, and therefore no one can wonder that its influence should have been so imperfect. But however imperfect the influence of Christianity may have been, it deserves to be considered what the effect of the rejection of it would be? "He who removes," faith the Bishop of Landaff, "from the mind of man the hopes and fears of futurity, opens the flood-gates of immorality, and lets in a deluge of vice and crimes destructive alike of the dignity of human nature, and of the tranquillity of the world." "Unhappy will it be for a nation," says the celebrated Author of the Travels of Anacharsis, "when light conversations (concerning Religion) become general among the industrious forming the manners of men. To the Politician and to the Divine, who are concerned for the true interests of mankind, this must be an object of the greatest magnitude and importance, to which, in times like these especially, every other consideration should be subservient. A Tax imposed upon the community for the sole purpose of Education, would return to those upon whom it was levied an hundred-fold into their bosoms, in the promotion of the happiness of themselves and their posterity.
classes of the people, who are but too much exposed to their influence, by the sufferings of their condition, the faults of their education, and the influence of example. Will they be kept, by the mere terrors of justice, within the bounds that order in society prescribes? Who will think himself secure in the midst of domestics, each of whom have an interest in seizing on his property, and perhaps in taking away his life, when they have nothing farther to do than to contrive the means of impunity? The laws of man hold back the hand from wrongs; those of Religion restrain the heart. Have we reason to expect that the former are sufficient, of themselves, to inspire the love of virtue, when, aided by the latter, they scarcely produce that effect?

These observations of this enlightened Statesman* have been most awfully verified by

* * "To disturb the order of society," says the same excellent Author, "is not the only effect of indecent declamations against Religion; they taint with despair the minds of the unfortunate. No country or condition is without virtuous people, who weep in secret, from the outrages of fortune—the injustice of the wicked—or the natural evils of life. And who is he that would tear from them the only consolation that remains? that of believing that all is conducted by the hand of God, who sees their tears
by his own countrymen, who have since openly rejected Christianity as an imposture, and by whose depravity he himself became a victim to those very calamities which he has here so well described! What more powerful stimulus can be offered to the human mind, to the exertion of the friends of Christianity, to endeavor to remove the difficulties with which, from various causes, it may have been clogged, and to exhibit it to the eyes of mankind in all its genuine simplicity! And what method more natural or more effectual can be devised, than the study—

"tears—is full of compassion for them—and has in store for them, blessings to compensate for all their sufferings. If our system be an illusion, it is a thousand times to be preferred to the fatal knowledge Infidels would give us in lieu of its delights."

"Infidels of every condition loudly vaunt their virtue, but it is not of a kind to be scrupulously examined. What solidity is there in the virtue that proclaims implacable hatred to a Religion which inculcates, inspires, recommends nothing but virtue? and which, founding all prosperity upon human principles, invites us to consider even those principles as no more than the prejudice of education? This is an awful problem for Infidels to solve!"

"If Religion were no more than the work of men's hands, he who first conceived the idea of opening an intercourse of affection between an Infinite Being and feeble man, formed the most beneficent of projects!"

"The Christian Religion, detached from extraneous things with which men have confused it, is the purest system of morals, and the best source of happiness; it enriches
Studying the Evangelists as Historians! Until they are so studied, it will be in vain to expect that solid satisfaction from them which they seem, in this view of them, so well calculated to produce—or to say, with any certainty, what Christianity is!

When the Evangelists chose the historic form, no doubt can possibly be entertained that they considered it as preferable to any other, to communicate to mankind the great and important truths which it contains; and why that form should have been so little attended to by Christians of all

“enriches the mind with all virtue; it enlarges the circle of virtues; it expands the soul, filling it with sweet and lasting peace; that peace which the world cannot give nor take away, and which makes us at peace with ourselves and the whole human race.”

To this invaluable extract may very properly be added the observation of the Bishop of Landaff, that “there never yet hath existed, and there never can exist, a nation without Religion. If Christianity be abolished, Paganism, Mahometanism, some religious imposture or other must be introduced in its stead, or civil society must be given up. But, in the opinion of Bacon, (a Philosopher with whom our modern Philosophers cannot be compared) there hath not, in any age, been discovered any philosophy, opinion, religion, law, or discipline, which so greatly exalts the common, and lessens individual interest, as the Christian Religion doth; so that I know not which most to admire and deplore, their wickedness as men, or their weakness as statesmen, who have attempted to govern mankind without Religion, and to establish society on the ruins of Christianity.”

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denominations, will probably be a matter of astonishment to future ages; as the neglect of it has, incontestibly, been the source of innumerable opinions, which otherwise could never have existed.

Had the celebrated Historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, for instance, viewed the Christian institution in this light, he never could have asserted, that those who understood, in their literal sense, the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished which had beheld his humble condition upon earth—or, that the records of seventeen centuries have instructed us not to press too closely the language of prophecy and revelation. The most superficial view of Christianity, considered as an History, would immediately have led him to perceive that it was not a second coming, but his coming as the Messiah, to which alone the language which Jesus adopted, can possibly be applied, without perverting the whole tenor of the Gospel History, and that therefore the closer the language of prophecy and revelation is pressed, the more it will re-
redound to the honor of him who made use of it. It would have been manifest to a demonstration, that when Jesus asserted he should come *in clouds*, he could only mean to oppose the expectation which the Jews had so constantly entertained, that his coming would be with all the splendor and glory of a Conqueror!

If there are any whose religious opinions have unhappily been influenced to the prejudice of Christianity, by these assertions of the learned Historian, and considered as incontrovertible by the learned University Preacher, they are most earnestly entreated to give the closest attention to the preceding examination of the subject. If there is any just foundation for such a charge, as it relates to the Author of our Religion, let Christianity be answerable for it—let it be rejected as unworthy of the reception of rational beings! But if, on the contrary, the reasoning which has been adopted in the preceding pages shall, in the main, be found to be just and accurate, let it have its due influence in giving correcter ideas of this important subject, and in increasing the veneration of mankind for the character of Jesus, and their esteem for the
Religion which he came to establish: and particularly let it be a strong inducement to all future Enquirers into the nature and merits of Christianity, to study it as an History, since such a mode of studying it has afforded so satisfactory a reply to one of the most formidable objections which has ever been brought against it, and since it may, without assuming too much, be affirmed, that it never could have been answered, in a satisfactory manner, in any other way.

Another observation, arising from the view which has been given of the subject of the coming of Christ, as delineated by the Evangelists, is, that it will probably lay a firm foundation for the right understanding of the language of the Epistles, so extremely similar to that of our Lord. This language has likewise been the source of the greatest perplexity to the most careful Enquirers into the meaning of these Epistles; but nothing satisfactory has hitherto been advanced to account for it. It hath indeed been said, and very truly, that the Writers of these Epistles have asserted such things as are totally incompatible with the supposition that the end of the world was at hand! But the Bishop of Lan-
Landaff, after having produced several instances of this kind, much to the purpose, does not appear extremely solicitous to relieve the Apostles from the accusation of error; for he says, addressing himself to Mr. Gibbon—“If, notwithstanding what hath been said, you should still be of opinion that the Apostles expected Christ would come in their time, it will not follow that this their error ought, in any wise, to diminish their authority as Preachers of the Gospel. It can be no impeachment, either of their integrity as Merchants or their ability as Historians, or their honesty as Preachers of the Gospel, that they were unacquainted with what had never been revealed to them; that they followed their own understandings where they had no better light to guide them; speaking from conjecture when they could not speak from certainty; of themselves when they had no commandment of the Lord. They knew but in part, and they prophesied but in part; and concerning this particular point, Jesus himself had told them, just as he was about finally to leave them, that it was not for them to know the times and the seasons, which
"the Father had put in his own power." The Bishop adds—"Nor is it to be wondered at, that the Apostles were left in a state of uncertainty concerning the time in which Christ should appear, since Beings far more exalted, and more highly favoured of heaven than they, were under an equal degree of ignorance: Of that day, says our Saviour, and of that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven; neither the Son, but the Father only." Watson's Apol. p. 60, &c.

But how will this reasoning apply to the Apostles, in their use of the language in question? Had the Apostles contented themselves with being silent upon a subject about which they had no commandment—had they followed their own understandings where they had no better light to guide them—or had they even spoken from conjecture, when they could not speak from certainty—nothing could have been more to the purpose than what the Bishop has here advanced in their favor! But unfortunately for the Bishop's reasoning, the Apostles asserted, in very strong terms, and that without the most distant idea of doubt that the Lord was at hand, and that the coming
of the Lord was drawing nigh. Indeed no language could have been more peremptory and decisive than that which the Apostles have made use of upon the subject! The authority of the Apostles, therefore, is as materially concerned in this matter, as Preachers of the Gospel, as that of our Lord himself.

How then, it will naturally be asked, are the Apostles to be vindicated in the use of this language? This question is of an importance perhaps little inferior to that which hath been discussed in the preceding pages, and consequently deserves as minute an investigation; but this would far exceed the limits of the present volume. Suffice it at present to say, that a satisfactory answer to this question would in vain be sought for, but in the language of our Lord, and in the events which, in the course of his ministry, he had occasion to unfold to his Disciples, and particularly in that event which makes so conspicuous a figure in the Gospel History, and which yet remained to be accomplished, viz. the destruction of Jerusalem. With this event, it is abundantly evident our Lord all along connected his coming; and it appears, with a fin-
a singular propriety, to have been adopted by the Apostles as a more delicate and covert way of speaking upon so disagreeable a subject as the destruction of Jerusalem. To have spoken openly, and without reserve, of that awful catastrophe, every one must perceive, would have been extremely hazardous, and have exposed them to greater persecutions than even those which, on other accounts, they were then suffering under, particularly from the Jews, whose power and influence were by no means inconsiderable, even out of Judea. Such a language had been rendered familiar to them by the use which their Divine Master had made of it; and as it was a less dangerous mode of speaking upon the subject, and was probably perfectly understood by the Christians of those times, it was natural for them to avail themselves of it, as a term which was less capable of giving offence to their enemies. In this view no language could have been more happily fitted for the purpose, and it seems difficult to imagine how the Apostles could have avoided availing themselves of it, especially at a period when the approaching accomplishment of our Lord's prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, must
must necessarily have engrossed much of their thoughts, both in their conversations and in their writings.

It seems to have been generally allowed, by those who have turned their attention to the time when the Epistles were written, that most of them were composed prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, and nothing can be more evident, than that the troubles and persecutions which the early Christians experienced, arose principally from the Jewish nation. As the late Dr. Home has observed, "the mention of heaven's mercy being extended to the Gentiles, always put them beside themselves. Christ only hinted the case of Elijah healing Naaman the Syrian, and that of Elisha being sent to a widow of Sarepta, leaving the application to themselves. They understood him, and endeavoured instantly to destroy him. St. Paul, relating the story of his conversion, was patiently heard, till he touched upon the circumstance of his mission to the Gentiles. They gave him audience to this word, and then lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live."

But
But if they were offended at the extension of the divine favor to the Gentile world, they were still more so, at the terms upon which they were to receive it. The Jews conceived that their law was of perpetual obligation, and they had not the most distant idea, that if the Gentiles were to be admitted to partake of the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom, it could be upon any other conditions than a strict observance of all the rites of the Jewish law, and particularly of circumcision, the distinguishing badge of a Jew.

The History of the Acts of the Apostles affords ample evidence that these were the chief causes, and the principal sources of the violent opposition which the Apostles met with in propagating Christianity, not only in Judea, but in almost every country where it was preached. With a view to this opposition the Apostle Paul characterizes them as the common enemies of mankind—as filling up the measure of their iniquities, and as persons on whom wrath was actually coming to the uttermost.

As it is not probable that the Jews ever ceased persecuting the Gentiles, till Jerusalem was destroyed, nothing could tend so
effectually to silence, or at least to soften the opposition which they met with from them, as the completion of this awful event. But in what terms could the Apostles converse or write, upon this very delicate and affecting subject, so natural as those which their Lord had previously adopted in his prediction of it. Such a language must have been less offensive, and have exposed them to much less hazard than any direct and explicit expressions upon the subject. And that they actually did make use of this language, and apply it to that awful event, seems highly probable from that gradation in their expressions, which is observable in the Epistles, according to the order of time in which they appear to have been written. In the Epistle to the Philippians, which is supposed to have been written about the year sixty-two, St. Paul says that it was at band. In that to the Hebrews, which was written at a still later period, the Writer's language is—the day is approaching—and yet a little while and be that shall come will come, and will not tarry. And St. John, in his first Epistle, intimates that it was still nearer. ch. ii. Little children, it is the last time; and what is particularly worthy of obser-
observation, he adds—as ye have heard that Antichrift shall come, even now are there many Antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. Bishop Hurd, in his Introduction to the Study of the Prophecies, says—"it is easy to give a just exposition" of this passage. "Little children, it is the last time, or hour—that is, the destruction of Jerusalem is at hand; as indeed it followed very soon after the date of this Epistle." And, a little farther on, he says—"the appearance of false Christs and false Prophets (of which there were many, according to our Lord's prediction, in St. John's time) indicated the arrival of that hour that was to be fatal to the Jewish state." vol. ii. pp. 8-9.

Bishop Hurd, it is true, says—"that the appearance of false Christs and false Prophets were, at the same time, types and fore-runners of a still more dreadful power, which should be fully revealed in the latter times, in a future period, when that calamity was past—that the Apostle appeals to a tradition then current among the Disciples, that such a power should arise in the Christian church, and that his hated name of Antichrist is applied, in this passage, by way of anticipation to the
"the false Prophets of that time, as pos-
"sessed much of his character, and acting
"with his spirit." But whatever foundation
there may be for such an opinion, in other
parts of the Apostolic Writings, it appears
to have no countenance in this Epistle of
St. John; for the only tradition to which
the Apostle here appeals, seems to be that
which was handed down from our Lord to
the Christians to whom St. John wrote;
for so the Apostle himself explains it: And
now, says he, there are many Antichrists,
whereby ye know that it is the last time, viz.
the time when the destruction of Jerusalem
was at hand. This is abundantly evident
from the very next verse—They went out
from us, but they were not of us; for if they
had been of us, they would have continued with
us; but they went out that they might be made
manifest that they were not all of us. So again,
v. 22. Who is a liar, but he that denieth that
Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah; and, in
the twenty-sixth verse, he says—These things
have I written concerning them that seduce you.
In the fourth chapter, v. 1. the Apostle re-
news the same subject. Beloved, believe not
every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are
of God; and the reason which the Apostle
gives
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gives for this trial, he says, is—because many false Prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ, or the Messiah, is come in the flesh, is of God. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God. And this is that Spirit of Antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is in the world. If any doubt could arise concerning the Apostle's meaning here; the fifteenth verse will fully remove it. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, God dwelleth in him and he in God. But, besides this, there is farther very striking evidence of the meaning of the Apostle, John, v. 4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome, or triumphed over them, to wit, the Seducers mentioned ch. ii. 26. who would have persuaded them that Jesus Christ, or the Messiah, was not come, because, says the Apostle, greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. He then describes the character of these false Christs and false Prophets nearly in the same language which the Jews, who expected a temporal Messiah, then indisputably held. They are of the world—they are looking for a temporal Messiah.
Messiah—therefore speak they of the world—they promise you great worldly prosperity, and, on that account, the world heareth them. How extremely to the purpose is all this, if the Apostle is here describing what they had heard from their beloved Lord, that there would be false Christ and false Prophets, who should arise prior to the destruction of Jerusalem? And how strongly does it confirm the idea that the Apostles, when they spoke of the coming of the Lord drawing nigh, borrowed their language from him, to describe the approaching destruction of Jerusalem? And if so, these may justly be considered as so many genuine, internal evidences of the authenticity of the Epistle!*

In

* When Bishop Hurd says that the Apostle John appeals to a tradition then current among the Disciples, that such a power as he refers to was to arise in the Christian church, in a future period, there seems not to be the smallest evidence of the existence of such a tradition, except the expression of the Apostle—Ye have heard, which applies infinitely more naturally to our Lord’s prediction of the coming of false Christ and false Prophets, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem, than to the apostacy of the Christian church, in ages that were far distant.

With respect to the term Antichrist, it deserves to be remarked, that it is not to be found in the second chapter of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is so generally supposed to relate to the enormous corruptions of the church of Rome; nor is the word Antichrist once mentioned throughout the whole of the Revelations, where, if any where, it might
In like manner the Apostle Paul, in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, ch. v. 2, tells them that the day of the Lord was coming as a thief in the night, and they were

might most naturally have been expected to be found, if it had any relation to the church of Rome. In fact it occurs only four times in the whole of the New Testament, viz. in the first and second Epistles of John, in all which places there is the strongest reason for believing that the opinion of Grotius is perfectly accurate, when he says Sicut Antichristus dicitur, qui contra Caesarem fe Caesarem vult dici atque Caesar haberis, sic Antichristus est qui se vero Christo opponit et ipse Christus haberis velit." Op. iv. p. 490.

Two out of the four passages, where the word Antichrist occurs, have already been laid before the Reader. A third is, 1 John, ii 22. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ, or the Messiah. He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son: Not denying, says Dr. Benson, that there was a God, nor that the maker of the world, and the God of Israel, was the one true God; but denying him a due regard, in not acknowledging Jesus to be the Messiah, after the many and clear evidences which God had given of that truth: just as he who despised the Apostles despised both Christ and God who had sent them. See Benson in loco.

The other place where this word is used is in the second Epistle of John, verse the seventh. Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ, or the Messiah, is come in the flesh. This is a Deceiver and an Antichrist.

If the observation of Mr. Kett, vol. ii. p. 2. is just, that the particular meaning of the word Antichrist is to be collected from those passages of Scripture in which it occurs, there can be no reasonable doubt that St. John refers to those persons who denied that Jesus was the Messiah, without any reference to the corruptions of the church of Rome, though those corruptions may certainly well enough be termed Antichristian, in the sense of their being directly contrary to the nature and the spirit of Christianity!
particularly directed to watch for it, and for this reason especially, because it would so come. But, adds the Apostle, ye are not in darkness that that day should come upon you unawares; i. e. you have been told of the signs of its approach, and a state of watchfulness will preserve you against surprize!

This chapter, it must be acknowledged, has generally been applied to an event very different from the destruction of Jerusalem, viz. to the final judgment of the world. But it must not be overlooked, that the Jews were, in this very Epistle, the object of the severest censure of the Apostle—They both killed the Lord Jesus and their own Prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God, and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. Nor is it a little remarkable, that Dr. Benson, Dr. Macknight, and indeed almost all the Commentators are so struck with the similarity of the Apostle's language in this fifth chapter, to that of our Lord in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, that they uniformly refer to it, though they generally think the day of judgment is exclusively the subject of the Apostle's discourse; and Dr. Benfon
Benson particularly refers to, Matt. xxiv. 46. Of that day and hour knoweth no man. If Scripture is to be its own interpreter, what better commentary of this chapter can the judicious Reader have, than that which the twenty-fourth of Matthew, and the parallel chapters, afford? Besides, how could it be said that the Thessalonians were not in darkness; that the day of judgment should overtake them as a thief; for, as Bishop Newton observes—if we consult reason, if we consult revelation, about the time when the general judgment shall come, neither of them afford us any light: both of them leave us in darkness. He might, with equal propriety, have added, that there is no where in Scripture any account of signs which were to precede the day of judgment, nor any tokens of its approach. The best authority has, indeed, said that such a day will come, and that there will be a general resurrection, both of the just and unjust. But this seems to be all that is necessary or proper for us, for obvious reasons, to know. Nor can there be any good reason assigned, why a revelation of this matter should have been made to the Thessalonians, which would not
not concern Christians of every age, and more especially those who should live the nearest to it.*

If this reasoning is of any weight, it will tend greatly to confirm the leading purpose of this observation, that the Apostles adopted the language of our Lord, in order, with the greater security, both in writing and conversation, to point out the approaching destruction of Jerusalem! and if so, a complete solution of the difficulty, arising from the use of the language of the Apostles, and a full vindication of them from the charge of the Historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, of having predicted the end of the world in their own age, will probably be afforded. But this, it must be owned, will best appear by a close attention to the several passages in their connection which relate to this subject. Should this work meet with sufficient encouragement, this subject will afford ample matter for another volume;

* These remarks are chiefly taken from a work entitled An Illustration of various important Passages in the Epistles, published by the Author, where the design of the two Epistles to the Thessalonians is largely investigated; which a lapse of ten years has contributed to strengthen and confirm, by many other weighty and important considerations.
but, as a greater risque, considering the declining state of Religion in the world, and the Author's situation in life, is run, in the present publication, than prudence perhaps would have dictated, he must wait the public decision, which will influence his future conduct.

With one observation more this work shall conclude; but it is an observation in which more than one nation seems to be deeply interested! The destruction of Jerusalem was the effect of a most deplorable corruption of manners, and of a supine indifference to the means of improvement which were offered to them, arising from an unbounded ambition, which had taken the deepest root in their minds. Ideas of aggrandizement, and of universal empire, had entirely engrossed their thoughts, at the moment when desolation and ruin were advancing with hasty steps. Nor were frequent warnings of their approaching calamities wanting. Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee—how often would I have gathered thy children, as an hen gathereth her chicken under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate.
The present crisis is an alarming one! The judgments of God are abroad in the earth. All the inhabitants of the earth are trembling with apprehension, and imagination is upon the stretch as to the probable issue of things! The French nation, like the Jews of old, have grasped at Universal Empire! Like them, promising themselves liberty, they have become slaves, and, by the like unsubstantial promises, have enslaved many of the surrounding nations. By using it as a cloak for the most unbounded licentiousness, they have rendered even the name of Liberty an object of suspicion, which has had a most deadly influence upon every species of reform; which, if not checked, must be productive of the most malignant effects upon the happiness of mankind, if it doth not involve them in one general ruin.

Britain hath, happily, under Providence, been the chief instrument in restraining the exorbitant ambition which was ready to draw everything within its vortex. May it likewise be the happy instrument of restraining the rapid progress of Infidelity, by promoting the knowledge and practice of genuine Christianity! If the preceding enquiry shall, in any wise, contribute to remove ob-
objections to it, and to present it, under a more favourable light, to the notice of mankind—if it shall serve as a model for future enquiry, and lead to a more general and cordial reception of it—if, in short, it in any way shall answer the great purpose of all Religion, to reform and amend mankind,* and thus to ward off calamity, it will be some recompence, under uncommon infirmity and personal affliction, for the trouble of composing it.

* Le deffein de Dieu est plus de perfeccionner la volonté que l'esprit. Pascal.