

A VINDICATION OF SOME PASSAGES IN THE
FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CHAPTERS OF THE
HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE
ROMAN EMPIRE



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Introduction

Perhaps it may be necessary to inform the Public, that not long since an Examination of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire was published by Mr. Davis. He styles himself a Bachelor of Arts, and a Member of Baliol College in the University of Oxford. His title-page is a declaration of war, and in the prosecution of his religious crusade, he assumes a privilege of disregarding the ordinary laws which are respected in the most hostile transactions between civilized men or civilized nations. Some of the harshest epithets in the English language are repeatedly applied to the historian, a part of whose work Mr. Davis has chosen for the object of his criticism. To this author Mr. Davis imputes the crime of betraying the confidence and seducing the faith of those readers, who may heedlessly stray in the flowery paths of his diction, without perceiving the poisonous snake that lurks concealed in the grass. *Latet anguis in herbâ.* The Examiner has assumed the province of reminding them of "the unfair proceedings of such an insidious friend, who offers the deadly draught in a golden cup, that they may be less sensible of the danger."¹ In order to which, Mr. Davis has selected several of the more notorious instances of his misrepresentations and errors; reducing them to their respective heads, and subjoining a long list of almost incredible inaccuracies: and such striking proof of servile plagiarism, as the world will be surprised to meet with in an author who puts in so bold a claim to originality and extensive reading?² Mr. Davis prosecutes this attack through an octavo volume of not less than two hundred and eighty-four pages with the same implacable spirit; perpetually charges his adversary with perverting the ancients, and transcribing the moderns; and, inconsistently enough, imputes to him the opposite crimes of art and carelessness, of gross ignorance and of wilful falsehood. The Examiner closes his work³ with a severe reproof of those feeble critics who have allowed any share of knowledge to an odious antagonist. He presumes to pity and to condemn the first historian of the present age, for the generous approbation which he had bestowed on a writer who is content that Mr. Davis should be his enemy, whilst he has a right to name Dr. Robertson for his friend.

When I delivered to the world the First Volume of an important History, in which I had been obliged to connect the progress of Christianity with the civil state and revolutions of the Roman Empire, I could not be ignorant that the result of my inquiries might offend the interest of some and the opinions of others. If the whole work was favourably received by the Public, I had the more reason to expect that this obnoxious part would provoke the zeal of those who consider themselves as the Watchmen of the Holy City. These expectations were not disappointed; and a fruitful crop of Answers, Apologies, Remarks, Examinations etc. sprung up with all convenient speed. As soon as I saw the advertisement, I generally sent for them; for I have never affected, indeed I have never understood, the stoical apathy, the proud contempt of criticism, which some authors have publicly professed. Fame is the motive, it is the reward, of our labours; nor can I easily comprehend how it is possible that we should remain cold and indifferent with regard to the attempts which are made to deprive us of the most valuable object of our possessions, or at least of our hopes. Besides this strong and natural impulse of curiosity, I was prompted by the more laudable desire of applying to my own, and the public, benefit, the well-grounded censures of a learned adversary; and of correcting those faults which the indulgence of vanity and friendship had suffered to escape without observation. I read with attention several criticisms which were published against the Two last Chapters of my History, and unless I much deceive myself, I weighed them in my own mind without prejudice and without resentment. After I was clearly satisfied that their principal objections were founded on misrepresentation or mistake, I declined with sincere and disinterested reluctance the odious task of controversy, and almost formed a tacit resolution of committing my intentions, my writings, and my adversaries to the judgment of the Public, of whose favourable disposition I had received the most flattering proofs.

The reasons which justified my silence were obvious and forcible: the respectable nature of the subject itself, which ought not to be rashly violated by the rude hand of controversy; the inevitable tendency of dispute, which soon degenerates into minute and personal altercation; the indifference of the Public for the discussion of such questions as neither relate to the business nor the amusement of the present age. I calculated the possible loss of temper and the certain loss of time, and considered, that while I was laboriously engaged in a humiliating task, which could add nothing to my own reputation, or to the entertainment of my readers, I must interrupt the prosecution of a work which claimed my whole attention, and which the Public, or at least my friends, seemed to require with some impatience at my hands. The judicious lines of Dr. Young sometimes offered themselves to my memory, and I felt the truth of his observation, That every author lives or dies by his own pen, and that the unerring sentence of Time assigns its proper rank to every composition and to every criticism, which it preserves from oblivion.

¹Davis, Preface, p. ii

²Davis, Preface, p. iii

³Davis, p. 282,283

I should have consulted my own ease, and perhaps I should have acted in stricter conformity to the rules of prudence, if I had still persevered in patient silence. But Mr. Davis may, if he pleases, assume the merit of extorting from me the notice which I had refused to more honourable foes. I had declined the consideration of their literary Objections; but he has compelled me to give an answer to his criminal Accusations. Had he confined himself to the ordinary, and indeed obsolete charges of impious principles, and mischievous intentions, I should have acknowledged with readiness and pleasure that the religion of Mr. Davis appeared to be very different from mine. Had he contented himself with the use of that style which decency and politeness have banished from the more liberal part of mankind, I should have smiled, perhaps with some contempt, but without the least mixture of anger or resentment. Every animal employs the note, or cry, or howl, which is peculiar to its species; every man expresses himself in the dialect the most congenial to his temper and inclination, the most familiar to the company in which he has lived, and to the authors with whom he is conversant; and while I was disposed to allow that Mr. Davis had made some proficiency in Ecclesiastical Studies, I should have considered the difference of our language and manners as an unsurmountable bar of separation between us. Mr. Davis has over-leaped that bar, and forces me to contend with him on the very dirty ground which he has chosen for the scene of our combat. He has judged, I know not with how much propriety, that the support of a cause, which would disclaim such unworthy assistance, depended on the ruin of my moral and literary character. The different misrepresentations, of which he has drawn out the ignominious catalogue, would materially affect my credit as an historian, my reputation as a scholar, and even my honour and veracity as a gentleman. If I am indeed incapable of understanding what I read, I can no longer claim a place among those writers who merit the esteem and confidence of the Public. If I am capable of wilfully perverting what I understand, I no longer deserve to live in the society of those men, who consider a strict and inviolable adherence to truth, as the foundation of every thing that is virtuous or honourable in human nature. At the same time, I am not insensible that his mode of attack has given a transient pleasure to my enemies, and a transient uneasiness to my friends. The size of his volume, the boldness of his assertions, the acrimony of his style, are contrived with tolerable skill to confound the ignorance and candour of his readers. There are few who will examine the truth or justice of his accusations; and of those persons who have been directed by their education to the study of ecclesiastical antiquity, many will believe, or will affect to believe, that the success of their champion has been equal to his zeal, and that the serpent pierced with an hundred wounds lies expiring at his feet. Mr. Davis's book will cease to be read (perhaps the grammarians may already reproach me for the use of an improper tense); but the oblivion towards which it seems to be hastening, will afford the more ample scope for the artful practices of those, who may not scruple to affirm, or rather to insinuate, that Mr. Gibbon was publicly convicted of falsehood and misrepresentation; that the evidence produced against him was unanswerable; and that his silence was the effect and the proof of conscious guilt. Under the hands of a malicious surgeon, the sting of a wasp may continue to fester and inflame, long after the vexatious little insect has left its venom and its life in the wound.

The defence of my own honour is undoubtedly the first and prevailing motive which urges me to repel with vigour an unjust and unprovoked attack; and to undertake a tedious vindication, which, after the perpetual repetition of the vainest and most disgusting of the pronouns, will only prove that I am innocent; and that Mr. Davis, in his charge, has very frequently subscribed his own condemnation. And yet I may presume to affirm, that the Public have some interest in this controversy. They have some interest to know, whether the writer whom they have honoured with their favour is deserving of their confidence, whether they must content themselves with reading the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire as a tale amusing enough, or whether they may venture to receive it as a fair and authentic history. The general persuasion of mankind, that where much has been positively asserted, something must be true, may contribute to encourage a secret suspicion, which would naturally diffuse itself over the whole body of the work. Some of those friends who may now tax me with imprudence for taking this public notice of Mr. Davis's book, have perhaps already condemned me for silently acquiescing under the weight of such serious, such direct, and such circumstantial imputations.

Mr. Davis, who in the last page of his⁴ Work appears to have recollected that modesty is an amiable and useful qualification, affirms, that his plan required only that he should consult the authors to whom he was directed by my references; and that the judgment of riper years was not so necessary to enable him to execute with success the pious labour to which he had devoted his pen. Perhaps, before we separate, a moment to which I most fervently aspire, Mr. Davis may find that a mature judgment is indispensably requisite for the successful execution of any work of literature, and more especially of criticism. Perhaps he will discover, that a young student, who hastily consults an unknown author, on a subject with which he is unacquainted, cannot always be guided by the most accurate reference to the knowledge of the sense, as well as to the sight of the

⁴Davis, p. 284

passage which has been quoted by his adversary. Abundant proofs of these maxims will hereafter be suggested. For the present, I shall only remark, that it is my intention to pursue in my defence the order, or rather the course, which Mr. Davis has marked out in his Examination; and that I have numbered the several articles of my impeachment according to the most natural division of the subject. And now let me proceed on this hostile march over a dreary and barren desert, where thirst, hunger, and intolerable weariness, are much more to be dreaded, than the arrows of the enemy.

Quotations In General

”The remarkable mode of quotation which Mr. Gibbon adopts must immediately strike every one who turns to his notes. He sometimes only mentions the author, perhaps the book; and often leaves the reader the toil of finding out, or rather guessing at the passage. The policy, however, is not without its design and use. By endeavouring to deprive us of the means of comparing him with the authorities he cites, he flattered himself, no doubt, that he might safely have recourse to misrepresentation.”⁵

Such is the style of Mr. Davis; who in another place⁶ mentions this mode of quotation ”as a good artifice to escape detection;” and applauds, with an agreeable irony, his own labours in turning over a few pages of the Theodosian Code.

I shall not descend to animadvert on the rude and illiberal strain of this passage, and I will frankly own that my indignation is lost in astonishment. The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters of my History are illustrated by three hundred and eighty-three Notes; and the nakedness of a few Notes, which are not accompanied by any quotation, is amply compensated by a much greater number, which contain two, three, or perhaps four distinct references; so that upon the whole my stock of quotations which support and justify my facts cannot amount to less than eight hundred or a thousand. As I had often felt the inconvenience of the loose and general method of quoting which is so falsely imputed to me, I have carefully distinguished the books, the chapters, the sections, the pages of the authors to whom I referred, with a degree of accuracy and attention, which might claim some gratitude, as it has seldom been so regularly practised by any historical writers. And here I must confess some obligation to Mr. Davis, who, by staking my credit and his own on a circumstance so obvious and palpable, has given me this early opportunity of submitting the merits of our cause, or at least of our characters, to the judgment of the Public. Hereafter, when I am summoned to defend myself against the imputation of misquoting the text, or misrepresenting the sense of a Greek or Latin author, it will not be in my power to communicate the knowledge of the languages, or the possession of the books, to those readers who may be destitute either of one or of the other, and the part which they are obliged to take between assertions equally strong and peremptory, may sometimes be attended with doubt and hesitation. But, in the present instance, every reader who will give himself the trouble of consulting the First Volume of my History, is a competent judge of the question. I exhort, I solicit him to run his eye down the columns of Notes, and to count how many of the quotations are minute and particular, how few are vague and general. When he has satisfied himself by this easy computation, there is a word which may naturally suggest itself; an epithet, which I should be sorry either to deserve or use; the boldness of Mr. Davis’s assertion, and the confidence of my appeal will tempt, nay, perhaps, will force him to apply that epithet either to one or to the other of the adverse parties.

I have confessed that a critical eye may discover some loose and general references; but as they bear a very inconsiderable proportion to the whole mass, they cannot support, or even excuse, a false and ungenerous accusation, which must reflect dishonour either on the object or on the author of it. If the examples in which I have occasionally deviated from my ordinary practice were specified and examined, I am persuaded that they might always be fairly attributed to one of the following reasons. 1. In some rare instances, which I have never attempted to conceal, I have been obliged to adopt quotations which were expressed with less accuracy than I could have wished. 2. I may have accidentally recollected the sense of a passage which I had formerly read, without being able to find the place, or even to transcribe from memory the precise words. 3. The whole tract (as in a remarkable instance of the second Apology of Justin Martyr) was so short, that a more particular description was not required. 4. The form of the composition supplied the want of a local reference; the preceding mention of the year fixed the passage of the annalist; and the reader was guided to the proper spot in the commentaries of Grotius, Valesius, or Godefroy, by the more accurate citation of their original author. 5. The idea which I was desirous of communicating to the reader, was sometimes the general result of the author or treatise that I had quoted; nor was it possible to confine, within the narrow limits of a particular reference, the sense or spirit which was mingled with the whole mass. These motives are either laudable, or at least innocent. In

⁵Davis, Preface p. ii.

⁶Davis, p. 230

two of these exceptions, my ordinary mode of citation was superfluous; in the other three, it was impracticable.

In quoting a comparison which Tertullian had used to express the rapid increase of the Marcionnes, I expressly declared that I was obliged to quote it from memory. ⁷ If I have been guilty of comparing them to bees instead of wasps, I can however most sincerely disclaim the sagacious suspicion of Mr. Davis, ⁸ who imagines that I was tempted to amend the simile of Tertullian from an improper partiality for those odious Heretics.

A rescript of Diocletian, which declared the old law (not an old law ⁹), had been alleged by me on the respectable authority of Fra-Paolo. The Examiner, who thinks that he has turned over the pages of the Theodosian Code, informs ¹⁰ his reader that it may be found, I. vi. tit. xxiv. 8.; he will be surprised to learn that this rescript could not be found in a code where it does not exist, but that it may distinctly be read in the same number, the same title, and the same book of the CODE OF JUSTINIAN. He who is severe should at least be just: yet I should probably have disdained this minute animadversion, unless it had served to display the general ignorance of the critic in the History of the Roman Jurisprudence. If Mr. Davis had not been an absolute stranger, the most treacherous guide could not have persuaded him that a rescript of Diocletian was to be found in the Theodosian Code, which was designed only to preserve the laws of Constantine and his successors. *Compendiosam (says Theodosius himself) Divalium Constitutionum scientiam, ex D. Constantini temporibus roboramus. (Novell. ad calcem Cod. Theod. 1. i. tit. i. leg. I.)*

Errors Of The Press

Few objects are below the notice of Mr. Davis, and his criticism is never formidable as when it is directed against the guilty corrector of the press, who on some occasions has shewn himself negligent of my fame and of his own. Some errors have arisen from the omission of letters; from the confusion of cyphers, which perhaps were not very distinctly marked in the original manuscript. The two of the Roman, and the eleven of the Arabic, numerals have been unfortunately mistaken for each other; the similar forms of a 2 and a 3, a 5 and a 6, a 3 and an 8, have improperly been transposed; Antolycus for Autolycus, Idolatria for Idololatria, Holsterius for Holstenius, had escaped my own observation, as well as the diligence of the person who was employed to revise the sheets of my History. These important errors, from the indulgence of a deluded Public, have been multiplied in the numerous impressions of three different editions; and for the present I can only lament my own defects, whilst I deprecate the wrath of Mr. Davis, who seems ready to infer that I cannot either read or write. I sincerely admire his patient industry, which I despair of being able to imitate; but if a future edition should ever be required. I could wish to obtain, on any reasonable terms, the services of so useful a corrector.

Difference Of Editions

Mr. Davis had been directed by my references to several passages of Optatus Milevitanus, ¹¹ and of the *Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique* of M. Dupin. ¹² He eagerly consults those places, is unsuccessful, and is happy. Sometimes the place which I have quoted does not offer any of the circumstances which I had alleged, sometimes only a few; and sometimes the same passages exhibit a sense totally adverse and repugnant to mine. These shameful misrepresentations incline Mr. Davis to suspect that I have never consulted the original (not even of a common French book!), and he asserts his right to censure my presumption. These important charges form two distinct articles in the list of Misrepresentations; but Mr. Davis has amused himself with adding to the slips of the pen or of the press, some complaints of his ill success, when he attempted to verify my quotations from Cyprian and from Shaw's Travels. ¹³

The success of Mr. Davis would indeed have been somewhat extraordinary, unless he had consulted the same editions, as well as the same places. I shall content myself with mentioning the editions which I have used, and with assuring him, that if he renews his search, he will not, or rather that he will, be disappointed.

⁷Gibbon's History, p. 458. I shall usually refer to the third edition, unless there are various readings.

⁸Davis, p.144.

⁹Gibbon, p.492

¹⁰Davis, p. 230

¹¹Davis, p.73

¹²Davis, p. 132-136.

¹³Davis, p.151, 155.

Work	Mr. Gibbon's Editions	Mr. Davis's Editions
Optatus Milevitanus, by Dupin	fol. Paris, 1700.	Fol. Antwerp, 1702.
Dupin, Bibliotheque Ecclesiastique	4t0. Paris, 1690	8vo. Paris, 1687.
Cypriam Opera	Fell, fol. Amsterdam, 1700.	Most probably Oxon. 1682.
Shaw's Travels	4t0. London, 1757.	The folio Edition.

Jewish History, Tacitus

The nature of my subject had led me to mention, not the real origin of the Jews, but their first appearance to the eyes of other nations; and I cannot avoid transcribing the short passage in which I had introduced them.

"The Jews, who under the Assyrian and Persian monarchies had languished for many ages the most despised portion of their slaves, emerged from their obscurity under the successors of Alexander. And as they multiplied to a surprising degree in the East, and afterwards in the West, they soon excited the curiosity and wonder of other nations." ¹⁴

This simple abridgment seems in its turn to have excited the wonder of Mr Davis, whose surprise almost renders him eloquent.

"What a strange assemblage," says he, "is here? It is like Milton's Chaos, without bound, without dimension, where time and place are lost. In short, what does this display afford us, but a deal of boyish colouring to the prejudice of much good history?" ¹⁵

If I rightly understand Mr Davis's language, he censures, as a piece of confused declamation, the passage which he has produced from my History; and if I collect the angry criticisms which he has scattered over twenty pages of controversy, ¹⁶ I think I can discover that there is hardly a period, or even a word, in this unfortunate passage, which has obtained the approbation of the Examiner.

As nothing can escape his vigilance, he censures me for including the twelve tribes of Israel under the common appellation of JEWS, ¹⁷ and for extending the name of As SYRIANS to the subjects of the Kings of Babylon; ¹⁸ and again censures me, because some facts which are affirmed or insinuated in my text, do not agree with the strict and proper limits which he has assigned to those national denominations. The name of Jews has indeed been established by the scepter of the tribe of Judah, and, in the times which precede the captivity, it is used in the more general sense with some sort of impropriety; but surely I am not peculiarly charged with a fault which has been consecrated by the consent of twenty centuries, the practice of the best writers, ancient as well as modern (See Josephus and Prideaux, even in the titles of their respective works), and by the usage of modern languages, of the Latin, the Greek, and, if I may credit Reland, of the Hebrew itself (See Palestin. 1. i. c. 6.). With regard to the other word, that of Assyrians, most assuredly I will not lose myself in the labyrinth of the Asiatic monarchies before the age of Cyrus; nor indeed is any more required for my justification, than to prove that Babylon was considered as the capital and royal seat of Assyria. If Mr Davis were a man of learning, I might be morose enough to censure his ignorance of ancient geography, and to overwhelm him under a load of quotations, which might be collected and transcribed with very little trouble: But as I must suppose that he has received a classical education, I might have expected him to have read the first book of Herodotus, where that historian describes, in the clearest and most elegant terms, the situation and greatness of Babylon:

*Τῆς δὲ Ἀσσυρηζ τα μεν κου και αλλα
πολισματα μεγαλα πολλα το δε
ονομαστοτατον και ισχυροτατον
και ευθα σφι, Νινου αναστατου γενομενης
τα βασιλγια κατεστηκεε ην Βαβυλων.*

(Clio, c. 178.) Ancient Greek quote by Clio

I may be surprised that he should be so little conversant with the Cyropoedia of Xenophon, in the whole course of which the King of Babylon, the adversary of the Medes and Persians, is repeatedly mentioned by the style and tide of THE ASSYRIAN,

¹⁴Gibbon, P. 447

¹⁵Davis, p. 5.

¹⁶Davis, p. 2-22

¹⁷Davis, p.3.

¹⁸Davis, p. 2,

*Οδε Ασσυριοζ, ό Βαβυλωνα τε
εχων και την αλλην Ασσυριαν*

Ancient Greek quote from the *Cyropoedia* of Xenophon
(I. ii. p. 102, 103, Edit. Hutchinson.)

But there remains something more: and Mr Davis must apply the same reproaches of inaccuracy, if not ignorance, to the Prophet Isaiah, who, in the name of Jehovah, announcing the downfall of Babylon and the deliverance of Israel, declares with an oath;

”And as I have purposed the thing shall stand: to crush the ASSYRIAN in my land, and to trample him on my mountains. Then shall his yoke depart from off them; and his burthen shall be removed from off their shoulders.” (Isaiah, xiv. 24, 25. Lowth’s new translation. See likewise the Bishop’s note, p. 98.)

Our old translation expresses, with less elegance, the same meaning; but I mention with pleasure the labours of a respectable Prelate, who in this, as well as in a former work, has very happily united the most critical judgment, with the taste and spirit of poetry.

The jealousy which Mr Davis affects for the honour of the Jewish people, will not suffer him to allow that they were slaves to the conquerors of the East; and while he acknowledges that they were tributary and dependent, he seems desirous of introducing, or even inventing, some milder expression of the state of vassalage and subservience;¹⁹ from whence Tacitus assumed the words of *despectissima pars servientium*. Has Mr Davis never heard of the distinction of civil and political slavery? Is he ignorant that even the natural and victorious subjects of an Asiatic despot have been deservedly marked with the opprobrious epithet of slaves by every writer acquainted with the name and advantage of freedom? Does he not know that, under such a governments the yoke is imposed with double weight on the necks of the vanquished, as the rigour of tyranny is aggravated by the abuse of conquest. From the first invasion of Judea by the arms of the Assyrians, to the subversion of the Persian monarchy by Alexander, there elapsed a period of above four hundred years, which included about twelve ages or generations of the human race. As long as the Jews asserted their independence, they repeatedly suffered every calamity which the rage and insolence of a victorious enemy could inflict; the throne of David was overturned, the temple and city were reduced to ashes, and the whole land, a circumstance perhaps unparalleled in history, remained three-score and ten years without inhabitants, and without cultivation. (2 Chronicles, xxxvi. 21.) According to an institution which has long prevailed in Asia, and particularly in the Turkish government, the most beautiful and ingenious youths were carefully educated in the palace, where superior merit sometimes introduced these fortunate slaves to the favour of the conqueror, and to the honours of the state. (See the book and example of Daniel.) The rest of the unhappy Jews experienced the hardships of captivity and exile in distant lands, and while individuals were oppressed, the nation seemed to be dissolved or annihilated. The gracious edict of Cyrus was offered to all those who worshipped the God of Israel in the temple of Jerusalem; but it was accepted by no more than forty-two thousand persons of either sex and of every age, and of these about thirty thousand derived their origin from the Tribes of Judah, of Benjamin, and of Levi. (See Ezra, i. Nehemiah, vii. and Prideaux’s *Connections*, vol. i. p. 107. fol. Edit. London, 1718.) The inconsiderable band of exiles, who returned to inhabit the land of their fathers, cannot be computed as the hundred and fiftieth part of the mighty people that had been numbered by the impious rashness of David. After a survey, which did not comprehend the Tribes of Levi and Benjamin, the monarch was assured that he reigned over one million five hundred and seventy thousand men that drew sword (I Chronicles, xxi. 1-6), and the country of Judaea must have contained near seven millions of free inhabitants. The progress of restoration is always less rapid than that of destruction; Jerusalem, which had been ruined in a few months, was rebuilt by the slow and interrupted labours of a whole century; and the Jews, who gradually multiplied in their native seats, enjoyed a servile and precarious existence, which depended on the capricious will of their master. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah do not afford a very pleasing view of their situation under the Persian Empire; and the book of Esther exhibits a most extraordinary instance of the degree of estimation in which they were held at the Court of Susa. A Minister addressed his King in the following words, which may be considered as a Commentary on the *despectissima pars servientium* of the Roman historian:

”And Haman said to King Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the King’s laws; therefore it is not for the King’s profit to suffer them. If it please the King, let it be written that they may be destroyed; and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it to the King’s treasuries. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it to Haman, the son of Hammedatlia the Agagite, the Jews’ enemy. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given unto thee; the people also, to

¹⁹Davis, p. 6.

do with them as it seemeth good to thee." (Esther, iii. 8-11.)

This trifling favour was asked by the Minister, and granted by the Monarch, with an easy indifference, which expressed their contempt for the lives and fortunes of the Jews; the business passed without difficulty through the forms of office; and had Esther been less lovely, or less beloved, a single day would have consummated the universal slaughter of a submissive people, to whom no legal defence was allowed, and from whom no resistance seems to have been dreaded. I am a stranger to Mr Davis's political principles; but I should think that the epithet of slaves, and of despised slaves, may, without injustice, be applied to a captive nation, over whose head the sword of tyranny was suspended by so slender a thread.

The policy of the Macedonians was very different from that of the Persians; and yet Mr Davis, who reluctantly confesses that the Jews were oppressed by the former, does not understand how long they were favoured and protected by the latter.²⁰ In the shock of those revolutions which divided the empire of Alexander, Judaea, like the other provinces, experienced the transient ravages of an advancing or retreating enemy, who led away a multitude of captives. But, in the age of Josephus, the Jews still enjoyed the privileges granted by the Kings of Asia and Egypt, who had fixed numerous colonies of that nation in the new cities of Alexandria, Antioch, etc. and placed them in the same honourable condition (*ισοπολιταζ, ισοτιμουζ*) as the Greeks and Macedonians themselves. (Joseph. Antiquitat. 1. xii. c. 5. 3. p. 596. Vol. i. edit. Havercamp.) Had they been treated with less indulgence, their settlement in those celebrated cities, the seats of commerce and learning, was enough to introduce them to the knowledge of the world, and to justify my absurd proposition, that they emerged from obscurity under the successors of Alexander.

The Jews remained and flourished under the mild dominion of the Macedonian Princes, till they were compelled to assert their civil and religious rights against Antiochus Epiphanes, who had adopted new maxims of tyranny; and the age of the Maccabees is perhaps the most glorious period of the Hebrew annals. Mr Davis, who on this occasion is bewildered by the subtlety of Tacitus, does not comprehend why the historian should ascribe the independence of the Jews to three negative causes, "Macedonibus invalidis, Parthis nondum adultis, et Romani procul aberant." To the understanding of the critic, Tacitus might as well have observed, that the Jews were not destroyed by a plague, a famine, or an earthquake; and Mr Davis cannot see, for his own part, any reason why they might not have elected Kings of their own two or three hundred years before.²¹ Such indeed was not the reason of Tacitus: he probably considered that every nation, depressed by the weight of a foreign power, naturally rises towards the surface, as soon as the pressure is removed; and he might think that, in a short and rapid history of the independence of the Jews, it was sufficient for him to shew that the obstacles did not exist, which, in an earlier or in a later period, would have checked their efforts. The curious reader, who has leisure to study the Jewish and Syrian history, will discover, that the throne of the Asmonaeon Princes was confirmed by the two great victories of the Parthians over Demetrius Nicator, and Antiochus Sidetes (See Joseph. Antiquitat. Jud. 1. xiii. c. 5, 6, 8, 9, Justin, xxxvi. I. xxxviii. 10. with Usher and Prideaux, before Christ 141 and 130); and the expression of Tacitus, the more closely it is examined, will be the more rationally admired.

My Quotations²² are the object of Mr Davis's criticism,²³ as well as the Text of this short, but obnoxious passage. He corrects the error of my memory, which had suggested *servitutis* instead of *servientium*; and so natural is the alliance between truth and moderation, that on this occasion he forgets his character, and candidly acquits me of any malicious design to misrepresent the words of Tacitus. The other references, which are contained in the first and second Notes of my Fifteenth Chapter, are connected with each other, and can only be mistaken after they have been forcibly separated. The silence of Herodotus is a fair evidence of the obscurity of the Jews, who had escaped the eyes of so curious a traveller. The Jews are first mentioned by Justin, when he relates the siege of Jerusalem by Antiochus Sidetes; and the conquest of Judaea, by the arms of Pompey, engaged Diodorus and Dion to introduce that singular nation to the acquaintance of their readers. These epochs, which are within seventy years of each other, mark the age in which the Jewish people, emerging from their obscurity, began to act a part in the society of nations, and to excite the curiosity of the Greek and Roman historians. For that purpose only, I had appealed to the authority of Diodorus Siculus, of Justin, or rather of Trogius Pompeius, and of Dion Cassius. If I had designed to investigate the Jewish Antiquities, reason, as well as faith, must have directed my inquiries to the Sacred Books, which, even as human productions, would deserve to be studied as one of the most curious and original monuments of the East.

I stand accused, though not indeed by Mr Davis, for profanely depreciating the promised Land, as well as the chosen People. The Gentleman without a name has placed this charge in the front of

²⁰Davis, p. 4.

²¹Davis, p. 8.

²²Gibbon, P. 447 Note 1, 2.

²³Davis, P. 10. 11. 12.

his battle, ²⁴ and if my memory does not deceive me, it is one of the few remarks in Mr Apthorpe's book, which have any immediate relation to my History They seem to consider in the light of a reproach, and of an unjust reproach, the idea which I had given of Palestine, as of a territory scarcely superior to Wales in extent and fertility; ²⁵ and they strangely convert a geographical observation into a theological error. When I recollect that the imputation of a similar error was employed by the implacable Calvin, to precipitate and to justify the execution of Servetus, I must applaud the felicity of this country, and of this age, which has disarmed, if it could not mollify, the fierceness of ecclesiastical criticism (see *Dictionaire Critique de Chaffeupié*, tom. iv. p. 223).

As I had compared the narrow extent of Phoenicia and Palestine with the important blessings which those celebrated countries had diffused over the rest of the earth, their minute size became an object not of censure but of praise.

Ingentes animos angusto in pectore versant.

The precise measure of Palestine was taken from Templeman's Survey of the Globe: he allows to Wales 7011 square English miles, to the Morea, or Peloponnesus, 7220, to the Seven United Provinces 7546, and to Judaea or Palestine 7600. The difference is not very considerable, and if any of these countries has been magnified beyond its real size, Asia is more liable than Europe to have been affected by the inaccuracy of Mr Templeman's maps. To the authority of this modern survey, I shall only add the ancient and weighty testimony of Jerom, who passed in Palestine above thirty years of his life. From Dan to Bershebah, the two fixed and proverbial boundaries of the Holy Land, he reckons no more than one hundred and sixty miles (*Hieronym. ad Dardanum*, tom. iii. p. 66), and the breadth of Palestine cannot by any expedient be stretched to one half of its length (see *Reland, Palestin.* 1. ii. c. 5. p. 425).

The degrees and limits of fertility cannot be ascertained with the strict simplicity of geographical measures. Whenever we speak of the productions of the earth, in different climates, our ideas must be relative, our expressions vague and doubtful; nor can we always distinguish between the gifts of Nature and the rewards of Industry. The Emperor Frederick II., the enemy and the victim of the Clergy, is accused of saying, after his return from his Crusade, that the God of the Jews would have despised his promised land, if he had once seen the fruitful realms of Sicily and Naples (See *Giannone Istoria Civile del Regno di Napoli*, tom. ii. p. 245). This raillery, which malice has perhaps falsely imputed to Frederick, is inconsistent with truth and piety; yet it must be confessed, that the soil of Palestine does not contain that inexhaustible, and as it were spontaneous, principle of fecundity, which, under the most unfavourable circumstance, has covered with rich harvests the banks of the Nile, the fields of Sicily, or the plains of Poland. The Jordan is the only navigable river of Palestine: a considerable part of the narrow space is occupied, or rather lost, in the Dead Sea, whose horrid aspect inspires every sensation of disgust, and countenances every tale of horror. The districts which border on Arabia partake of the sandy quality of the adjacent desert. The face of the country, except the sea-coast and the valley of the Jordan, is covered with mountains, which appear for the most part as naked and barren rocks; and in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem there is a real scarcity of the two elements of earth and water (See *Maundrel's Travels*, p. 65, and *Reland Palestin.* tom. i. p. 238-395). These disadvantages, which now operate in their fullest extent, were formerly corrected by the labours of a numerous people, and the active protection of a wise government. The hills were clothed with rich beds of artificial mould, the rain was collected in vast cisterns, a supply of fresh water was conveyed by pipes and aqueducts to the dry lands, the breed of cattle was encouraged in those parts which were not adapted for tillage, and almost every spot was compelled to yield some production for the use of the inhabitants. (See the same testimonies and observations of *Maundrel and Reland.*)

Pater ipse colendi Haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem Movit agros; curi acuens mortalia corda Nec torpere gravi passus SUA REGNA veterno.

Such are the useful victories which have been achieved by MAN on the lofty mountains of Switzerland, along the rocky coast of Genoa, and upon the barren hills of Palestine; and since Wales has flourished under the influence of English freedom, that rugged country has surely acquired some share of the same industrious merit and the same artificial fertility. Those Critics who interpret the comparison of Palestine and Wales as a tacit libel on the former, are themselves guilty of an unjust satire against the latter, of those countries. Such is the injustice of Mr Apthorpe and of the anonymous Gentleman: but if Mr Davis (as we may suspect from his name) is himself of Cambrian origin, his patriotism on this occasion has protected me from his zeal.

Errors of Material

I shall begin this article by the confession of an error which candour might perhaps excuse, but which my Adversary magnifies by a pathetic interrogation.

²⁴Remarks, Page 1.

²⁵Gibbon p. 53

"When he tells us, that he has carefully examined all the original materials, are we to believe him? or is it his design to try how far the credulity and easy disposition of the age will suffer him to proceed unsuspected and undiscovered?"²⁶

Quousque tandem abuteris Catilina patientiâ nostrâ?

In speaking of the danger of idolatry, I had quoted the picturesque expression of Tertullian, "Recogita sylvam et quantae latitant spinae," and finding it marked c. 10 in my Notes, I hastily, though naturally, added de Idololatria, instead of de Corona Militis, and referred to one Treatise of Tertullian instead of another.²⁷ And now let me ask in my turn, whether Mr. Davis had any real knowledge of the passage which I had misplaced, or whether he made an ungenerous use of his advantage, to insinuate that I had invented or perverted the words of Tertullian? Ignorance is less criminal than malice, and I shall be satisfied if he will plead guilty to the milder charge.

The same observation may be extended to a passage of Le Clerc, which asserts, in the clearest terms, the ignorance of the more ancient Jews with regard to a future state. Le Clerc lay open before me, but while my eye moved from the book to the paper, I transcribed the reference c. I. sect. 8. instead of sect. I. c. 8. from the natural, but erroneous persuasion, that Chapter expressed the larger, and Section the smaller division:²⁸ and this difference, of such trifling moment and so easily rectified, holds a distinguished place in the list of Misrepresentations which adorn Mr. Davis's Table of Contents.²⁹ But to return to Tertullian.

The infernal picture, which I had produced³⁰ from that vehement writer, which excited the horror of every humane reader, and which even Mr. Davis will not explicitly defend, has furnished him with a few critical cavils.³¹ Happy should I think myself, if the materials of my History could be always exposed to the Examination of the Public; and I shall be content with appealing to the impartial Reader, whether my Version of this Passage is not as fair and as faithful, as the more literal translation which Mr. Davis has exhibited in an opposite column. I shall only justify two expressions which have provoked his indignation. 1. I had observed that the zealous African pursues the infernal description in a long variety of affected and unfeeling witticisms; the instances of Gods, of Kings, of Magistrates, of Philosophers, of Poets, of Tragedians, were introduced into my Translation. Those which I had omitted relate to the Dancers, the Charioteers, and the Wrestlers; and it is almost impossible to express those conceits which are connected with the language and manners of the Romans. But the reader will be sufficiently shocked, when he is informed that Tertullian alludes to the improvement which the agility of the Dancers, the red livery of the Charioteers, and the attitudes of the Wrestlers, would derive from the effects of fire.

"Tunc histriones cognoscendi solutiores multo per ignem; tunc spectandus Auriga in flammea rota totus ruber. Tunc Xystici contemplandi, non in Gymnasiis, sed in igue jaculati."

2. I cannot refuse to answer Mr. Davis's very particular question, Why I appeal to Tertullian for the condemnation of the wisest and most virtuous of the Pagans? Because I am inclined to bestow that epithet on Trajan and the Antonines, Homer and Euripides, Plato and Aristotle, who are all manifestly included within the fiery description which I had produced.

I am accused of misquoting Tertullian ad Scapulam,³² as an evidence that Martyrdoms were lately introduced into Africa.³³ Besides Tertullian, I had quoted from Ruinart (Acta Sincera, p. 84.) the Acts of the Scyllitan Martyrs; and a very moderate knowledge of Ecclesiastical History would have informed Mr. Davis, that the two authorities thus connected establish the proposition asserted in my Text. Tertullian, in the above-mentioned Chapter, speaks of one of the Proconsuls of Africa, Vigellius Saturninus, "qui primus hic gladium in nos egit;" the Acta Sincera represent the same Magistrate as the Judge of the Scyllitan Martyrs; and Ruinart, with the consent of the best Critics, ascribes their sufferings to the persecution of Severus. Was it my fault if Mr. Davis was incapable of supplying the intermediate ideas?

Is it likewise necessary that I should justify the frequent use which I have made of Tertullian? His copious writings display a lively and interesting picture of the primitive Church, and the scantiness of original materials scarcely left me the liberty of choice. Yet as I was sensible, that the Montanism of Tertullian is the convenient screen which our orthodox Divines have placed before his errors, I have, with peculiar caution, confined myself to those works which were composed in the more early and sounder part of his life.

As a collateral justification of my frequent appeals to this African Presbyter, I had introduced, in the third edition of my History, two passages of Jerom and Prudentius, which prove that Tertullian was the master of Cyprian, and that Cyprian was the master of the Latin Church.³⁴ Mr. Davis

²⁶Davis, p.25.

²⁷Gibbon P. 460 Note 40

²⁸Gibbon P. 460 Note 58

²⁹Davis P. 19.

³⁰Gibbon P. 471

³¹Davis, p.29-33.

³²Davis, p. 35, 36.

³³Gibbon Note 172.

³⁴Gibbon P. 471 Note 72.

assures me, however, that I should have done better not to have "added this note,"³⁵ as I have only accumulated my inaccuracies. One inaccuracy he had indeed detected, an error of the press, Hieronym. de Viris illustribus, c. 53 for 63; but this advantage is dearly purchased by Mr. Davis. *Επιδοξ του διδασκαλου*, which he produces as the original words of Cyprian, has a braver and more learned sound, than *Da magistrum*; but the quoting in Greek, a sentence which was pronounced, and is recorded, in Latin, seems to bear the mark of the most ridiculous pedantry; unless Mr. Davis, consulting for the first time the Works of Jerom, mistook the Version of Sophronius, which is printed in the opposite column, for the Text of his original Author. My reference to Prudentius, Hymn. xiii. 100. cannot so easily be justified, as I presumptuously believed that my critics would continue to read till they came to a full stop. I shall now place before them, not the first verse only, but the entire period, which they will find full, express, and satisfactory. The Poet says of St. Cyprian, whom he places in Heaven,

Nec minus involitat terris, nec ab hoc recedit orbe: Dissent, eloquitur, tractat, docet, instruit, prophetat; Nec Libyae populos tantum regit, exit usque in ortum Solis, et usque obitum; Gallos fovet, imbuit Britannos, Presidet Hesperiae, Christum sent ultimis Hibernis.

Sulpicius Severus and Fra-Paola

On the subject of the imminent dangers which the Apocalypse has so narrowly escaped,³⁶ Mr. Davis accuses me of misrepresenting the sentiments of Sulpicius Severus and Fra-Paolo,³⁷ with this difference, however, that I was incapable of reading or understanding the text of the Latin author; but that I wilfully perverted the sense of the Italian historian. These imputations I shall easily wipe away, by showing that, in the first instance, I am probably in the right, and that, in the second, he is certainly in the wrong.

1. The concise and elegant Sulpicius, who has been justly styled the Christian Sallust, after mentioning the exile and Revelations of St. John in the Isle of Patmos, observes (and surely the observation is in the language of complaint),

"*Librum sacrae Apocalypsis, qui quidem a plerisque aut stulte aut impie non recipitur, conscriptum edidit.*"

I am found guilty of supposing *plerique* to signify the greater number; whereas Mr. Davis, with Stephen's Dictionary in his hand, is able to prove that *plerique* has not always that extensive meaning, and that a classic of good authority has used the word in a much more limited and qualified sense. Let the Examiner therefore try to apply his exception to this particular case. For my part, I stand under the protection of the general usage of the Latin language, and with a strong presumption in favour of the justice of my cause, or at least of the innocence and fairness of my intentions; since I have translated a familiar word, according to its acknowledged and ordinary acceptation.

But,

"if I had looked into the passage, and found that Sulpicius Severus there expressly tells us, that the Apocalypse was the work of St. John, I could not have committed so unfortunate a blunder, as to cite this Father as saying, That the greater number of Christians denied its Canonical authority."³⁸

Unfortunate indeed would have been my blunder, had I asserted that the same Christians who denied its Canonical authority, admitted it to be the work of an Apostle. Such indeed was the opinion of Severus himself, and his opinion has obtained the sanction of the Church; but the Christians whom he taxes with folly or impiety for rejecting this sacred book, must have supported their error by attributing the Apocalypse to some uninspired writer; to John the Presbyter, or to Cerinthus the Heretic.

If the rules of grammar and of logic authorise, or at least allow me to translate *plerique* by the greater number, the Ecclesiastical History of the fourth century illustrates and justifies this obvious interpretation. From a fair comparison of the populousness and learning of the Greek and Latin Churches, may I not conclude that the former contained the greater number of Christians qualified to pass sentence on a mysterious prophecy composed in the Greek language? May I not affirm, on the authority of St. Jerom, that the Apocalypse was generally rejected by the Greek Churches?

"*Quod si eam (the Epistle to the Hebrews) Latinorum consuetudo non recipit inter Scripturas Canonicas; nec Graecorum Ecclesiae Apocalypsim Johannis eadem libertate suscipiunt. Et tamen nos utramque suscipimus, nequaquam hujus temporis consuetudinem, sed veterum auctoritatem sequentes.*" Epistol. ad Dardanum, tom. iii. p. 68.

³⁵Davis, p. 145.

³⁶Gibbon Note 67.

³⁷Davis, p.40-44.

³⁸Davis, p.270.

It is not my design to enter any farther into the controverted history of that famous book; but I am called upon ³⁹ to defend my Remark that the Apocalypse was tacitly excluded from the sacred canon by the council of Laodicea (Canon LX.) To defend my Remark, I need only state the fact in a simple, but more particular manner. The assembled Bishops of Asia, after enumerating all the books of the Old and New Testament which should be read in churches, omit the Apocalypse, and the Apocalypse alone; at a time when it was rejected or questioned by many pious and learned Christians, who might deduce a very plausible argument from the silence of the Synod.

2. When the Council of Trent resolved to pronounce sentence on the Canon of Scripture, the opinion which prevailed, after some debate, was to declare the Latin Vulgate authentic and almost infallible; and this sentence, which was guarded by formidable Anathemas, secured all the books of the Old and New Testament which composed that ancient version,

”che si dichiarassero tutti in tutte le parte come si trovano nella Biblia Latina, esser di Divina è uqual autorita.” (Istoria del Concilio Tridentino, 1. ii. p. 147. Helmstadt (Vicenza) 1761.)

When the merit of that version was discussed, the majority of the Theologians urged, with confidence and success, that it was absolutely necessary to receive the Vulgate as authentic and inspired, unless they wished to abandon the victory to the Lutherans, and the honours of the Church to the Grammarians.

”In contrario della maggior parte dè Teologi era detto . . . che questi nuovi Grammatici confonderanno ogni cosa, e sarà fargli giudici e arbitri della fede; e in luogo dè Teologi e Canonisti, converrà tener il primo conto nell’ assumere a Vescovati e Cardinalati de pedanti.” (Istoria del Concilio Tridentino, 1. ii. p. 149.)

The sagacious Historian, who had studied the Council, and the judicious Le Courayer, who had studied his Author (*Histoire du Concile de Trente*, tom. i. p. 245. Londres 1736) consider this ridiculous reason as the most powerful argument which influenced the debates of the Council: But Mr. Davis, jealous of the honour of a Synod which placed tradition on a level with the Bible, affirms that Fra-Paolo has given another more substantial reason on which these Popish Bishops built their determination, That after dividing the books under their consideration into three classes; of those which had been always held for divine; of those whose authenticity had formerly been doubted, but which by use and custom had acquired canonical authority; and of those which had never been properly certified; the Apocalypse was judiciously placed by the Fathers of the Council in the second of these classes.

The Italian passage, which, for that purpose, Mr. Davis has alleged at the bottom of his page, is indeed taken from the text of Fra-Paolo: but the reader who will give himself the trouble, or rather the pleasure, of perusing that incomparable historian, will discover that Mr. Davis has only mistaken a motion of the opposition, for a measure of the administration. He will find, that this critical division, which is so erroneously ascribed to the public reason of the Council, was no more than the ineffectual proposal of a temperate minority, which was soon over-ruled by a majority of artful Statesmen, bigotted Monks, and dependent Bishops.

”We have here an evident proof that Mr. Gibbon is equally expert in misrepresenting a modern as an ancient writer, or that he wilfully conceals the most material reason, with a design, no doubt, to instil into his Reader a notion, that the authenticity of the Apocalypse is built on the slightest foundation.”⁴⁰

Clemens

I had cautiously observed (for I was apprised of the obscurity of the subject) that the Epistle of Clemens does not lead us to discover any traces of Episcopacy either at Corinth or Rome. ⁴¹ In this observation I particularly alluded to the republican form of salutation, ”The Church of God inhabiting Rome, to the Church of God inhabiting Corinth;” without the least mention of a Bishop or President in either of those ecclesiastical assemblies.

Yet the piercing eye of Mr. Davis ⁴² can discover not only traces, but evident proofs, of Episcopacy, in this Epistle of Clemens; and he actually quotes two passages, in which he distinguishes by capital letters the word BISHOPS, whose institution Clemens refers to the Apostles themselves. But can Mr. Davis hope to gain credit by such egregious trifling? While we are searching for the origin of Bishops, not merely as an ecclesiastical title, but as the peculiar name of an order distinct from that of Presbyters, he idly produces a passage, which, by declaring that the Apostles established in every place Bishops and Deacons, evidently confounds the Presbyters with one or other of those two ranks. I have neither inclination nor interest to engage in a controversy which I had considered only in an historical light; but I have already said enough to shew, that there are

³⁹By Mr. Davis, p. 41. and Dr. Chelsum, Remarks, p. 57.

⁴⁰Davis, p. 44.

⁴¹Gibbon, Note 110

⁴²Davis, p. 44, 45

more traces of a disingenuous mind in Mr. Davis, than of an Episcopal Order in the Epistle of Clemens.

Eusebius

Perhaps, on some future occasion, I may examine the historical character of Eusebius; perhaps I may enquire, how far it appears from his words and actions, that the learned Bishop of Caesarea was averse to the use of fraud, when it was employed in the service of Religion. At present, I am only concerned to defend my own truth and honour, from the reproach of misrepresenting the sense of the Ecclesiastical Historian. Some of the charges of Mr Davis on this head are so strong, so pointed, so vehemently urged, that he seems to have staked, on the event of the trial, the merits of our respective characters. If his assertions are true, I deserve the contempt of learned, and the abhorrence of good, men. If they are false, *****

I. I had remarked, without any malicious intention, that one of the seventeen Christians who suffered at Alexandria was likewise accused of robbery. ⁴³ Mr Davis ⁴⁴ seems enraged because I did not add that he was falsely accused, takes some unnecessary pains to convince me that the Greek word *συκοφαντηθη* signifies falso accusatus, and

”can hardly think that any one who had looked into the original, would dare thus absolutely to contradict the plain testimony of the author he pretends to follow.”

A simple narrative of this fact, in the relation of which Mr Davis has really suppressed several material circumstances, will afford the clearest justification.

Eusebius has preserved an original letter from Dionysius Bishop of Alexandria to Fabius Bishop of Antioch, in which the former relates the circumstances of the persecution which had lately afflicted the capital of Egypt. He allows a rank among the martyrs to one Nemesion, an Egyptian, who was falsely or maliciously accused as a companion of robbers. Before the Centurion he justified himself from this calumny, which did not relate to him; but being charged as a Christian, he was brought in chains before the Governor. That unjust magistrate, after inflicting on Nemesion a double measure of stripes and tortures, gave orders that he should be burnt with the robbers. (Dionys. apud Euseb. 1. vi. c. 41.).

It is evident that Dionysius represents the religious sufferer as innocent of the criminal accusation which had been falsely brought against him. It is no less evident, that whatever might be the opinion of the Centurion, the supreme magistrate considered Nemesion as guilty and that he affected to shew, by the measure of his tortures, and by the companions of his execution, that he punished him, not only as a Christian, but as a robber. The evidence against Nemesion, and that which might be produced in his favour, are equally lost; and the question (which fortunately is of little moment) of his guilt or innocence rests solely on the opposite judgments of his ecclesiastical and civil superiors. I could easily perceive that both the Bishop and the Governor were actuated by different passions and prejudices towards the unhappy sufferer; but it was impossible for me to decide which of the two was the most likely to indulge his prejudices and passions at the expense of truth. In this doubtful situation, I conceived that I had acted with the most unexceptionable caution, when I contented myself with observing that Nemesion was accused; a circumstance of a public and authentic nature, in which both parties were agreed.

Mr Davis will no longer ask, ”what possible evasion then can Mr Gibbon have recourse to, to convince the world that I have falsely accused him of a gross misrepresentation of Eusebius?”

2. Mr Davis ⁴⁵ charges me with falsifying (falsifying is a very serious word) the testimony of Eusebius; because it suited my purpose to magnify the humanity and even kindness of Maxentius towards the afflicted Christians. ⁴⁶ To support this charge, he produces some part of a chapter of Eusebius, the English in his text, the Greek in his notes, and makes the Ecclesiastical Historian express himself in the following terms:

”Although Maxentius at first favoured the Christians with a view of popularity, yet afterwards, being addicted to magic, and every other impiety, HE exerted himself in persecuting the Christians, in a more severe and destructive manner than his predecessors had done before him.”

If it were in my power to place the volume and chapter of Eusebius (Hist. Eccles. 1. viii. c. 14.) before the eyes of every reader, I should be satisfied and silent. I should not be under the necessity of protesting, that in the passage quoted, or rather abridged, by my adversary, the second member of the period, which alone contradicts my account of Maxentius, has not the most distant reference to that odious tyrant. After distinguishing the mild conduct which he affected towards

⁴³Gibbon, Note 75

⁴⁴Davis, p. 61, 62, 63. This ridiculous charge is repeated by another Sycophant (in the Greek sense of the word), and forms one of the valuable communications, which the learning of a Randolph suggested to the candour of a Chesum. See Remarks, p 209.

⁴⁵Davis, p. 64, 65

⁴⁶Gibbon, Note 169

the Christians, Eusebius proceeds to animadvert with becoming severity on the general vices of his reign; the rapes, the murders, the oppression, the promiscuous massacres, which I had faithfully related in their proper place, and which the Christians, not in their religious, but in their civil capacity, must occasionally have shared with the rest of his unhappy subjects. The Ecclesiastical Historian then makes a transition to another tyrant, the cruel Maximin, who carried away from his friend and ally Maxentius the prize of superior wickedness; for HE was addicted to magic arts, and was a cruel persecutor of the Christians. The evidence of words and facts, the play meaning of Eusebius, the concurring testimony of Caecilius or Lactantius, and the superfluous authority of Versions and Commentators, establish beyond the reach of doubt or cavil, that Maximin, and not Maxentius, is stigmatized as a persecutor, and that Mr Davis alone has deserved the reproach of falsifying the testimony of Eusebius.

Let him examine the chapter on which he founds his accusation. If in that moment his feelings are not of the most painful and humiliating kind, he must indeed be an object of pity!

3. A gross blunder is imputed to me by this polite antagonist, ⁴⁷ for quoting under the name of Jerom, the Chronicle which I ought to have described as the work and property of Eusebius, ⁴⁸ and Mr Davis kindly points out the occasion of my blunder, That it was the consequence of my looking no farther than Dodwell for this remark, and of not rightly understanding his reference. Perhaps the Historian of the Roman Empire may be credited, when he affirms that he frequently consulted a Latin Chronicle of the affairs of that Empire; and he may the sooner be credited, if he shows that he knows something more of this Chronicle besides the name and the title-page.

Mr Davis, who talks so familiarly of the Chronicle of Eusebius, will be surprised to hear that the Greek original no longer exists. Some chronological fragments, which had successively passed through the hands of Africanus and Eusebius, are still extant, though in a very corrupt and mutilated state, in the compilations of Syncellus and Cedrenus. They have been collected, and disposed by the labour and ingenuity of Joseph Scaliger; but that proud Critic, always ready to applaud his own success, did not flatter himself, that he had restored the hundredth part of the genuine Chronicle of Eusebius. "Ex eo (Syncello) omnia Eusebiana excerptimus quae quidem deprehendere potuimus; quae, quanquam ne centesima quidem pars eorum esse videtur quae ab Eusebio relicta sunt, aliquod tamen justum volumen explere possunt. (Jos. Scaliger Animadversiones in Graeca Eusebii in Thesouro Temporum, p. 40 t. Amstelod. 1658.) While the Chronicle of Eusebius was perfect and entire, the second book was translated into Latin by Jerom, with the freedom, or rather licence, which that voluminous Author, as well as his friend or enemy Rufinus, always assumed. "Plurima in vertendo mutat, infulcit, praeterit," says Scaliger himself, in the Prolegomena, p. 22. In the persecution of Aurelian, which has so much offended Mr Davis, we are able to distinguish the work of Eusebius from that of Jerom, by comparing the expressions of the Ecclesiastical History with those of the Chronicle. The former affirms, that, towards the end of his reign, Aurelian was moved by some councils to excite a persecution against the Christians; that his design occasioned a great and general rumour; but that when the letters were prepared, and as it were signed, Divine Justice dismissed him from the world.

*Ἡδὴ τισι βουλαιζ ὡς ἀν διωγμον καθ
ἡμῶν ἐγειρειεν ἀνεκινειτο. πολυζ τε ἡν
ὁ παρα πασι περι τουτου λογοζ.
μελλοντα δε ἡδη και σχεδον ειπειν τοιζ
καθ ἡμῶν γραμμασιν υποσημειουμενον,
θεια μετεισιν δικη.*

— Eusebius Hist. Eccles. 1. vii. c. 30.

Whereas the Chronicle relates, that Aurelian was killed after he had excited or moved a persecution against the Christians,

"cum adversum nos persecutionem movisset."

From this manifest difference I assume a right to assert; first, that the expression of the Chronicle of Jerom, which is always proper, became in this instance necessary; and secondly, that the language of the Fathers is so ambiguous and incorrect, that we are at a loss how to determine how far Aurelian had carried his intention before he was assassinated. I have neither perverted the fact, nor have I been guilty of a gross blunder.

⁴⁷Davis, p. 66

⁴⁸Gibbon, Note 125

Justin Martyr

”The persons accused of Christianity had a convenient time allowed them to settle their domestic concerns, and to prepare their answer.”⁴⁹

This observation had been suggested, partly by a general expression of Cyprian (de Lapsis, p. 88. Edit. Fell. Amstelod. 1700), and more especially by the second Apology of Justin Martyr, who gives a particular and curious example of this legal delay.

The expressions of Cyprian, ”dies negantibus praestitutus, etc.”, which Mr. Davis most prudently suppresses, are illustrated by Mosheim in the following words:

”Primum qui delati erant aut suspecti, illis certum dierum spatium iudex defimebat, quo decurrente, secum deliberare poterant, utrum profiteri Christum an negare mallent; explorandae fidei prae finiebantur dies, per hoc tempus liberi manebant in domibus suis; nec impediēbat aliquis quod ex consequentibus apparet, ne fugā sibi consulerent. Satis hoc erat humanum.” (De Rebus Christianis ante Constantinum, p. 480.)

The practice of Egypt was sometimes more expeditious and severe; but this humane indulgence was still allowed in Africa during the persecution of Decius.

But my appeal to Justin Martyr is encountered by Mr. Davis with the following declaration: ⁵⁰

”The reader will observe, that Mr. Gibbon does not make any reference to any section or division of this part of Justin’s work; with what view we may shrewdly suspect, when I tell him, that after an accurate perusal of the whole second Apology, I can boldly affirm, that the following instance is the only one that bears the most distant similitude to what Mr. Gibbon relates as above on the authority of Justin. What I find in Justin is as follows: ”A woman being converted to Christianity, is afraid to associate with her husband, because he is an abandoned reprobate, lest she should partake of his sins. Her husband, not being able to accuse her, vents his rage in this manner on one Ptolemaeus, a teacher of Christianity, and who had converted her, etc.”

Mr. Davis then proceeds to relate the severities inflicted on Ptolemaeus, who made a frank and instant profession of his faith: and he sternly exclaims, that if I take every opportunity of passing encomiums on the humanity of Roman magistrates, it is incumbent on me to produce better evidence than this.

His demand may be easily satisfied, and I need only for that purpose transcribe and translate the words of Justin, which immediately precede the Greek quotation alleged at the bottom of my adversary’s page. I am possessed of two editions of Justin Martyr, that of Cambridge, 1768, in 8vo, by Dr. Ashton, who only published the two Apologies; and that of all his works, published in fol. Paris, 1742, by the Benedictines of the Congregation of St. Maar: the following curious passage may be found, p. 164, of the former, and p. 89 of the latter Edition.

*κατηγοριαν πεποιηται, λεγων αυτην χριστιανην ειναι,
και η μεν βιβλιδιον σοι τω αυτοκρατορι αναδεδωκε,
προτερον συνηωρηθηναι αυτη διοικησασθαι τα
εαυτης αζιουσα. επειτα απολογησασθαι περι του
κατηγορηματος, μετα την των πραγματων αυτης
διοικησιν. και συνεχωρησας τουτο*

Ancient Greek from ’The Congregation of St Maar’

”He brought an accusation against her, saying, that she was a Christian. But she presented a petition to the Emperor, praying that she might first be allowed to settle her domestic concerns; and promising, that after she had settled them, she would then put in her answer to the accusation. This you granted.”

I disdain to add a single reflection; nor shall I qualify the conduct of my adversary with any of those harsh epithets, which might be interpreted as the expressions of resentment, though I should be constrained to use them as the only words in the English language, which could accurately represent my cool and unprejudiced sentiments.

Lactantius

In stating the toleration of Christianity during the greatest part of the reign of Diocletian, I had observed, ⁵¹ that the principal officers of the palace, whose names and functions were particularly specified, enjoyed, with their wives and children, the free exercise of the Christian religion. Mr.

⁴⁹Gibbon

⁵⁰Davis, p. 71,72

⁵¹Gibbon, Note 133 ,and Note 134

Davis twice affirms, ⁵² in the most deliberate manner, that this pretended fact, which is asserted on the sole authority, is contradicted by the positive evidence, of Lactantius. In both these affirmations Mr. Davis is inexcusably mistaken.

1. When the storms of persecution arose, the Priests, who were offended by the sign of the Cross, obtained an order from the Emperor, that the profane, the Christians, who accompanied him to the Temple, should be compelled to offer sacrifice; and this incident is mentioned by the Rhetorician, to whom I shall not at present refuse the name of Lactantius. The act of idolatry, which, at the expiration of eighteen years, was required of the officers of Diocletian, is a manifest proof that their religious freedom had hitherto been inviolate, except in the single instance of waiting on their master to the Temple; a service less criminal than the profane compliance for which the Minister of the King of Syria solicited the permission of the Prophet of Israel.

2. The reference which I made to Lactantius expressly pointed out this exception to their freedom. But the proof of the toleration was built on a different testimony, which my disingenuous adversary has concealed; an ancient and curious instruction, composed by Bishop Theonas, for the use of Lucian, and the other Christian eunuchs of the palace of Diocletian. This authentic piece was published in the Spicilegium of Dom Luc d'Acheri; as I had not the opportunity of consulting the original, I was contented with quoting it on the faith of Tillemont, and the reference to it immediately precedes (ch. xvi. note 133.) the citation of Lactantius (note 134).

Mr. Davis may now answer his own question,

"What apology can be made for thus asserting, on the sole authority of Lactantius, facts which Lactantius so expressly denies?"

Dion Cassius

"I have already given a curious instance of our Author's asserting, on the authority of Dion Cassius, a fact not mentioned by that Historian. I shall now produce a very singular proof of his endeavouring to conceal from us a passage really contained in him." ⁵³

Nothing but the angry vehemence with which these charges are urged, could engage me to take the least notice of them. In themselves they are doubly contemptible; they are trifling, and they are false.

I. Mr. Davis ⁵⁴ had imputed to me as a crime, that I had mentioned, on the sole testimony of Dion (1. lxxviii. p. 1145.), the spirit of rebellion which inflamed the Jews, from the reign of Nero to that of Antoninus Pius, ⁵⁵ whilst the passage of that Historian is confined to an insurrection in Cyprus and Cyrene, which broke out within that period. The Reader who will cast his eye on the Note (ch. xvi. note I.), which is supported by that quotation from Dion, will discover that it related only to this particular fact. The general position, which is indeed too notorious to require any proof, I had carefully justified in the course of the same paragraph; partly by another reference to Dion Cassius, partly by an allusion to the well-known History of Josephus, and partly by several quotations from the learned and judicious Basnage, who has explained, in the most satisfactory manner, the principles and conduct of the rebellious Jews.

2. The passage of Dion, which I am accused of endeavouring to conceal, might perhaps have remained invisible, even to the piercing eye of Mr. Davis, if I had not carefully reported it in its proper place: ⁵⁶ and it was in my power to report it, without being guilty of any inconsiderate contradiction. I had observed, that, in the large history of Dion Cassius, Xiphilin had not been able to discover the name of Christians: yet I afterwards quote a passage in which Marcia, the favourite Concubine of Commodus, is celebrated as the Patroness of the Christians. Mr. Davis has transcribed my quotation, but he has concealed the important words which I now distinguish by Italics (ch. xvi. note 107. Dion Cassius, or rather his abbreviator Xiphilin, 1. lxxii. p. 1206.) The reference is fairly made and cautiously qualified: I am already secure from the imputations of fraud or inconsistency; and the opinion which attributes the last-mentioned passage to the Abbreviator, rather than to the original Historian, may be supported by the most unexceptionable authorities. I shall protect myself by those of Reimar (in his Edition of Dion Cassius, tom. ii. p. 1207. note 34.), and of Dr. Lardner; and shall only transcribe the words of the latter, in his Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. iii. p. 57.

"This paragraph I rather think to be Xiphilin's than Dion's. The style at least is Xiphilin's. In the other passages before quoted, Dion speaks of Impiety, or Atheism, or Judaism; but never useth the word Christians. Another thing that may make us doubt whether this observation be entirely Dion's, is the phrase, "it is related *ιστορειται*." For at the beginning of the reign of Commodus, he says, "These things, and what follows, I write not from the report of others, but from my own

⁵²Davis, p. 75, 76.

⁵³Davis, p. 83.

⁵⁴Davis, p. 11.

⁵⁵Gibbon

⁵⁶Gibbon, Note 107

knowledge and observation.” However, the sense may be Dion’s; but I wish we had also his style without any adulteration.”

For my own part, I must, in my private opinion, ascribe even the sense of this passage to Xiphilin. The Monk might eagerly collect and insert an anecdote which related to the domestic history of the church; but the religion of a courtesan must have appeared an object of very little moment in the eyes of a Roman Consul, who, at least in every other part of his history, disdained or neglected to mention the name of the Christians.

”What shall we say now? Do we not discover the name of Christians in the History of Dion? With what assurance then can Mr. Gibbon, after asserting a fact manifestly untrue, lay claim to the merits of diligence and accuracy, the indispensable duty of an Historian. Or can he expect us to credit his assertion, that he has carefully examined all the original materials?”⁵⁷

Mr. Gibbon may still maintain the character of an Historian; but it is difficult to conceive how Mr. Davis will support his pretensions, if he aspires to that of a Gentleman.

I almost hesitate whether I should take any notice of another ridiculous charge which Mr. Davis includes in the article of Dion Cassius. My adversary owns, that I have occasionally produced the several passages of the Augustan History which relate to the Christians; but he fiercely contends that they amount to more than six lines.⁵⁸ I really have not measured them: nor did I mean that loose expression as a precise and definite number. If, on a nicer survey, those short hints, when they are brought together, should be found to exceed six of the long lines of my folio edition, I am content that my critical Antagonist should substitute eight, or ten, or twelve, lines: nor shall I think either my learning or my veracity much interested in this important alteration.

Pliny

After a short description of the unworthy conduct of those Apostates who, in a time of persecution, deserted the Faith of Christ, I produced the evidence of a Pagan Proconsul,⁵⁹ and of two Christian Bishops, Pliny, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Cyprian. And here the unforgiving Critic remarks,

”That Pliny has not particularized that difference of conduct (in the different Apostates) which Mr. Gibbon here describes: yet his name stands at the head of those Authors whom he has cited on the occasion. It is allowed indeed that this distinction is made by the other Authors; but as Pliny, the first referred to by Mr. Gibbon, gives him no cause or reason to use them,” (I cannot help Mr. Davis’s bad English) ”it is certainly very reprehensible in our Author, thus to confound their testimony, and to make a needless and improper reference.”⁶⁰

A criticism of this sort can only tend to expose Mr. Davis’s total ignorance of historical composition. The Writer who aspires to the name of Historian, is obliged to consult a variety of original testimonies, each of which, taken separately, is perhaps imperfect and partial. By a judicious re-union and arrangement of these dispersed materials, he endeavours to form a consistent and interesting narrative. Nothing ought to be inserted which is not proved by some of the witnesses; but their evidence must be so intimately blended together, that as it is unreasonable to expect that each of them should vouch for the whole, so it would be impossible to define the boundaries of their respective property. Neither Pliny, nor Dionysius, nor Cyprian, mention all the circumstances and distinctions of the conduct of the Christian Apostates; but if any of them was withdrawn, the account which I have given would, in some instance, be defective.

Thus much I thought necessary to say, as several of the subsequent misrepresentations of Orosius, of Bayle, of Fabricius, of Gregory of Tours, etc,⁶¹ which provoked the fury of Mr. Davis, are derived only from the ignorance of this common historical principle.

Another class of Misrepresentations, which my Adversary urges with the same degree of vehemence (See in particular those of Justin, Diodorus Siculus, and even Tacitus), requires the support of another principle, which has not yet been introduced into the art of criticism; that when a modern historian appeals to the authority of the ancients for the truth of any particular fact; he makes himself answerable, I know not to what extent, for all the circumjacent errors or inconsistencies of the authors whom he has quoted.

⁵⁷Davis, p. 83.

⁵⁸Gibbon, Note 24

⁵⁹Gibbon, Note 102

⁶⁰Davis, p. 87,88.

⁶¹Davis, p. 88. 90. 137.

Ignatius

I am accused of throwing out a false accusation against this Father, ⁶² because I had observed ⁶³ that Ignatius, defending against the Gnostics the resurrection of Christ, employs a vague and doubtful tradition, instead of quoting the certain testimony of the Evangelists: and this observation was justified by a remarkable passage of Ignatius, in his Epistle to the Smyrnaeans, which I cited according to the volume and the page of the best edition of the Apostolical Fathers, published at Amsterdam, 1724, in two volumes in folio. The Criticism of Mr Davis is announced by one of those solemn declarations which leave not any refuge, if they are convicted of falsehood.

"I cannot find any passage that bears the least affinity to what Mr Gibbon observes, in the whole Epistle, which I have read over more than once."

I had already marked the situation; nor is it in my power to prove the existence, of this passage, by any other means than by producing the words of the original.

*Εγω γαρ και μετα την αναστασιν
εν σαρκι αυτου οίδα και πιστευω οντα, και οτε
προζ τουζ περι Πητρον ηλθεν, εφη αυτοιζ, λαβετε
ψυλαφησατε με, και ιδετε οτι ουκ ειμι δαιμονιον
ασωματου. και ευθυζ αυτου ηψαντο, και επιστευσαν.*

"I have known, and I believe, that after his resurrection likewise he existed in the flesh: And when he came to Peter, and to the rest, he said unto them, Take, handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal daemon or spirit. And they touched him, and believed."

The faith of the Apostles confuted the impious error of the Gnostics, which attributed only the appearances of a human body to the Son of God: and it was the great object of Ignatius, in the last moments of his life, to secure the Christians of Asia from the snares of those dangerous Heretics. According to the tradition of the modern Greeks, Ignatius was the child whom Jesus received into his arms (See Tillemont Mem. Eccles. tom. ii. part ii. p. 43.); yet as he could scarcely be old enough to remember the resurrection of the Son of God, he must have derived his knowledge either from our present Evangelists, or from some Apocryphal Gospel, or from some unwritten tradition.

1. The Gospels of St. Luke and St. John would undoubtedly have supplied Ignatius with the most invincible proofs of the reality of the body of Christ, when he appeared to the Apostles after his resurrection; but neither of those Gospels contain the characteristic words of *ουκ δαιμονιον ασωματου*, and the important circumstance that either Peter, or those who were with Peter, touched the body of Christ and believed. Had the saint designed to quote the Evangelist on a very nice subject of controversy, he would not surely have exposed himself, by an inaccurate, or rather by a false, reference, to the just reproaches of the Gnostics. On this occasion, therefore, Ignatius did not employ, as he might have done, against the Heretics, the certain testimony of the Evangelists.

2. Jerom who cites this remarkable passage from the Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans (See Catalog. Script. Eccles. in Ignatio, tom. i. p. 273. edit. Erasm. Basil, 1537), is of opinion that it was taken from the Gospel which he himself had lately translated: and this, from the comparison of two other passages in the same Work (in Jacob. et in Matthaeo, p. 264), appears to have been the Hebrew Gospel, which was used by the Nazarenes of Beraea, as the genuine composition of St. Matthew. Yet Jerom mentions another Copy of this Hebrew Gospel (so different from the Greek Text), which was extant in the library formed at Caesarea, by the care of Pamphilus: while the learned Eusebius, the friend of Pamphilus and the Bishop of Caesarea, very frankly declares (Hist. Eccles. 1. in. c. 36.), that he is ignorant from whence Ignatius borrowed those words, which are the subject of the present Inquiry.

3. The doubt which remains, is only whether he took them from an Apocryphal Book, or from unwritten tradition: and I thought myself safe from every species of Critics, when I embraced the rational sentiment of Casaubon and Pearson. I shall produce the words of the Bishop.

"Praeterea iterum observandum est, quod de hac re scripsit Isaacus Casaubonus, Quinetiam fortasse verius, non ex Evangelio Hebraico, Ignatium illa verba descripsisse, verum traditionem allegasse non scriptam, quae postea in literas fuerit relata, et Hebraico Evangelio, quod Matthaeo trihuebant, inserta. Et hoc quidem mihi multo verisimilius videtur." (Pearson. Vindiciae Ignatianae, part ii. c. ix. p. 396. in tom. ii. Patr. Apostol.)

I may now submit to the judgment of the Public, whether I have looked into the Epistle which I cite with such a parade of learning, and how profitably Mr Davis has read it over more than once.

⁶²Gibbon, Note 35

⁶³Gibbon, Note 35

Mosheim

The learning and judgment of Mosheim had been of frequent use in the course of my Historical Inquiry, and I had not been wanting in proper expressions of gratitude. My vexatious Adversary is always ready to start from his ambuscade, and to harass my march by a mode of attack, which cannot easily be reconciled with the laws of honourable war. The greatest part of the Misrepresentations of Mosheim, which Mr. Davis has imputed to me,⁶⁴ are of such a nature, that I must indeed be humble, if I could persuade myself to bestow a moment of serious attention on them. Whether Mosheim could prove that an absolute community of goods was not established among the first Christians of Jerusalem; whether he suspected the purity of the Epistles of Ignatius; whether he censured Dr. Middleton with temper or indignation (in this cause I must challenge Mr. Davis as an incompetent judge); whether he corroborates the whole of my description of the prophetic office, whether he speaks with approbation of the humanity of Pliny, and whether he attributed the same sense to the *malefica* of Suetonius, and the *exitiabilis* of Tacitus? These questions, even as Mr. Davis has stated them, lie open to the judgment of every reader, and the superfluous observations which I could make, would be an abuse of their time and of my own. As little shall I think of consuming their patience, by examining whether Le Clerc and Mosheim labour in the interpretation of some texts of the Fathers, and particularly of a passage of Irenaeus, which seem to favour the pretensions of the Roman Bishop. The material part of the passage of Irenaeus consists of about four lines; and in order to shew that the interpretations of Le Clerc and Mosheim are not laboured, Mr. Davis abridges them as much as possible in the space of twelve pages. I know not whether the perusal of my History will justify the suspicion of Mr. Davis, that I am secretly inclined to the interest of the Pope: but I cannot discover how the Protestant cause can be affected, if Irenaeus in the second, or Palavicini in the seventeenth century, were tempted, by any private views, to countenance in their writings the system of ecclesiastical dominion, which has been pursued in every age by the aspiring Bishops of the Imperial city. Their conduct was adapted to the revolutions of the Christian Republic, but the same spirit animated the haughty breasts of Victor the First, and of Paul the Fifth.

There still remain one or two of these imputed Misrepresentations, which appear, and indeed only appear, to merit a little more attention. In stating the opinion of Mosheim with regard to the progress of the Gospel, Mr. Davis boldly declares,

”that I have altered the truth of Mosheim’s history, that I might have an opportunity of contradicting the belief and wishes of the Fathers.”⁶⁵

In other words, I have been guilty of uttering a malicious falsehood.

I had endeavoured to mitigate the sanguine expression of the Fathers of the second century, who had too hastily diffused the light of Christianity over every part of the globe, by observing, as an undoubted fact,

”that the Barbarians of Scythia and Germany, who subverted the Roman Monarchy, were involved in the errors of Paganism; and that even the conquest of Iberia, of Armenia, or of Aethiopia, was not attempted with any degree of success, till the scepter was in the hands of an orthodox Emperor.”⁶⁶

I had referred the curious reader to the fourth century of Mosheim’s General History of the Church: Now Mr. Davis has discovered, and can prove, from that excellent work,

”that Christianity, not long after its first rise, had been introduced into the less as well as greater Armenia; that part of the Goths, who inhabited Thracia, Maesia, and Dacia, had received the Christian religion long before this century; and that Theophilus, their Bishop, was present at the Council of Nice.”⁶⁷

On this occasion, the reference was made to a popular work of Mosheim, for the satisfaction of the reader, that he might obtain the general view of the progress of Christianity in the fourth century, which I had gradually acquired by studying with some care the Ecclesiastic Antiquities of the Nations beyond the limits of the Roman Empire. If I had reasonably supposed that the result of our common inquiries must be the same, should I have deserved a very harsh censure for my unsuspecting confidence? Or if I had declined the invidious task of separating a few immaterial errors, from a just and judicious representation, might not my respect for the name and merit of Mosheim, have claimed some indulgence? But I disdain those excuses, which only a candid adversary would allow. I can meet Mr. Davis on the hard ground of controversy, and retort on his own head the charge of concealing a part of the truth. He himself has dared to suppress the words of my text, which immediately followed his quotation.

”Before that time the various accidents of war and commerce might indeed diffuse an imperfect knowledge of the Gospel among the tribes of Caledonia, and among the borderers of the Rhine,

⁶⁴Davis, p. 95-97,104-107,114-132.

⁶⁵Davis, p. 127.

⁶⁶Gibbon

⁶⁷Davis, p. 126,127.

the Danube, and the Euphrates;”

and Mr. Davis has likewise suppressed one of the justificatory Notes on this passage, which expressly points out the time and circumstances of the first Gothic conversions. These exceptions, which I had cautiously inserted, and Mr. Davis has cautiously concealed, are superfluous for the provinces of Thrace, Maesia, and the Lesser Armenia, which were contained within the precincts of the Roman Empire. They allow an ample scope for the more early conversion of some independent districts of Dacia and the Greater Armenia, which bordered on the Danube and Euphrates; and the entire sense of this passage, which Mr. Davis first mutilates and then attacks, is perfectly consistent with the original text of the learned Mosheim.

And yet I will fairly confess, that, after a nicer inquiry into the epoch of the Armenian Church, I am not satisfied with the accuracy of my own expression. The assurance that the first Christian King, and the first Archbishop, Tiridates, and St. Gregory the Illuminator, were still alive several years after the death of Constantine, inclined me to believe, that the conversion of Armenia was posterior to the auspicious Revolution, which had given the scepter of Rome to the hands of an orthodox Emperor. But I had not enough considered the two following circumstances. 1. I might have recollected the dates assigned by Moses of Chorene, who, on this occasion, may be regarded as a competent witness. Tiridates ascended the throne of Armenia in the third year of Diocletian (*Hist. Armeniae*, 1. ii. c. 79. p. 207.), and St. Gregory, who was invested with the Episcopal character in the seventeenth year of Tiridates, governed almost thirty years the Church of Armenia, and disappeared from the world in the forty-sixth year of the reign of the same Prince. (*Hist. Armeniae*, 1. ii. c. 88. p. 224, 225.) The consecration of St. Gregory must therefore be placed A.D. 303, and the conversion of the King and kingdom was soon achieved by that successful missionary. 2. The unjust and inglorious war which Maximin undertook against the Armenians, the ancient faithful allies of the Republic, was evidently derived from a motive of superstitious zeal. The historian Eusebius (*Hist. Eccles.* 1. ix. c. 8. p. 448. edit. Cantab.) considers the pious Armenians as a nation of Christians, who bravely defended themselves from the hostile oppression of an idolatrous tyrant. Instead of maintaining “that the conversion of Armenia was not attempted with any degree of success till the scepter was in the hands of an orthodox Emperor,” I ought to have observed, that the seeds of the faith were deeply sown during the season of the last and greatest persecution, that many Roman exiles might assist the labours of Gregory, and that the renowned Tiridates, the hero of the East, may dispute with Constantine the honour of being the first Sovereign who embraced the Christian religion.

In a future edition, I shall rectify an expression which, in strictness, can only be applied to the kingdoms of Iberia and Aethiopia. Had the error been exposed by Mr. Davis himself, I should not have been ashamed to correct it; but I am ashamed at being reduced to contend with an adversary who is unable to discover, or to improve, his own advantages.

But, instead of prosecuting any inquiry from whence the public might have gained instruction, and himself credit, Mr. Davis chooses to perplex his readers with some angry cavils about the progress of the Gospel in the second century. What does he mean to establish or to refute? Have I denied, that before the end of that period Christianity was very widely diffused both in the East and in the West? Has not Justin Martyr affirmed, without exception or limitation, that it was already preached to every nation on the face of the earth? Is that proposition true at present? Could it be true in the time of Justin? Does not Mosheim acknowledge the exaggeration?

”*Demus, nec enim quae in oculos incurrunit infitari audemus, esse in his verbis exaggerationis nonnihil. Certum enim est diu post Justinianae aetatem, multas orbis terrarum gentes cognitione Christi caruisse.*” (*Mosheim de Rebus Christianis*, p. 203.)

Does he not expose (p. 205.), with becoming scorn and indignation, the falsehood and vanity of the hyperboles of Tertullian?

”*bonum hominem aestu imaginationis elatum non satis attendisse ad ea quae litteris consignabat.*”

The high esteem which Mr. Davis expresses for the writings of Mosheim, would alone convince me how little he has read them, since he must have been perpetually offended and disgusted by a train of thinking, the most repugnant to his own. His jealousy, however, for the honour of Mosheim, provokes him to arraign the boldness of Mr. Gibbon who presumes falsely to charge such an eminent man with unjustifiable assertions. ⁶⁸ I might observe, that my style, which on this occasion was more modest and moderate, has acquired, perhaps undesignedly, an illiberal cast from the rough hand of Mr. Davis. But as my veracity is impeached, I may be less solicitous about my politeness; and though I have repeatedly declined the fairest opportunities of correcting the errors of my predecessors, yet, as long as I have truth on my side, I am not easily daunted by the names of the most eminent men.

The assertion of Mosheim, which did not seem to be justified ⁶⁹ by the authority of Lactantius, was, that the wife and daughter of Diocletian, Prisca and Valeria, had been privately baptized. Mr.

⁶⁸Davis, p. 131.

⁶⁹Gibbon, Note 132

Davis is sure that the words of Mosheim, "Christianis sacris clam initiata," need not be confined to the rite of baptism; and he is equally sure, that the reference to Mosheim does not lead us to discover even the name of Valeria. In both these assurances he is grossly mistaken; but it is the misfortune of controversy, that an error may be committed in three or four words, which cannot be rectified in less than thirty or forty lines.

1. The true and the sole meaning of the Christian initiation, one of the familiar and favourite allusions of the Fathers of the fourth century, is clearly explained by the exact and laborious Bingham.

"The baptized were also styled *οι μεμνημενοι* for 'initiati' which the Latins call *initiati*, the initiated, that is admitted to the use of the sacred offices, and knowledge of the sacred mysteries of the Christian Religion. Hence came that form of speaking so frequently used by St. Chrysostom, and other ancient writers, when they touched upon any doctrines or mysteries which the Catechumens understood not, *ισασι οι μεμνημενοι*, the initiated know what is spoken. St. Ambrose writes a book to these *initiati*; Isidore of Pelusium and Hesychius call them *μυσται* and *μυσταγωγητοι*. Whence the Catechumens have the contrary names, *Αμυστοι*, *Αμυητοι*, *Αμυσταγωγητοι*, the uninitiated or unbaptized." (Antiquities of the Christian Church, 1. i. c. 4. No 2. vol. i. p. II. fol. edit.)

Had I presumed to suppose that Mosheim was capable of employing a technical expression in a loose and equivocal sense, I should indeed have violated the respect which I have always entertained for his learning and abilities.

2. But Mr. Davis cannot discover in the text of Mosheim the name of Valeria. In that case Mosheim would have suffered another slight inaccuracy to drop from his pen, as the passage of Lactantius, "sacrificio pollui coëgit," on which he founds his assertion, includes the names both of Prisca and Valeria. But I am not reduced to the necessity of accusing another in my own defence. Mosheim has properly and expressly declared that Valeria imitated the pious example of her mother Prisca,

"Gener Diocletiani uxorem habebat Valeriam matris exemplum pietate erga Deum imitantem et a cultu fidorum Numinum alienam." (Mosheim, p. 913.)

Mr. Davis has a bad habit of greedily snapping at the first words of a reference, without giving himself the trouble of going to the end of the page or paragraph.

These trifling and peevish cavils would, perhaps, have been confounded with some criticisms of the same stamp, on which I had bestowed a slight, though sufficient notice, in the beginning of this article of Mosheim; had not my attention been awakened by a peroration worthy of Tertullian himself, if Tertullian had been devoid of eloquence as well as of moderation —

"Much less does the Christian Mosheim give our infidel Historian any pretext for inserting that illiberal malignant insinuation, "That Christianity has, in every age, acknowledged its important obligations to FEMALE devotion;" the remark is truly contemptible." ⁷⁰

It is not my design to fill whole pages with a tedious enumeration of the many illustrious examples of female Saints, who, in every age, and almost in every country, have promoted the interest of Christianity. Such instances will readily offer themselves to those who have the slightest knowledge of Ecclesiastical History; nor is it necessary that I should remind them how much the charms, the influence, the devotion of Clotilda, and of her great-grand-daughter Bertha, contributed to the conversion of France and England. Religion may accept, without a blush, the services of the purest and most gentle portion of the human species: but here are some advocates who would disgrace Christianity, if Christianity could be disgraced, by the manner in which they defend her cause.

Tillemont

As I could not readily procure the works of Gregory of Nyssa, I borrowed ⁷¹ from the accurate and indefatigable Tillemont, a passage in the Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, or the Wonder-worker, which affirmed that when the Saint took possession of his Episcopal See, he found only SEVENTEEN Christians in the city of Neo-Caesarea, and the adjacent country, "Les environs, la Campagne, le pays d'alentour." (Mem. Eccles. Tom. iv. p. 677. 691. Edit. Bruxelles, 1706). These expressions of Tillemont, to whom I explicitly acknowledged my obligation, appeared synonymous to the word Diocese, the whole territory intrusted to the pastoral care of the Wonder-worker, and I added the epithet of extensive; because I was apprised that Neo-Caesarea was the capital of the Polemoniac Pontus, and that the whole kingdom of Pontus, which stretched above five hundred miles along the coast of the Euxine, was divided between sixteen or seventeen Bishops. (See the Geographia Ecclesiastica of Charles de St. Paul, and Lucas Holstenius, p. 249, 250, 251.) Thus far I may not be thought to have deserved any censure; but the omission of the subsequent

⁷⁰Davis, p. 132.

⁷¹Gibbon, Note 156

part of the same passage, which imports that at his death the Wonder-worker left no more than seventeen Pagans, may seem to wear a partial and suspicious aspect.

Let me therefore first observe, as some evidence of an impartial disposition, that I easily admitted, as the cool observation of the philosophic Lucian, the angry and interested complaint of the false prophet Alexander, that Pontus was filled with Christians. This complaint was made under the reigns of Marcus or of Commodus, with whom the impostor so admirably exposed by Lucian was contemporary: and I had contented myself with remarking that the numbers of Christians must have been very unequally distributed in the several parts of Pontus, since the diocese of Neo-Caesarea contained, above sixty years afterwards, only seventeen Christians. Such was the inconsiderable flock which Gregory began to feed about the year two hundred and forty, and the real or fabulous conversions ascribed to that Wonder-working Bishop during a reign of thirty years, are totally foreign to the state of Christianity in the preceding century. This obvious reflection may serve to answer the objection of Mr. Davis,⁷² and of another adversary,⁷³ who on this occasion is more liberal than Mr. Davis of those harsh epithets so familiar to the tribe of Polemics.

Pagi

"Mr. Gibbon says,⁷⁴ "Pliny was sent into Bithynia (according to Pagi) in the year 110."

"Now that accurate Chronologer places it in the year 102. See the fact recorded in his *Critico-Historico-Chronologica* in *Annales C. Baronii*, A.D. 102. p. 99. faec. ii. § 3."

"I appeal to my reader, Whether this anachronism does not plainly prove that our Historian never looked into Pagi's Chronology, though he has not hesitated to make a pompous reference to him in his note?"⁷⁵

I cannot help observing, that either Mr. Davis's Dictionary is extremely confined, or that in his Philosophy all sins are of equal magnitude. Every error of fact or language, every instance where he does not know to reconcile the original and the reference, he expresses by the gentle word of misrepresentation. An inaccurate appeal to the sentiment of Pagi, on a subject where I must have been perfectly disinterested, might have been styled a lapse of memory, instead of being censured as the effect of vanity and ignorance. Pagi is neither a difficult nor an uncommon writer, nor could I hope to derive much additional fame from a pompous quotation of his writings, which I had never seen.

The words employed by Mr. Davis, of fact, of record, of anachronism, are unskillfully chosen, and so unhappily applied, as to betray a very shameful ignorance, either of the English language, or of the nature of this Chronological Question. The date of Pliny's government of Bithynia is not a fact recorded by any ancient writer, but an opinion which modern critics have variously formed, from the consideration of presumptive and collateral evidence. Cardinal Baronius placed the consulship of Pliny one year too late, and, as he was persuaded that the old practice of the republic still subsisted, he naturally supposed that Pliny obtained his province immediately after the expiration of his consulship. He therefore sends him into Bithynia in the year which, according to his erroneous computation, coincided with the year one hundred and four (*Baron. Annal. Eccles. A.D. 103. No I. 104. No I*), or, according to the true chronology, with the year one hundred and two, of the Christian Aera. This mistake of Baronius, Pagi, with the assistance of his friend Cardinal Noris, undertakes to correct. From an accurate parallel of the *Annals of Trajan* and the *Epistles of Pliny*, he deduces his proofs that Pliny remained at Rome several years after his Consulship; by his own ingenious, though sometimes fanciful theory, of the imperial *Quinquennalia*, etc. Pagi at last discovers that Pliny made his entrance into Bithynia in the year one hundred and ten.

"Plinius igitur anno Christi CENTESIMO DECIMO Bithyniam intravit." Pagi, tom. i. p. 100.

I will be more indulgent to my adversary than he has been to me: I will admit, that he has looked into Pagi; but I must add, that he has only looked into that accurate Chronologer. To rectify the errors, which, in the course of a laborious and original work, had escaped the diligence of the Cardinal, was the arduous task which Pagi proposed to execute: and for the sake of perspicuity, he distributes his criticisms according to the particular dates, whether just or faulty, of the Chronology of Baronius himself. Under the year 102, Mr. Davis confusedly saw a long argument about Pliny and Bithynia, and without condescending to read the Author whom he pompously quotes, this hasty Critic imputes to him the opinion which he had so laboriously destroyed.

My readers, if any readers have accompanied me thus far, must be satisfied, and indeed satiated, with the repeated proofs which I have made of the weight and temper of my adversary's weapons. They have, in every assault, fallen dead and lifeless to the ground: they have more than

⁷²Davis, p. 136,137.

⁷³Dr. Randolph, in *Chelsum's Remarks*.

⁷⁴Gibbon, Note 157

⁷⁵Davis, p. 140.

once recoiled, and dangerously wounded the unskilful hand that had presumed to use them. I have now examined all the misrepresentations and inaccuracies, which even for a moment could perplex the ignorant, or deceive the credulous: the few imputations which I have neglected, are still more palpably false, or still more evidently trifling, and even the friends of Mr. Davis will scarcely continue to ascribe my contempt to my fear.

Plagiarisms

The first part of his Critical Volume might admit, though it did not deserve, a particular reply. But the easy, though tedious compilation, which fills the remainder,⁷⁶ and which Mr. Davis has produced as the evidence of my shameful plagiarisms, may be set in its true light by three or four short and general reflections.

1. Mr. Davis has disposed, in two columns, the passages which he thinks proper to select from my Two last Chapters, and the corresponding passages from Middleton, Barbeyrac, Beausobre, Dodwell, etc., to the most important of which he had been regularly guided by my own quotations. According to the opinion which he has conceived of literary property, to agree is to follow, and to follow is to steal. He celebrates his own sagacity with loud and reiterated applause, and declares with infinite facetiousness, that if he restored to every author the passages which Mr. Gibbon has purloined, he would appear as naked as the proud and gaudy Daw in the Fable, when each bird had plucked away its own plumes. Instead of being angry with Mr. Davis for the parallel which he has extended to so great a length, I am under some obligation to his industry for the copious proofs which he has furnished the reader, that my representation of some of the most important facts of Ecclesiastical Antiquity, is supported by the authority or opinion of the most ingenious and learned of the modern writers. The Public may not, perhaps, be very eager to assist Mr. Davis in his favourite amusement of depluming me. They may think, that if the materials which compose my Two last Chapters are curious and valuable, it is of little moment to whom they properly belong. If my readers are satisfied with the form, the colours, the new arrangement which I have given to the labours of my predecessors, they may perhaps consider me not as a contemptible Thief, but as an honest and industrious Manufacturer, who has fairly procured the raw materials, and worked them up with a laudable degree of skill and success.

2. About two hundred years ago, the Court of Rome discovered that the system which had been erected by ignorance must be defended and countenanced by the aid, or at least by the abuse, of science. The grosser legends of the middle ages were abandoned to contempt, but the supremacy and infallibility of two hundred Popes, the virtues of many thousand Saints, and the miracles which they either performed or related, have been laboriously consecrated in the Ecclesiastical Annals of Cardinal Baronius. A Theological Barometer might be formed, of which the Cardinal and our countryman Dr. Middleton should constitute the opposite and remote extremities, as the former sunk to the lowest degree of credulity, which was compatible with learning, and the latter rose to the highest pitch of scepticism, in any wise consistent with Religion. The intermediate gradations would be filled by a line of ecclesiastical critics, whose rank has been fixed by the circumstances of their temper and studies, as well as by the spirit of the church or society to which they were attached. It would be amusing enough to calculate the weight of prejudice in the air of Rome, of Oxford, of Paris, and of Holland; and sometimes to observe the irregular tendency of Papists towards freedom, sometimes to remark the unnatural gravitation of Protestants towards slavery. But it is useful to borrow the assistance of so many learned and ingenious men, who have viewed the first ages of the church in every light, and from every situation. If we skilfully combine the passions and prejudices, the hostile motives and intentions, of the several theologians, we may frequently extract knowledge from credulity, moderation from zeal, and impartial truth from the most disingenuous controversy. It is the right, it is the duty of a critical historian to collect, to weigh, to select the opinions of his predecessors; and the more diligence he has exerted in the search, the more rationally he may hope to add some improvement to the stock of knowledge, the use of which has been common to all.

3. Besides the ideas which may be suggested by the study of the most learned and ingenious of the moderns, the historian may be indebted to them for the occasional communication of some passages of the ancients, which might otherwise have escaped his knowledge or his memory. In the consideration of any extensive subject, none will pretend to have read all that has been written, or to recollect all that they have read: nor is there any disgrace in recurring to the writers who have professionally treated any questions, which, in the course of a long narrative, we are called upon to mention in a slight and incidental manner. If I touch upon the obscure and fanciful theology of the Gnostics, I can accept without a blush the assistance of the candid Beausobre; and when, amidst the fury of contending parties, I trace the progress of ecclesiastical dominion, I am not ashamed to

⁷⁶Davis, p. 168-274.

confess myself the grateful disciple of the impartial Mosheim. In the next Volume of my History, the Reader and the Critic must prepare themselves to see me make a still more liberal use of the labours of those indefatigable workmen who have dug deep into the mine of antiquity. The Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries are far more voluminous than their predecessors; the writings of Jerom, of Augustin, of Chrysostom, etc. cover the walls of our libraries. The smallest part is of the historical kind: yet the treatises which seem the least to invite the curiosity of the reader, frequently conceal very useful hints, or very valuable facts. The polemic, who involves himself and his antagonists in a cloud of argumentation, sometimes relates the origin and progress of the heresy which he confutes; and the preacher who declaims against the luxury, describes the manners, of the age; and seasonably introduces the mention of some public calamity, that he may ascribe it to the justice of offended Heaven. It would surely be unreasonable to expect that the historian should peruse enormous volumes, with the uncertain hope of extracting a few interesting lines, or that he should sacrifice whole days to the momentary amusement of his Reader. Fortunately for us both, the diligence of ecclesiastical critics has facilitated our inquiries: the compilations of Tillemont might alone be considered as an immense repertory of truth and fable, of almost all that the Fathers have preserved, or invented, or believed; and if we equally avail ourselves of the labours of contending sectaries, we shall often discover, that the same passages which the prudence of one of the disputants would have suppressed or disguised, are placed in the most conspicuous light by the active and interested zeal of his adversary. On these occasions, what is the duty of a faithful historian, who derives from some modern writer the knowledge of some ancient testimony, which he is desirous of introducing into his own narrative? It is his duty, and it has been my invariable practice, to consult the original; to study with attention the words, the design, the spirit, the context, the situation of the passage to which I had been referred; and before I appropriated it to my own use, to justify my own declaration, "that I had carefully examined all the original materials that could illustrate the subject which I had undertaken to treat." If this important obligation has sometimes been imperfectly fulfilled, I have only omitted what it would have been impracticable for me to perform. The greatest city in the world is still destitute of that useful institution, a public library; and the writer who has undertaken to treat any large historical subject, is reduced to the necessity of purchasing, for his private use, a numerous and valuable collection of the books which must form the basis of his work. The diligence of his booksellers will not always prove successful; and the candour of his readers will not always expect, that, for the sake of verifying an accidental quotation of ten lines, he should load himself with an useless and expensive series of ten volumes. In a very few instances, where I had not the opportunity of consulting the originals, I have adopted their testimony on the faith of modern guides, of whose fidelity I was satisfied; but on these occasions,⁷⁷ instead of decking myself with the borrowed plumes of Tillemont or Lardner, I have been most scrupulously exact in marking the extent of my reading, and the source of my information. This distinction, which a sense of truth and modesty had engaged me to express, is ungenerously abused by Mr. Davis, who seems happy to inform his readers, that

"in ONE instance (Chap. xvi. 164. or, in the first edition, 163.) I have, by an unaccountable oversight, unfortunately for myself, forgot to drop the modern, and that I modestly disclaim all knowledge of Athanasius, but what I had picked up from Tillemont."⁷⁸

Without animadverting on the decency of these expressions, which are now grown familiar to me, I shall content myself with observing, that as I had frequently quoted Eusebius, or Cyprian, or Tertullian, because I had read them; so, in this instance, I only made my reference to Tillemont, because I had not read, and did not possess, the works of Athanasius. The progress of my undertaking has since directed me to peruse the Historical Apologies of the Archbishop of Alexandria, whose life is a very interesting part of the age in which he lived; and if Mr. Davis should have the curiosity to look into my Second Volume, he will find that I make a free and frequent appeal to the writings of Athanasius. Whatever may be the opinion or practice of my adversary, this I apprehend to be the dealing of a fair and honourable man.

4. The historical monuments of the three first centuries of ecclesiastical antiquity are neither very numerous, nor very prolix. From the end of the Acts of the Apostles, to the time when the first Apology of Justin Martyr was presented, there intervened a dark and doubtful period of fourscore years; and, even if the Epistles of Ignatius should be approved by the critic, they could not be very serviceable to the historian. From the middle of the second, to the beginning of the fourth, century, we gain knowledge of the state and progress of Christianity from the successive Apologies which were occasionally composed by Justin, Athenagoras, Tertullian, Origen, etc.; from the Epistles of Cyprian; from a few sincere acts of the Martyrs; from some moral or controversial tracts, which indirectly explain the events and manners of the times; from the rare and accidental notice which profane writers have taken of the Christian sect; from the declamatory Narrative which celebrates the deaths of the persecutors; and from the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius, who has

⁷⁷Gibbon, Note 156, Note 161, Note 164, Note 178.

⁷⁸Davis, p. 273.

preserved some valuable fragments of more early writers. Since the revival of letters, these original materials have been the common fund of critics and historians: nor has it ever been imagined, that the absolute and exclusive property of a passage in Eusebius or Tertullian was acquired by the first who had an opportunity of quoting it. The learned work of Mosheim, *de Rebus Christianis ante Constantinum*, was printed in the year 1753; and if I were possessed of the patience and disingenuity of Mr. Davis, I would engage to find all the ancient testimonies that he has alleged, in the writings of Dodwell or Tillemont, which were published before the end of the last century. But if I were animated by any malevolent intentions against Dodwell or Tillemont, I could as easily, and as unfairly, fix on them the guilt of Plagiarism, by producing the same passages transcribed or translated at full length in the *Annals of Cardinal Baronius*. Let not criticism be any longer disgraced by the practice of such unworthy arts. Instead of admitting suspicions as false as they are ungenerous, candour will acknowledge, that Mosheim or Dodwell, Tillemont or Baronius, enjoyed the same right, and often were under the same obligation, of quoting the passages which they had read, and which were indispensably requisite to confirm the truth and substance of their similar narratives. Mr. Davis is so far from allowing me the benefit of this common indulgence, or rather of this common right, that he stigmatizes with the name of Plagiarism a close and literal agreement with Dodwell in the account of some parts of the persecution of Diocletian, where a few chapters of Eusebius and Lactantius, perhaps of Lactantius alone, are the sole materials from whence our knowledge could be derived, and where, if I had not transcribed, I must have invented. He is even bold enough (bold is not the proper word) to conceive some hopes of persuading his readers, that an Historian who has employed several years of his life, and several hundred pages, on the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, had never read Orosius, or the Augustan History; and that he was forced to borrow, at second-hand, his quotations from the Theodosian Code. I cannot profess myself very desirous of Mr. Davis's acquaintance; but if he will take the trouble of calling at my house any afternoon when I am not at home, my servant shall show him my library, which he will find tolerably well furnished with the useful authors, ancient as well as modern, ecclesiastical as well as profane, who have directly supplied me with the materials of my History.

The peculiar reasons, and they are not of the most flattering kind, which urged me to repel the furious and feeble attack of Mr. Davis, have been already mentioned. But since I am drawn thus reluctantly into the lists of controversy, I shall not retire till I have saluted, either with stern defiance or gentle courtesy, the theological champions who have signalized their ardour to break a lance against the shield of a Pagan adversary. The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Chapters have been honoured with the notice of several writers, whose names and characters seemed to promise more maturity of judgment and learning than could reasonably be expected from the unfinished studies of a Batchelor of Arts. The Reverend Mr. Apthorpe, Dr. Watson, the Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, Dr. Chelsum of Christ Church, and his associate Dr. Randolph, President of Corpus Christi College, and the Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, have given me a fair right, which, however, I shall not abuse, of freely declaring my opinion on the subject of their respective criticisms.

Mr. Apthorpe

If I am not mistaken, Mr. Apthorpe was the first who announced to the Public his intention of examining the interesting subject which I had treated in the Two last Chapters of my History. The multitude of collateral and accessory ideas which presented themselves to the Author, insensibly swelled the bulk of his papers to the size of a large volume in octavo; the publication was delayed many months beyond the time of the first advertisement; and when Mr. Apthorpe's Letters appeared, I was surprised to find, that I had scarcely any interest or concern in their contents. They are filled with general observations on the Study of History, with a large and useful catalogue of Historians, and with a variety of reflections, moral and religious, all preparatory to the direct and formal consideration of my Two last Chapters, which Mr. Apthorpe seems to reserve for the subject of a Second Volume. I sincerely respect the learning, the piety, and the candour of this Gentleman, and must consider it as a mark of his esteem, that he has thought proper to begin his approaches at so great a distance from the fortifications which he designed to attack.

Dr. Watson

When Dr. Watson gave to the public his Apology for Christianity, in a Series of Letters, he addressed them to the Author of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, with a just confidence that he had considered this important object in a manner not unworthy of his antagonist or of himself.

Dr. Watson's mode of thinking bears a liberal and philosophic cast; his thoughts are expressed with spirit, and that spirit is always tempered by politeness and moderation. Such is the man whom I should be happy to call my friend, and whom I should not blush to call my antagonist. But the same motives which might tempt me to accept, or even to solicit, a private and amicable conference, dissuaded me from entering into a public controversy with a Writer of so respectable a character; and I embraced the earliest opportunity of expressing to Dr. Watson himself, how sincerely I agreed with him in thinking,

"That as the world is now possessed of the opinion of us both upon the subject in question, it may be perhaps as proper for us both to leave it in this state." ⁷⁹

The nature of the ingenious Professor's Apology contributed to strengthen the insuperable reluctance to engage in hostile altercation which was common to us both, by convincing me, that such an altercation was unnecessary as well as unpleasant. He very justly and politely declares, that a considerable part, near seventy pages, of his small volume are not directed to me, ⁸⁰ but to a set of men whom he places in an odious and contemptible light. He leaves to other hands the defence of the leading Ecclesiastics, even of the primitive church; and without being very anxious, either to soften their vices and indiscretion, or to aggravate the cruelty of the Heathen Persecutors, he passes over in silence the greatest part of my Sixteenth Chapter. It is not so much the purpose of the Apologist to examine the facts which have been advanced by the Historian, as to remove the impressions which may have been formed by many of his Readers; and the remarks of Dr. Watson consist more properly of general argumentation than of particular criticism. He fairly owns, that I have expressly allowed the full and irresistible weight of the first great cause of the success of Christianity, ⁸¹ and he is too candid to deny that the five secondary causes, which I had attempted to explain, operated with some degree of active energy towards the accomplishment of that great event. The only question which remains between us, relates to the degree of the weight and effect of those secondary causes; and as I am persuaded that our philosophy is not of the dogmatic kind, we should soon acknowledge that this precise degree cannot be ascertained by reasoning, nor perhaps be expressed by words. In the course of this inquiry, some incidental difficulties have arisen, which I had stated with impartiality, and which Dr. Watson resolves with ingenuity and temper. If in some instances he seems to have misapprehended my sentiments, I may hesitate whether I should impute the fault to my own want of clearness or to his want of attention, but I can never entertain a suspicion that Dr. Watson would descend to employ the disingenuous arts of vulgar controversy.

There is, however, one passage, and one passage only, which must not pass without some explanation; and I shall the more eagerly embrace this occasion to illustrate what I had said, as the misconstruction of my true meaning seems to have made an involuntary, but unfavourable, impression on the liberal mind of Dr. Watson. As I endeavour not to palliate the severity, but to discover the motives, of the Roman Magistrates, I had remarked,

"it was in vain that the oppressed Believer asserted the unalienable rights of conscience and private judgment. Though his situation might excite the pity, his arguments could never reach the understanding, either of the philosophic or of the believing part of the Pagan world." ⁸²

The humanity of Dr. Watson takes fire on the supposed provocation, and he asks with unusual quickness,

"How, Sir, are the arguments for liberty of conscience so exceedingly inconclusive, that you think them incapable of reaching the understanding even of philosophers?" ⁸³

He continues to observe, that a captious adversary would embrace with avidity the opportunity this passage affords, of blotting my character with the odious stain of being a Persecutor; a stain which no learning can wipe out, which no genius or ability can render amiable; and though he himself does not entertain such an opinion of my principles, his ingenuity tries in vain to provide me with means of escape.

I must lament that I have not been successful in the explanation of a very simple notion of the spirit both of philosophy and of polytheism, which I have repeatedly inculcated. The arguments which assert the rights of conscience are not inconclusive in themselves, but the understanding of the Greeks and Romans was fortified against their evidence by an invincible prejudice. When we listen to the voice of Bayle, of Locke, and of genuine reason, in favour of religious toleration, we shall easily perceive that our most forcible appeal is made to our mutual feelings. If the Jew were allowed to argue with the Inquisitor, he would request that for a moment they might exchange their different situations, and might safely ask his Catholic Tyrant, whether the fear of death would compel him to enter the synagogue, to receive the mark of circumcision, and to partake of the paschal lamb. As soon as the case of persecution was brought home to the breast of the Inquisitor, he must have found some difficulty in suppressing the dictates of natural equity, which would insinuate

⁷⁹Watson's Apology for Christianity, p200

⁸⁰Watson's Apology for Christianity, p202-268.

⁸¹Watson's Apology for Christianity, p5

⁸²Gibbon,

⁸³Watson's Apology for Christianity, p185

to his conscience, that he could have no right to inflict those punishments which, under similar circumstances, he would esteem it as his duty to encounter. But this argument could not reach the understanding of a Polytheist, or of an ancient Philosopher. The former was ready, whenever he was summoned, or indeed without being summoned, to fall prostrate before the altars of any Gods who were adored in any part of the world, and to admit a vague persuasion of the truth and divinity of the most different modes of religion. The Philosopher, who considered them, at least in their literal sense, as equally false and absurd, was not ashamed to disguise his sentiments, and to frame his actions according to the laws of his country, which imposed the same obligation on the philosophers and the people. When Pliny declared, that whatever was the opinion of the Christians, their obstinacy deserved punishment, the absurd cruelty of Pliny was excused in his own eye, by the consciousness that, in the situation of the Christians, he would not have refused the religious compliance which he exacted. I shall not repeat, that the Pagan worship was a matter, not of opinion, but of custom; that the toleration of the Romans was confined to nations or families who followed the practice of their ancestors; and that in the first ages of Christianity their persecution of the individuals who departed from the established religion was neither moderated by pure reason, nor inflamed by exclusive zeal. But I only desire to appeal, from the hasty apprehension to the more deliberate judgment, of Dr. Watson himself. Should there still remain any difference of opinion between us, I shall be satisfied, if he will consider me as a sincere, though perhaps unsuccessful, lover of truth, and as a firm friend to civil and ecclesiastical freedom.

Dr. Chelsum and Dr. Randolph

Far be it from me, or from any faithful Historian, to impute to respectable societies the faults of some individual members. Our two Universities most undoubtedly contain the same mixture, and most probably the same proportions, of zeal and moderation, of reason and superstition. Yet there is much less difference between the smoothness of the Ionic, and the roughness of the Doric dialect, than may be found between the polished style of Dr. Watson, and the coarse language of Mr. Davis, Dr. Chelsum, or Dr. Randolph. The second of these Critics, Dr. Chelsum of Christ Church, is unwilling that the world should forget that he was the first who sounded to arms, that he was the first who furnished the antidote to the poison, and who, as early as the month of October of the year 1776, published his *Strictures on the Two last Chapters of Mr. Gibbon's History*. The success of a pamphlet, which he modestly styles imperfect and ill-digested, encouraged him to resume the controversy. In the beginning of the present year, his *Remarks* made their second appearance, with some alteration of form, and a large increase of bulk; and the author who seems to fight under the protection of two episcopal banners, has prefixed, in the front of his volume, his name and titles, which in the former edition he had less honourably suppressed. His confidence is fortified by the alliance and communications of a distinguished Writer, Dr. Randolph, etc. who, on a proper occasion, would, no doubt, be ready to bear as honourable testimony to the merit and reputation of Dr. Chelsum. The two friends are indeed so happily united by art and nature, that if the author of the *Remarks* had not pointed out the valuable communications of the Margaret Professor, it would have been impossible to separate their respective property. Writers who possess any freedom of mind, may be known from each other by the peculiar character of their style and sentiments; but the champions who are enlisted in the service of Authority, commonly wear the uniform of the regiment. Oppressed with the same yoke, covered with the same trappings, they heavily move along, perhaps not with an equal pace, in the same beaten track of prejudice and preferment. Yet I should expose my own injustice, were I absolutely to confound with Mr. Davis the two Doctors in Divinity, who are joined in one volume. The three Critics appear to be animated by the same implacable resentment against the Historian of the Roman Empire; they are alike disposed to support the same opinions by the same arts; and in the language of the two latter, the disregard of politeness is somewhat less gross and indecent, the difference is not of such a magnitude as to excite in my breast any lively sensations of gratitude. It was the misfortune of Mr. Davis that he undertook to write before he had read. He set out with the stock of authorities which he found in my quotations, and boldly ventured to play his reputation against mine. Perhaps he may now repent of a loss which is not easily recovered; but if I had not surmounted my almost insuperable reluctance to a public dispute, many a reader might still be dazzled by the vehemence of his assertions, and might still believe that Mr. Davis had detected several wilful and important misrepresentations in my *Two last Chapters*. But the confederate Doctors appear to be scholars of a higher form and longer experience; they enjoy a certain rank in their academical world; and as their zeal is enlightened by some rays of knowledge, so their desire to ruin the credit of their adversary is occasionally checked by the apprehension of injuring their own. These restraints, to which Mr. Davis was a stranger, have confined them to a very narrow and humble path of historical criticism; and if I were to correct, according to their wishes, all the particular facts against which they have advanced any

objections, these corrections, admitted in their fullest extent, would hardly furnish materials for a decent list of errata.

The dogmatical part of their work, which in every sense of the word deserves that appellation, is ill adapted to engage my attention. I had declined the consideration of theological arguments, when they were managed by a candid and liberal adversary; and it would be inconsistent enough, if I should have refused to draw my sword in honourable combat against the keen and well-tempered weapon of Dr. Watson, for the sole purpose of encountering the rustic cudgel of two staunch and sturdy Polemics.

I shall not enter any farther into the character and conduct of Cyprian, as I am sensible that, if the opinion of Le Clere, Mosheim, and myself, is reprobated by Dr. Chelsum and his ally, the difference must subsist, till we shall entertain the same notions of moral virtue and Ecclesiastical power.⁸⁴ If Dr. Randolph will allow that the primitive Clergy received, managed, and distributed the tythes, and other charitable donations of the faithful, the dispute between us, will be a dispute of words.⁸⁵ I shall not amuse myself with proving that the learned Origen must have derived from the inspired authority of the Church his knowledge, not indeed of the authenticity, but of the inspiration of the four Evangelists, two of whom are not in the rank of the Apostles.⁸⁶ I shall submit to the judgment of the Public, whether the Athanasian Creed is not read and received in the Church of England, and whether the wisest and most virtuous of the Pagans⁸⁷ believed the Catholic faith, which is declared in the Athanasian Creed to be absolutely necessary for salvation. As little shall I think myself interested in the elaborate disquisitions with which the Author of the Remarks has filled a great number of pages, concerning the famous testimony of Josephus, the passages of Irenaeus and Theophilus, which relate to the gift of miracles, and the origin of circumcision in Palestine or in Egypt.⁸⁸ If I have rejected, and rejected with some contempt, the interpolation which pious fraud has very awkwardly inserted in the text of Josephus, I may deem myself secure behind the shield of learned and pious critics (See in particular Le Clere, in his *Ars Critica*, part iii. sect. i. c. 15. and Lardner's *Testimonies*, Vol. i. p. 150, etc.), who have condemned this passage: and I think it very natural that Dr. Chelsum should embrace the contrary opinion, which is not destitute of able advocates. The passages of Irenaeus and Theophilus were thoroughly sifted in the controversy about the duration of Miracles; and as the Works of Dr. Middleton may be found in every library, so it is not impossible that a diligent search may still discover some remains of the writings of his adversaries. In mentioning the confession of the Syrians of Palestine, that they had received from Egypt the rite of circumcision, I had simply alleged the testimony of Herodotus, without expressly adopting the sentiment of Marsham. But I had always imagined, that in these doubtful and indifferent questions, which have been solemnly argued before the tribunal of the Public, every scholar was at liberty to chuse his side, without assigning his reasons; nor can I yet persuade myself, that either Dr. Chelsum, or myself, are likely to enforce, by any new arguments, the opinions which we have respectively followed. The only novelty for which I can perceive myself indebted to Dr. Chelsum, is the very extraordinary Scepticism which he insinuates concerning the time of Herodotus, who, according to the chronology of some, flourished during the time of the Jewish captivity.⁸⁹ Can it be necessary to inform a Divine, that the captivity which lasted seventy years, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, was terminated in the year 536 before Christ, by the edict which Cyrus published in the first year of his reign (Jeremiah, xxv. II, 12. xxix. 10. Ezra, i. I. etc. Usher and Prideaux, under the years 606 and 536.)? Can it be necessary to inform a man of letters, that Herodotus was fifty-three years old at the commencement of the Peloponnesian war (Aulus Gellius, Noct. Attic. xv. 23. from the commentaries of Pamphila), and consequently that he was born in the year before Christ 484, fifty-two years after the end of the Jewish captivity? As this well attested fact is not exposed to the slightest doubt or difficulty, I am somewhat curious to learn the names of those unknown authors, whose chronology Dr. Chelsum has allowed as the specious foundation of a probable hypothesis. The Author of the Remarks does not seem indeed to have cultivated, with much care or success, the province of literary history; as a very moderate acquaintance with that useful branch of knowledge would have saved him from a positive mistake, much less excusable than the doubt which he entertains about the time of Herodotus. He styles Suidas

"a Heathen writer, who lived about the end of the tenth century."⁹⁰

I admit the period which he assigns to Suidas; and which is well ascertained by Dr. Bentley (See his Reply to Boyle, p. 22, 23.). We are led to fix this epoch, by the chronology which this Heathen writer has deduced from Adam, to the death of the emperor John Zimisces, A.D. 975:

⁸⁴Gibbon, Chelsum, P 132-139.

⁸⁵Randolph in Chelsum, p 122

⁸⁶Gibbon, chapter 15 Note 33, Chelsum, P. 39.

⁸⁷Gibbon, chapter 15 Note 70, Chelsum, P. 66.

⁸⁸Chelsum's Remarks, p.13-19. 67-91. 180-185

⁸⁹Chelsum's Remarks, p.15

⁹⁰Chelsum's Remarks, p.73

and a crowd of passages might be produced, as the unanswerable evidence of his Christianity. But the most unanswerable of all is the very date, which is not disputed between us. The philosophers who flourished under Justinian (See Agathias, 1. ii. p. 65, 66.), appear to have been the last of the Heathen writers: and the ancient religion of the Greeks was annihilated almost four hundred years before the birth of Suidas.

After this animadversion, which is not intended either to insult the failings of my Adversary or to provide a convenient excuse for my own errors, I shall proceed to select two important parts of Dr. Chelsum's Remarks, from which the candid reader may form some opinion of the whole. They relate to the military service of the first Christians, and to the historical character of Eusebius; and I shall review them with the less reluctance, as it may not be impossible to pick up something curious and useful even in the barren waste of controversy.

1. Military Service of the first Christians.

In representing the errors of the primitive Christians, which flowed from an excess of virtue, I had observed, that they exposed themselves to the reproaches of the Pagans, by their obstinate refusal to take an active part in the civil administration, or military defence of the empire; that the objections of Celsus appear to have been mutilated by his adversary Origen, and that the Apologists, to whom the public dangers were urged, returned obscure and ambiguous answers, as they were unwilling to disclose the true ground of their security, their opinion of the approaching end of the world.

⁹¹ In another place I had related, from the Acts of Ruinart, the action and punishment of the Centurion Marcellus, who was put to death for renouncing the service in a public and seditious manner. ⁹² On this occasion Dr. Chelsum is extremely alert. He denies my facts, controverts my opinions, and, with a politeness worthy of Mr. Davis himself, insinuates that I borrowed the story of Marcellus, not from Ruinart, but from Voltaire. My learned Adversary thinks it highly improbable that Origen should dare to mutilate the objections of Celsus,

"whose work was, in all probability, extant at the time he made this reply In such case, had he even been inclined to treat his adversary unfairly, he must yet surely have been with-held from the attempt, through the fear of detection." ⁹³

The experience both of ancient and modern controversy, had indeed convinced me that this reasoning, just and natural as it may seem, is totally inconclusive, and that the generality of disputants, especially in religious contests, are of a much more daring and intrepid spirit. For the truth of this remark, I shall content myself with producing a recent and very singular example, in which Dr. Chelsum himself is personally interested. He charges ⁹⁴ me with passing over in

"silence the important and unsuspected testimony of a Heathen historian (Dion Cassius) to the persecution of Domitian; and he affirms, that I have produced that testimony so far only as it relates to Clemens and Domitilla; yet in the very same passage follows immediately, that on a like accusation MANY OTHERS were also condemned. Some of them were put to death, others suffered the confiscation of their goods." ⁹⁵

Although I should not be ashamed to undertake the apology of Nero or Domitian, if I thought them innocent of any particular crime with which zeal or malice had unjustly branded their memory; yet I should indeed blush, if, in favour of tyranny, or even in favour of virtue, I had suppressed the truth and evidence of historical facts. But the Reader will feel some surprise, when he has convinced himself that, in the three editions of my First Volume, after relating the death of Clemens, and the exile of Domitilla, I continue to allege the ENTIRE TESTIMONY of Dion, in the following words:

"and sentences either of death, or of confiscation, were pronounced against a GREAT NUMBER OF PERSONS who were involved in the SAME accusation. The guilt imputed to their charge, was that of Atheism and Jewish manners; a singular association of ideas which cannot with any propriety be applied except to the Christians, as they were obscurely and imperfectly viewed by the magistrates and writers of that period."

Dr. Chelsum has not been deterred, by the fear of detection, from this scandalous mutilation of the popular work of a living adversary. But Celsus had been dead above fifty years before Origen published his Apology; and the copies of an ancient work, instead of being instantaneously multiplied by the operation of the press, were separately and slowly transcribed by the labour of the hand.

If any modern Divine should still maintain that the fidelity of Origen was secured by motives more honourable than the fear of detection, he may learn from Jerom the difference of the gymnastic and dogmatic styles. Truth is the object of the one, Victory of the other; and the same arts which would disgrace the sincerity of the teacher, serve only to display the skill of the disputant. After

⁹¹Gibbon,

⁹²Gibbon,

⁹³Chelsum's Remarks, p. 118, 119.

⁹⁴Chelsum's Remarks, p. 188.

⁹⁵Gibbon,

justifying his own practice by that of the orators and philosophers, Jerom defends himself by the more respectable authority of Christian Apologists.

"How many thousand lines, says he, have been composed against Celsus and Porphyry, by Origen, Methodius, Eusebius, Apollinaris? Consider with what arguments, with what slippery problems, they elude the inventions of the Devil; and how in their controversy with the Gentiles, they are sometimes obliged to speak, not what they really think, but what is most advantageous for the cause they defend."

"Origenes, etc. multis versuum millibus scribunt adversus Celsum et Porphyrium. Considerate quibus argumentis et quam lubricis problematibus diaboli spiritu contexts subvertunt: et quia interdum coguntur loqui, non quod sentiunt, sed quod necesse est dicunt adversus ea quae dicunt Gentiles." (Pro Libris advers. Jovinian. Apolog. Tom. ii. p. i 35.)

Yet Dr. Chelsum may still ask, and he has a right to ask, why in this particular instance I suspect the pious Origen of mutilating the objections of his adversary. From a very obvious, and, in my opinion, a very decisive, circumstance. Celsus was a Greek philosopher, the friend of Lucian; and I thought that, although he might support error by sophistry, he would not write nonsense in his own language. I renounce my suspicion, if the most attentive reader is able to understand the design and purport of a passage which is given as a formal quotation from Celsus, and which begins with the following words:

Ου μὴν οὐδὲ ἐκεῖνο ἀνεκτοῦ σου λεγούτοζ, ὡς

etc. (Origen contr. Celsum, 1. viii. p. 425. edit. Spencer, Cantab. 1677.)

I have carefully inspected the original, I have availed myself of the learning of Spencer, and even Bouhereau (for I shall always disclaim the absurd and affected pedantry of using without scruple a Latin version, but of despising the aid of a French translation), and the ill success of my efforts has countenanced the suspicion to which I still adhere, with a just mixture of doubt and hesitation. Origen very boldly denies, that any of the Christians have affirmed what is imputed to them by Celsus, in this unintelligible quotation; and it may easily be credited, that none had maintained what none can comprehend. Dr. Chelsum has produced the words of Origen; but on this occasion there is a strange ambiguity in the language of the modern Divine,⁹⁶ as if he wished to insinuate what he dared not affirm; and every reader must conclude, from his state of the question, that Origen expressly denied the truth of the accusation of Celsus, who had accused the Christians of declining to assist their fellow-subjects in the military defence of the empire, assailed on every side by the arms of the Barbarians.

Will Dr. Chelsum justify to the world, can he justify to his own feelings, the abuse which he has made even of the privileges of the Gymnastic style? Careless and hasty indeed must have been his perusal of Origen, if he did not perceive that the ancient Apologist, who makes a stand on some incidental question, admits the accusation of his adversary, that the Christians refused to bear arms even at the command of their Sovereign.

”καὶ οὐ συστρατευομεθα μὴν αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐπειγῆ”

(Origen, 1. viii. p. 427.)

He endeavours to palliate this undutiful refusal, by representing that the Christians had their peculiar camps, in which they incessantly combated for the safety of the emperor and the empire, by lifting up their right hands — in prayer. The Apologist seems to hope that his country will be satisfied with this spiritual aid, and dexterously confounding the colleges of Roman priests with the multitudes which swelled the Catholic Church, he claims for his brethren, in all the provinces, the exemption from military service, which was enjoyed by the sacerdotal order. But as this excuse might not readily be allowed, Origen looks forwards with a lively faith to that auspicious Revolution, which Celsus had rejected as impossible, when all the nations of the habitable earth, renouncing their passions and their arms, should embrace the pure doctrines of the Gospel, and lead a life of peace and innocence under the immediate protection of Heaven. The faith of Origen seems to be principally founded on the predictions of the Prophet Zephaniah (See iii. 9, 10.); and he prudently observes, that the Prophets often speak secret things (*ἐν ἀπορρητῷ λεγούσι*, p. 426.) which may be understood by those who can understand them; and that if this stupendous change cannot be effected while we retain our bodies, it may be accomplished as soon as we shall be released from them. Such is the reasoning of Origen: though I have not followed the order, I have faithfully preserved the substance, of it; which fully justifies the truth and propriety of my observations.

The execution of Marcellus, the Centurion, is naturally connected with the Apology of Origen,

⁹⁶Chelsum's Remarks, p. 118.

as the former declared by his actions, what the latter affirmed in his writings, that the conscience of a devout Christian would not allow him to bear arms, even at the command of his Sovereign. I had represented this religious scruple as one of the motives which provoked Marcellus; on the day of a public festival, to throw away the ensigns of his office; and I presumed to observe, that such an act of desertion would have been punished in any government according to martial or even civil law Dr. Chelsum ⁹⁷ very bluntly accuses me of misrepresenting the story, and of suppressing those circumstances which would have defended the Centurion from the unjust imputation thrown by me upon his conduct. The dispute between the Advocate for Marcellus and myself, lies in a very narrow compass; as the whole evidence is comprised in a short, simple, and, I believe, authentic narrative.

1 In another place I observed, and even pressed the observation,

”that the innumerable Deities and rites of Polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or of private life;”

and I had particularly specified how much the Roman discipline was connected with the national superstition. A solemn oath of fidelity was repeated every year in the name of the Gods and of the genius of the Emperor, public and daily sacrifices were performed at the head of the camp, the legionary was continually tempted, or rather compelled, to join in the idolatrous worship of his fellow-soldiers, and had not any scruples been entertained of the lawfulness of war, it is not easy to understand how any serious Christian could enlist under a banner which has been justly termed the rival of the Cross. ”Vexilla aemula Christi.” (Tertullian de Corona Militis, c. xi.) With regard to the soldiers, who before their conversion were already engaged in the military life, fear, habit, ignorance, necessity might bend them to some acts of occasional conformity; and as long as they abstained from absolute and intentional idolatry, their behaviour was excused by the indulgent, and censured by the more rigid casuists. (See the whole Treatise De Corona Militis.) We are ignorant of the adventures and character of the Centurion Marcellus, how long he had conciliated the profession of arms and of the Gospel, whether he was only a Catechumen, or whether he was initiated by the Sacrament of Baptism. We are likewise at a loss to ascertain the particular act of idolatry which so suddenly and so forcibly provoked his pious indignation. As he declared his faith in the midst of a public entertainment given on the birth-day of Galerius, he must have been startled by some of the sacred and convivial rites (*Convivia ista profana reputans*) of prayers, or vows, or libations, or, perhaps, by the offensive circumstance of eating the meats which had been offered to the idols. But the scruples of Marcellus were not confined to these accidental impurities; they evidently reached the essential duties of his profession; and when before the tribunal of the magistrates, he avowed his faith at the hazard of his life, the Centurion declared, as his cool and determined persuasion, that it does not become a Christian man, who is the soldier of the Lord Christ, to bear arms for any object of earthly concern.

”Non enim decebat Christianum hominem molestiis secularibus militare, qui Christo Domino militat.”

A formal declaration, which clearly disengages from each other the different questions of war and idolatry. With regard to both these questions, as they were understood by the primitive Christians, I wish to refer the Reader to the sentiments and authorities of Mr. Moyle, a bold and ingenious critic, who read the Fathers as their judge, and not as their slave, and who has refuted, with the most patient candour, all that learned prejudice could suggest in favour of the silly story of the Thundering Legion. (See Moyle’s Works, Vol. ii. p. 84-88. 111-116. 163-212. 298-302. 327-341.) And here let me add, that the passage of Origen, who in the name of his brethren disclaims the duty of military service, is understood by Mr. Moyle in its true and obvious signification.

2. I know not where Dr. Chelsum has imbibed the principles of logic or morality which teach him to approve the conduct of Marcellus, who threw down his rod, his belt, and his arms, at the head of the legion, and publicly renounced the military service, at the very time when he found himself obliged to offer sacrifice. Yet surely this is a very false notion of the condition and duties of a Roman Centurion. Marcellus was bound, by a solemn oath, to serve with fidelity till he should be regularly discharged; and according to the sentiments which Dr. Chelsum ascribes to him, he was not released from this oath by any mistaken opinion of the unlawfulness of war. I would propose it as a case of conscience to any philosopher, or even to any casuist in Europe, whether a particular order, which cannot be reconciled with virtue or piety, dissolves the ties of a general and lawful obligation? And whether, if they had been consulted by the Christian Centurion, they would not have directed him to increase his diligence in the execution of his military functions, to refuse to yield to any act of idolatry, and patiently to expect the consequences of such a refusal? But, instead of obeying the mild and moderate dictates of religion, instead of distinguishing between the duties of the soldier and of the Christian, Marcellus, with imprudent zeal, rushed forwards to seize the crown of martyrdom. He might have privately confessed himself guilty to the tribune or praefect under whom he served: he chose on the day of a public festival to disturb the order of the camp.

⁹⁷Chelsum’s Remarks, p. 114-117.

He insulted without necessity the religion of his Sovereign and of his country, by the epithets of contempt which he bestowed on the Roman Gods.

”Deos vestros ligneos et lapideos, adorare contemno, quae sunt idola surda et muta.”

Nay more: at the head of the legion, and in the face of the standards, the Centurion Marcellus openly renounced his allegiance to the Emperors.

”Ex hoc militare IMPERATORIBUS VESTRIS desisto.”

From this moment I no longer serve YOUR EMPERORS, are the important words of Marcellus, which his advocate has not thought proper to translate. I again make my appeal to any lawyer, to any military man, Whether, under such circumstances, the pronoun your has not a seditious and even treasonable import? And whether the officer who should make this declaration, and at the same time throw away his sword at the head of the regiment, would not be condemned for mutiny and desertion by any court-martial in Europe? I am the rather disposed to judge favourably of the conduct of the Roman government, as I cannot discover any desire to take advantage of the indiscretion of Marcellus. The Commander of the Legion seemed to lament that it was not in his power to dissemble this rash action. After a delay of more than three months, the Centurion was examined before the Vice-praefect, his superior Judge, who offered him the fairest opportunities of explaining or qualifying his seditious expressions, and at last condemned him to lose his head; not simply because he was a Christian, but because he had violated his military oath, thrown away his belt, and publicly blasphemed the Gods and the Emperors. Perhaps the impartial reader will confirm the sentence of the Vice-Praefect Agricolaus,

”Ita se habent facta Marcelli, ut haec disciplinâ debeant vindicari.”

Notwithstanding the plainest evidence, Dr. Chelsum will not believe that either Origen in Theory, or Marcellus in Practice, could seriously object to the use of arms;

”because it is well known, that far from declining the business of war altogether, whole legions of Christians served in the Imperial armies.”⁹⁸

I have not yet discovered, in the Author or Authors of the Remarks, many traces of a clear and enlightened understanding, yet I cannot suppose them so destitute of every reasoning principle, as to imagine that they here allude to the conduct of the Christians who embraced the profession of arms after their religion had obtained a public establishment. Whole legions of Christians served under the banners of Constantine and Justinian, as whole regiments of Christians are now enlisted in the service of France or England. The representation which I had given, was confined to the principles and practice of the Church of which Origen and Marcellus were members, before the sense of public and private interest had reduced the lofty standard of Evangelical perfection to the ordinary level of human nature. In those primitive times, where are the Christian legions that served in the Imperial armies? Our Ecclesiastical Pompeys may stamp with their foot, but no armed men will arise out of the earth, except the ghosts of the Thundering and the Thebaean legions, the former renowned for a Miracle, and the latter for a Martyrdom. Either the two Protestant Doctors must acquiesce under some imputations which are better understood than expressed, or they must prepare, in the full light and freedom of the eighteenth century, to undertake the defence of two obsolete legends, the least absurd of which staggered the well-disciplined credulity of a Franciscan Friar. (See Pagi Critic, ad Annal. Baronii, A.D. 174. tom. i. p. 168.) Very different was the spirit and taste of the learned and ingenuous Dr. Jortin, who after treating the silly story of the Thundering Legion with the contempt it deserved, continues in the following words:

”Moyle wishes no greater penance to the believers of the Thundering Legion, than that they may also believe the Martyrdom of the Thebaean Legion. (Moyle’s Works, vol. ii. p. 103): to which good wish, I say with Le Clerc (Bibliotheque A. et M. tom. xxvii. p. 193) AMEN.

Qui Bavium non odit, amet tua carmina, Maevi.”

(Jortin’s Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 367. 2d edition. London, 1767.)

Yet I shall not attempt to conceal a formidable army of Christians and even of Martyrs, which is ready to enlist under the banners of the confederate Doctors, if they will accept their service. As a specimen of the extravagant legends of the middle age, I had produced the instance of ten thousand Christian soldiers supposed to have been crucified on Mount Ararat, by the order either of Trajan or Hadrian.⁹⁹ For the mention and for the confutation of this story, I had appealed to a Papist and a Protestant, to the learned Tillemont (Mem. Ecclesiast. torn. ii. part ii. p. 438), and to the diligent Geddes (Miscellanies, vol. ii. p. 203), and when Tillemont was not afraid to say that there are few histories which appear more fabulous, I was not ashamed of dismissing the Fable with silent contempt. We may trace the degrees of fiction as well as those of credibility;

⁹⁸Chelsum’s Remarks, p. 113.

⁹⁹Gibbon Chapter 16 Note 74,

and the impartial Critic will not place on the same level the baptism of Philip and the donation of Constantine. But in considering the crucifixion of the ten thousand Christian soldiers, we are not reduced to the necessity of weighing any internal probabilities, or of disproving any external testimonies. This legend, the absurdity of which must strike every rational mind, stands naked and unsupported by the authority of any writer who lived within a thousand years of the age of Trajan, and has not been able to obtain the poor sanction of the uncorrupted Martyrologies which were framed in the most credulous period of Ecclesiastical History. The two Protestant Doctors will probably reject the unsubstantial present which has been offered them: yet there is one of my adversaries, the anonymous Gentleman, who boldly declares himself the votary of the ten thousand Martyrs, and challenges me

”to discredit a FACT which hitherto by many has been looked upon as well established.”¹⁰⁰

It is pity that a prudent confessor did not whisper in his ear, that, although the martyrdom of these military Saints, like that of the eleven thousand Virgins, may contribute to the edification of the faithful, these wonderful tales should not be rashly exposed to the jealous and inquisitive eye of those profane Critics, whose examination always precedes, and sometimes checks, their Religious Assent.

2. Character and credit of Eusebius.

A grave and pathetic complaint is introduced by Dr. Chelsum, into his preface,¹⁰¹ that Mr. Gibbon, who has often referred to the Fathers of the Church, seems to have entertained a general distrust of those respectable witnesses. The Critic is scandalized at the epithets of scanty and suspicious, which are applied to the materials of Ecclesiastical History; and if he cannot impeach the truth of the former, he censures in the most angry terms the injustice of the latter. He assumes, with peculiar zeal, the defence of Eusebius, the venerable parent of Ecclesiastical History, and labours to rescue his character from the gross misrepresentation on which Mr. Gibbon has openly insisted.’¹⁰² He observes, as if he sagaciously foresaw the objection,

”That it will not be sufficient here to allege a few instances of apparent credulity in some of the Fathers, in order to fix a general charge of suspicion on all.”

But it may be sufficient to allege a clear and fundamental principle of historical as well as legal Criticism, that whenever we are destitute of the means of comparing the testimonies of the opposite parties, the evidence of any witness, however illustrious by his rank and titles, is justly to be suspected in his own cause. It is unfortunate enough, that I should be engaged with adversaries, whom their habits of study and conversation appear to have left in total ignorance of the principles which universally regulate the opinions and practice of mankind.

As the ancient world was not distracted by the fierce conflicts of hostile sects, the free and eloquent writers of Greece and Rome had few opportunities of indulging their passions, or of exercising their impartiality in the relation of religious events. Since the origin of Theological Factions, some Historians, Ammianus Marcellinus, Fra-Paolo, Thuanus, Hume, and perhaps a few others, have deserved the singular praise of holding the balance with a steady and equal hand. Independent and unconnected, they contemplated with the same indifference, the opinions and interests of the contending parties; or, if they were seriously attached to a particular system, they were armed with a firm and moderate temper, which enabled them to suppress their affections, and to sacrifice their resentments. In this small, but venerable Synod of Historians, Eusebius cannot claim a seat. I had acknowledged, and I still think, that his character was less tinctured with credulity than that of most of his contemporaries; but as his enemies must admit, that he was sincere and earnest in the profession of Christianity, so the warmest of his admirers, or at least of his readers, must discern, and will probably applaud, the religious zeal which disgraces or adorns every page of his Ecclesiastical History. This laborious and useful work was published at a time, between the defeat of Licinius and the Council of Nice, when the resentment of the Christians was still warm, and when the Pagans were astonished and dismayed by the recent victory and conversion of the great Constantine. The materials, I shall dare to repeat the invidious epithets of scanty and suspicious, were extracted from the accounts which the Christians themselves had given of their own sufferings, and of the cruelty of their enemies. The Pagans had so long and so contemptuously neglected the rising greatness of the Church, that the Bishop of Caesarea had little either to hope or to fear from the writers of the opposite party; almost all of that little which did exist, has been accidentally lost, or purposely destroyed; and the candid enquirer may vainly wish to compare with the History of Eusebius, some Heathen narrative of the persecutions of Decius and Diocletian. Under these circumstances, it is the duty of an impartial judge to be counsel for the prisoner, who is incapable of making any defence for himself; and it is the first office of a counsel to examine with distrust and suspicion, the interested evidence of the accuser. Reason justifies

¹⁰⁰Chelsum’s Remarks, p. 65,66,67.

¹⁰¹Chelsum’s Remarks, p. ii, iii.

¹⁰²Chelsum and Randolph, p. 220-238.

the suspicion, and it is confirmed by the constant experience of modern History, in almost every instance where we have an opportunity of comparing the mutual complaints and apologies of the religious factions, who have disturbed each other's happiness in this world, for the sake of securing it in the next.

As we are deprived of the means of contrasting the adverse relations of the Christians and Pagans; it is the more incumbent on us to improve the opportunities of trying the narratives of Eusebius, by the original, and sometimes occasional, testimonies of the more ancient writers of his own party. Dr Chelsum ¹⁰³ has observed, that the celebrated passage of Origen, which has so much thinned the ranks of the army of Martyrs, must be confined to the persecutions that had already happened. I cannot dispute this sagacious remark, but I shall venture to add, that this passage more immediately relates to the religious tempests which had been excited in the time and country of Origen; and still more particularly to the city of Alexandria, and to the persecution of Severus, in which young Origen successfully exhorted his father, to sacrifice his life and fortune for the cause of Christ. From such unquestionable evidence, I am authorised to conclude, that the number of holy victims who sealed their faith with their blood, was not, on this occasion, very considerable: but I cannot reconcile this fair conclusion with the positive declaration of Eusebius (l. vi. c. a. p. 258), that at Alexandria, in the persecution of Severus, an innumerable, at least an indefinite multitude *μυριοι* of Christians were honoured with the Crown of Martyrdom. The advocates for Eusebius may exert their critical skill in proving that *μυριοι* and *ολιγοι* many and few are synonymous and convertible terms, but they will hardly succeed in diminishing so palpable a contradiction, or in removing the suspicion which deeply fixes itself on the historical character of the Bishop of Caesarea. This unfortunate experiment taught me to read, with becoming caution, the loose and declamatory style which seems to magnify the multitude of Martyrs and Confessors, and to aggravate the nature of their sufferings. From the same motives I selected, with careful observation, the more certain account of the number of persons who actually suffered death in the province of Palestine, during the whole eight years of the last and most rigorous persecution.

Besides the reasonable grounds of suspicion, which suggest themselves to every liberal mind, against the credibility of the Ecclesiastical Historians, and of Eusebius, their venerable leader, I had taken notice of two very remarkable passages of the Bishop of Caesarea. He frankly, or at least indirectly, declares, that in treating of the last persecution,

”he has related whatever might redound to the glory and suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of Religion.” ¹⁰⁴

Dr. Chelsum, who, on this occasion, most lamentably exclaims that we should hear Eusebius, before we utterly condemn him has provided, with the assistance of his worthy colleague, an elaborate defence for their common patron; and as if he were secretly conscious of the weakness of the cause, he has contrived the resource of entrenching himself in a very muddy soil, behind three several fortifications, which do not exactly support each other. The advocate for the sincerity of Eusebius maintains: 1st, That he never made such a declaration: 2dly, That he had a right to make it: and, 3dly, That he did not observe it. These separate and almost inconsistent apologies, I shall separately consider

1. Dr. Chelsum is at a loss how to reconcile, — I beg pardon for weakening the force of his dogmatic style; he declares that,

”It is plainly impossible to reconcile the express words of the charge exhibited, with any part of either of the passages appealed to in support of it.” ¹⁰⁵

If he means, as I think he must, that the express words of my text cannot be found in that of Eusebius, I congratulate the importance of the discovery. But was it possible? Could it be my design to quote the words of Eusebius, when I reduced into one sentence the spirit and substance of two diffuse and distinct passages? If I have given the true sense and meaning of the Ecclesiastical Historian, I have discharged the duties of a fair Interpreter; nor shall I refuse to rest the proof of my fidelity on the translation of those two passages of Eusebius, which Dr. Chelsum produces in his favour. ¹⁰⁶

”But it is not our part to describe the sad calamities which at last befell them (the Christians), since it does not agree with our plan to relate their dissensions and wickedness before the persecution; on which account we have determined to relate nothing more concerning them than may serve to justify the Divine Judgment. We therefore have not been induced to make mention either of those who were tempted in the persecution, or of those who made utter shipwreck of their salvation, and who were sunk of their own accord in the depths of the storm; but shall only add those things to our General History, which may in the first place be profitable to ourselves, and afterwards to posterity”

¹⁰³Gibbon Chelsum, p. 204-207.

¹⁰⁴Gibbon,

¹⁰⁵Chelsum, p. 232.

¹⁰⁶P. 228. 231.

In the other passage, Eusebius, after mentioning the dissensions of the Confessors among themselves, again declares that it is his intention to pass over all these things.

”Whatsoever things, (continues the Historian, in the words of the Apostle, who was recommending the practice of virtue) whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise; these things Eusebius thinks most suitable to a History of Martyrs;”

of wonderful Martyrs, as the splendid epithet which Dr. Chelsum had not thought proper to translate. I should betray a very mean opinion of the judgment and candour of my readers, if I added a single reflection on the clear and obvious tendency of the two passages of the Ecclesiastical Historian. I shall only observe, that the Bishop of Caesarea seems to have claimed a privilege of a still more dangerous and extensive nature. In one of the most learned and elaborate works that antiquity has left us, the Thirty-second Chapter of the Twelfth Book of his Evangelical Preparation bears for its title this scandalous Proposition,

”How it may be lawful and fitting to use falsehood as a medicine, and for the benefit of those who want to be deceived.”

*Οτι δεησει ποτε τω φευδει αυτι φαρμακου χρησθαι
επι ωφέλεια των δεομενων του τοιουτου τροπου*

(P 356, Edit. Graec. Rob. Stephani, Paris 1544.)

In this chapter he alleges a passage of Plato, which approves the occasional practice of pious and salutary frauds; nor is Eusebius ashamed to justify the sentiments of the Athenian philosopher by the example of the sacred writers of the Old Testament.

2. I had consented myself with observing, that Eusebius had violated one of the fundamental laws of history, *Ne quid veri dicere non audeat*; nor could I imagine, if the fact was allowed, that any question could possibly arise upon the matter of right. I was indeed mistaken; and I now begin to understand why I have given so little satisfaction to Dr. Chelsum, and to other critics of the same complexion, as our ideas of the duties and the privileges of an historian appear to be so widely different. It is alleged, that

”every writer has a right to choose his subject, for the particular benefit of his reader; that he has explained his own plan consistently; that he considers himself, according to it, not as a complete historian of the times, but rather as a didactic writer, whose main object is to make his work, like the Scriptures themselves, *PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE*; that, as he treats only of the affairs of the Church, the plan is at least excusable, perhaps peculiarly proper; and that he has conformed himself to the principal duty of an historian, while, according to his immediate design, he has not particularly related any of the transactions which could tend to the disgrace of religion.”¹⁰⁷

The historian must indeed be generous, who will conceal, by his own disgrace, that of his country, or of his religion. Whatever subject he has chosen, whatever persons he introduces, he owes to himself, to the present age, and to posterity, a just and perfect delineation of all that may be praised, of all that may be excused, and of all that must be censured. If he fails in the discharge of his important office, he partially violates the sacred obligations of truth, and disappoints his readers of the instruction which they might have derived from a fair parallel of the vices and virtues of the most illustrious characters. Herodotus might range without control in the spacious walks of the Greek and Barbaric domain, and Thucydides might confine his steps to the narrow path of the Peloponnesian war; but those historians would never have deserved the esteem of posterity, if they had designedly suppressed or transiently mentioned those facts which could tend to the disgrace of Greece or of Athens. These unalterable dictates of conscience and reason have been seldom questioned, though they have been seldom observed; and we must sincerely join in the honest complaint of Melchior Canus,

”that the lives of the philosophers have been composed by Laertius, and those of the Caesars by Suetonius, with a much stricter and more severe regard for historic truth, than can be found in the lives of saints and martyrs, as they are described by Catholic writers.” (See *Loci Communes*, l. xi. p. 650, apud Clericum, *Epistol. Critic.* v. p. 136.)

And yet the partial representation of truth is of far more pernicious consequence in ecclesiastical, than in civil, history. If Laertius had conceded the defects of Plato, or if Suetonius had disguised the vices of Augustus, we should have been deprived of the knowledge of some curious, and perhaps instructive, facts, and our idea of those celebrated men might have been more favourable than they deserved; but I cannot discover any practical inconveniencies which could have been the result of our ignorance. But if Eusebius had fairly and circumstantially related the scandalous dissensions of the Confessors; if he had shewn that their virtues were tinctured with pride and obstinacy, and that their lively faith was not exempt from some mixture of enthusiasm; he would have armed his readers

¹⁰⁷Chelsum, p. 229,230,231.

against the excessive veneration for those holy men, which imperceptibly degenerated into religious worship. The success of these didactic histories, by concealing or palliating every circumstance of human infirmity, was one of the most efficacious means of consecrating the memory, the bones, and the writings of the saints of the prevailing party; and a great part of the errors and corruptions of the Church of Rome may fairly be ascribed to this criminal dissimulation of the ecclesiastical historians. As a Protestant Divine, Dr. Chelsum must abhor these corruptions; but as a Christian, he should be careful lest his apology for the prudent choice of Eusebius should fix an indirect censure on the unreserved sincerity of the four Evangelists. Instead of confirming their narrative to those things which are virtuous and of good report, instead of following the plan which is here recommended as peculiarly proper for the affairs of the Church, the inspired writers have thought it their duty to relate the most minute circumstances of the fall of St. Peter, without considering whether the behaviour of an Apostle, who thrice denied his Divine Master, might redound to the honour, or to the disgrace, of Christianity. If Dr Chelsum should be frightened by this unexpected consequence, if he should be desirous of saving his faith from utter shipwreck, by throwing over-board the useless lumber of memory and reflection, I am not enough his enemy to impede the success of his honest endeavours.

The didactic method of writing history was still more profitably exercised by Eusebius in another work, which he has entitled, *The Life of Constantine*, his gracious patron and benefactor. Priests and poets have enjoyed in every age a privilege of flattery; but if the actions of Constantine are compared with the perfect idea of a royal saint, which, under his name, has been delineated by the zeal and gratitude of Eusebius, the most indulgent reader will confess, that when I styled him a courtly Bishop,¹⁰⁸ I could only be restrained by my respect for the episcopal character from the use of a much harsher epithet. The other appellation of a passionate declaimer, which seems to have sounded still more offensive in the tender ears of Dr. Chelsum,¹⁰⁹ was not applied by me to Eusebius, but to Lactantius, or rather to the author of the historical declamation, *De mortibus persecutorum*; and indeed it is much more properly adapted to the Rhetorician, than to the Bishop. Each of those authors was alike studious of the glory of Constantine: but each of them directed the torrent of his invectives against the tyrant, whether Maxentius or Licinius, whose recent defeat was the actual theme of popular and Christian applause. This simple observation may serve to extinguish a very trifling objection of my critic, That Eusebius has not represented the tyrant Maxentius under the character of a Persecutor.

Without scrutinizing the considerations of interest which might support the integrity of Baronius and Tillemont, I may fairly observe, that both those learned Catholics have acknowledged and condemned the dissimulation of Eusebius, which is partly denied, and partly justified, by my adversary. The honourable reflection of Baronius well deserves to be transcribed.

”Haec (the passages already quoted) de suo in conscribendâ persecutionis historia Eusebius; parum explens numeros sui muneris; dum perinde ac si panegyrim scriberet non historiam, triumphos dumtaxat martyrum atque victorias, non autem lapsus jacturamque fidelium posteris scripturae monumentis curaret.” (Baron. *Annal. Ecclesiast. AD. 302, No. 11.* See likewise Tillemont, *Mem. Eccles. tom. v. p. 62. 156; tom. vii. p. 130.*)

In a former instance, Dr. Chelsum appeared to be more credulous than a Monk: on the present occasion, he has shown himself less sincere than a Cardinal, and more obstinate than a Jansenist.

3. Yet the advocate for Eusebius has still another expedient in reserve. Perhaps he made the unfortunate declaration of his partial design, perhaps he had a right to make it; but at least his accuser must admit, that he has saved his honour by not keeping his word; since I myself have taken notice of *THE CORRUPTION OF MANNERS AND PRINCIPLES* among the Christians, so *FORCIBLY LAMENTED* by Eusebius.¹¹⁰ He has indeed indulged himself in a strain of loose and indefinite censure, which may generally be just, and which cannot be personally offensive, which is alike incapable of wounding or of correcting, as it seems to have no fixed object or certain aim. Juvenal might have read his satire against women in a circle of Roman ladies, and each of them might have listened with pleasure to the amusing description of the various vices and follies, from which she herself was so perfectly free. The moralist, the preacher, the ecclesiastical historian, enjoy a still more ample latitude of invective; and as long as they abstain from any particular censure, they may securely expose, and even exaggerate, the sins of the multitude. The precepts of Christianity seem to inculcate a style of mortification, of abasement, of self-contempt; and the hypocrite who aspires to the reputation of a saint, often finds it convenient to affect the language of a penitent. I should doubt whether Dr. Chelsum is much acquainted with the comedies of Moliere. If he has ever read that inimitable master of human life, he may recollect whether *Tartuffe* was very much inclined to confess his real guilt, when he exclaimed,

Oui, mon Frere, je suis un mechant, un coupable; Un malheureux pécheur, tout plein d'iniquité

¹⁰⁸Gibbon,

¹⁰⁹Chelsum, p. 234.

¹¹⁰Chelsum, p. 226,227.

Le plus grand scelerat qui ait jamais été. Chaque instant de ma vie est chargé de souillures, Elle n'est qu'un amas de crimes et d'ordures.

Où, mon cher fils, parlez, traitez moi de perfide, D'infame, de perdu, de voleur, d'homicide; Accablez moi de noms encore plus detestés: Je n'y contredis point, je les ai mérités, Et j'en veux à genoux souffrir l'ignominie, Comme une honte due aux crimes de ma vie.

It is not my intention to compare the character of Tartuffe with that of Eusebius; the former pointed his invectives against himself, the latter directed them against the times in which he had lived: but as the prudent Bishop of Caesarea did not specify any place or person for the object of his censure, he cannot justly be accused, even by his friends, of violating the profitable plan of his didactic history.

The extreme caution of Eusebius, who declines any mention of those who were tempted and who fell during the persecution, has countenanced a suspicion that he himself was one of those unhappy victims, and that his tenderness for the wounded fame of his brethren arose from a just apprehension of his own disgrace. In one of my notes,¹¹¹ I had observed, that he was charged with the guilt of some criminal compliances, in his own presence, and in the Council of Tyre. I am therefore accountable for the reality only, and not for the truth, of the accusation: but as the two Doctors, who on this occasion unite their forces, are angry and clamorous in asserting the innocence of the Ecclesiastical Historian,¹¹² I shall advance one step farther, and shall maintain, that the charge against Eusebius, though not legally proved, is supported by a reasonable share of presumptive evidence.

I have often wondered why our orthodox Divines should be so earnest and zealous in the defence of Eusebius: whose moral character cannot be preserved, unless by the sacrifice of a more illustrious, and, as I really believe, of a more innocent victim. Either the Bishop of Caesarea, on a very important occasion, violated the laws of Christian charity and civil justice, or we must fix a charge of calumny, almost of forgery, on the head of the great Athanasius, the standard-bearer of the Homoousian cause, and the firmest pillar of the Catholic faith. In the Council of Tyre, he was accused of murdering, or at least of mutilating, a Bishop, whom he produced at Tyre alive and unhurt (Athanas. tom. i. p. 783. 786.); and of sacrilegiously breaking a consecrated chalice, in a village where neither church, nor altar, nor chalice, could possibly have existed. (Athanas. tom. i. p. 731, 732, 802.) Notwithstanding the clearest proofs of his innocence, Athanasius was oppressed by the Arian faction; and Eusebius of Caesarea, the venerable father of ecclesiastical history conducted this iniquitous prosecution from a motive of personal enmity (Athanas. tom. i. p. 728. 795. 797.) Four years afterwards, a national council of the Bishops of Egypt, forty-nine of whom had been present at the Synod of Tyre, addressed an epistle or manifesto in favour of Athanasius to all the Bishops of the Christian world. In this epistle they assert, that some of the Confessors, who accompanied them to Tyre, had accused Eusebius of Caesarea of an act relative to idolatrous sacrifice.

*οὐκ Εὐσεβίος ὁ ἐν Καισάρεια τῆς Παλαιστίνης ἐπι
θυσία κατηγορεῖτο ὑπὸ τῶν συν ἡμῶν ὁμολογητῶν*

(Athanas. tom. i. p. 728.)

Besides this short and authentic memorial, which escaped the knowledge or the candour of our confederate Doctors, a consonant but more circumstantial narrative of the accusation of Eusebius may be found in the writings of Epiphanius (Haeres. lxxviii. p. 723, 724.), the learned Bishop of Salamis, who was born about the time of the Synod of Lyre. He relates that, in one of the Sessions of the Council, Potamon, Bishop of Heraclea in Egypt, addressed Eusebius in the following words:

"How now, Eusebius, can this be borne, that you should be seated as a judge, while the innocent Athanasius is left standing as a criminal? Tell me, continued Potamon, were we not in prison together during the persecution? For my own part. lost an eye for the sake of the truth: but I cannot discern that you have lost any one of your members. You bear not any marks of your sufferings for Jesus Christ; but here you are, full of life, and with all the parts of your body sound and entire. How could you contrive to escape from prison, unless you stained your conscience, either by actual guilt or by a criminal promise to our persecutors."

Eusebius immediately broke up the meeting, and discovered by his anger, that he was confounded or provoked by the reproaches of the Confessor Potamon.

I should despise myself, if I were capable of magnifying, for a present occasion, the authority of the witness whom I have produced. Potamon was most assuredly actuated by a strong prejudice against the personal enemy of his Primate; and if the transaction to which he alluded had been of a private and doubtful kind, I would not take any ungenerous advantage of the respect which my Reverend Adversaries must entertain for the character of a Confessor. But I cannot distrust

¹¹¹Gibbon Note 178,

¹¹²Chelsum and Randolph, p. 236, 237, 238.

the veracity of Potamon, when he confined himself to the assertion of a fact, which lay within the compass of his personal knowledge: and collateral testimony (See Photius, p. 296. 297.) attests, that Eusebius was long enough in prison to assist his friend, the Martyr Pamphilus. in composing the first five books of his Apology for Origen. If we admit that Eusebius was imprisoned, he must have been discharged, and his discharge must have been either honourable, or criminal, or innocent. If his patience vanquished the cruelty of the Tyrant's Ministers, a short relation of his own confession and sufferings would have formed an useful and edifying Chapter in his Didactic History of the Persecution of Palestine; and the Reader would have been satisfied of the veracity of an Historian who valued truth above his life. If it had been in his power to justify, or even to excuse, the manner of his discharge from prison, it was his interest, it was his duty, to prevent the doubts and suspicions which must arise from his silence under these delicate circumstances. Notwithstanding these urgent reasons, Eusebius has observed a profound, and perhaps a prudent, silence: though he frequently celebrates the merit and martyrdom of his friend Pamphilus (p. 371. 394. 419. 427. Edit. Cantab.), he never insinuates that he was his companion in prison; and while he copiously describes the eight years persecution in Palestine, he never represents himself in any other light than that of a spectator. Such a conduct in a Writer, who relates with a visible satisfaction the honourable events of his own life, if it be not absolutely considered as an evidence of conscious guilt, must excite, and may justify, the suspicions of the most candid Critic.

Yet the firmness of Dr. Randolph is not shaken by these rational suspicions; and he condescends, in a magisterial tone, to inform me,

"That it is highly improbable, from the general well-known decision of the Church in such cases, that had his apostacy been known, he would have risen to those high honours which he attained, or been admitted at all indeed to any other than lay-communion."

This weighty objection did not surprise me, as I had already seen the substance of it in the Prolegomena of Valesius; but I safely disregarded a difficulty which had not appeared of any moment to the national council of Egypt; and I still think that an hundred Bishops, with Athanasius at their head, were as competent judges of the discipline of the fourth Century, as even the Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford. As a work of supererogation, I have consulted, however, the Antiquities of Bingham (see 1. iv. c.3. f. 6, 7. vol. i. p. 144, etc. fol. edit.), and found, as I expected, that much real learning had made him cautious and modest. After a careful examination of the facts and authorities already known to me, and of those with which I was supplied by the diligent Antiquarian, I am persuaded that the theory and the practice of discipline were not invariably the same, that particular examples cannot always be reconciled with general rules, and that the stern laws of justice often yielded to motives of policy and convenience. The temper of Jerom towards those whom he considered as Heretics, was fierce and unforgiving; yet the Dialogue of Jerom against the Luciferians, which I have read with infinite pleasure (tom. ii. p. 135-147. Edit. Basil. 1536.), is the seasonable and dextrous performance of a Statesman, who felt the expediency of soothing and reconciling a numerous party of offenders. The most rigid discipline, with regard to the Ecclesiastics who had fallen in time of persecution, is expressed in the 10th Canon of the Council of Nice; the most remarkable indulgence was shewn by the Fathers of the same Council to the lapsed, the degraded, the schismatic Bishop of Lycopolis. Of the penitent sinners, some might escape the shame of a public conviction or confession, and others might be exempted from the rigour of clerical punishment. If Eusebius incurred the guilt of a sacrilegious promise (for we are free to accept the milder alternative of Potamon), the proofs of this criminal transaction might be suppressed by the influence of money or favour; a seasonable journey into Egypt might allow time for the popular rumours to subside. The crime of Eusebius might be protected by the impunity of many Episcopal Apostates (see Philostorg. 1. ii. c. 15. p. 21, Edit. Gothofred.); and the Governors of the Church very reasonably desired to retain in their service the most learned Christian of the Age.

Before I return these sheets to the press, I must nor forget an anonymous pamphlet, which, under the title of *A Few Remarks*, etc. was published against my History in the course of the last summer. The unknown writer has thought proper to distinguish himself by the emphatic, yet vague, appellation of *A GENTLEMAN*: but I must lament that he has not considered, with becoming attention, the duties of that respectable character. I am ignorant of the motives which can urge a man of a liberal mind, and liberal manners, to attack without provocation, and without tenderness, any work which may have contributed to the information, or even to the amusement, of the Public. But I am well convinced, that the author of such a work, who boldly gives his name and his labours to the world, imposes on his adversaries the fair and honourable obligation of encountering him in open day-light, and of supporting the weight of their assertions by the credit of their names. The effusions of wit, or the productions of reason, may be accepted from a secret and unknown hand. The critic who attempts to injure the reputation of another, by strong imputations which may possibly be false, should renounce the ungenerous hope of concealing behind a mask the vexation of disappointment, and the guilty blush of detection.

After this remark, which I cannot make without some degree of concern. I shall frankly declare, that it is not my wish or my intention to prosecute with this Gentleman a literary altercation. There lies between us a broad and unfathomable gulph; and the heavy mist of prejudice and superstition, which has in a great measure been dispelled by the free inquiries of the present age, still continues to involve the mind of my Adversary. He fondly embraces those phantoms (for instance, an imaginary Pilate ¹¹³), which can scarcely find a shelter in the gloom of an Italian convent; and the resentment which he points against me, might frequently be extended to the most enlightened of the PROTESTANT, or, in his opinion, of the HERETICAL critics. His observations are divided into a number of unconnected paragraphs, each of which contains some quotation from my History, and the angry, yet commonly trifling, expression of his disapprobation and displeasure. Those sentiments I cannot hope to remove; and as the religious opinions of this Gentleman are principally founded on the infallibility of the Church, ¹¹⁴ they are not calculated to make a very deep impression on the mind of an English reader. The view of facts will be materially affected by the contagious influence of doctrines. The man who refuses to judge of the conduct of Lewis XIV. and Charles V towards their Protestant subjects ¹¹⁵ declares himself incapable of distinguishing the limits of persecution and toleration. The devout Papist, who has implored on his knees the intercession of St. Cyprian, will seldom presume to examine the actions of the Saint by the rules of historical evidence and of moral propriety. Instead of the homely likeness which I had exhibited of the Bishop of Carthage, my Adversary has substituted a life of Cyprian, ¹¹⁶ full of what the French call onction, and the English, canting (See Jortin's Remarks, Vol. ii. p. 239.): to which I can only reply, that those who are dissatisfied with the principles of Mosheim and Le Clerc, must view with eyes very different from mine, the Ecclesiastical History of the third century.

It would be an endless discussion (endless in every sense of the word), were I to examine the cavils which start up and expire in every page of this criticism, on the inexhaustible topic of opinions, characters, and intentions. Most of the instances which are here produced, are of so brittle a substance that they fall in pieces as soon as they are touched: and I searched for some time before I was able to discover an example of some moment where the Gentleman had fairly staked his veracity against some positive fact asserted in the Two last Chapters of my History. At last I perceived that he has absolutely denied ¹¹⁷ that any thing can be gathered from the Epistles of St. Cyprian, or from his treatise De Unitate Ecclesiae, to which I had referred, to justify my account of the spiritual pride and licentious manners of some of the Confessors. ¹¹⁸ As the numbers of the Epistles are not the same in the edition of Pamelius and in that of Fell, the Critic may be excused for mistaking my quotations, if he will acknowledge that he was ignorant of ecclesiastical history, and that he never heard of the troubles excited by the spiritual pride of the Confessors, who usurped the privilege of giving letters of communion to penitent sinners. But my reference to the treatise De Unitate Ecclesiae was clear and direct; the treatise itself contains only ten pages, and the following words might be distinctly read by any person who understood the Latin language.

"Nec quisquam miretur, dilectissimi fratres, etiam de confessoribus quosdam ad ista procedere, inde quoque aliquos tam nefanda tam gravia peccare. Neque enim confessio immunem facit ab insidiis diaboli; aut contra tentationes, et pericula, et incursus atque impetus seculares adhuc in seculo positum perpetuâ securitate defendit: ceterum nunquam in confessoribus, fraudes, et stupra, et adulteria post modum videremus, quae nunc in quibusdam videntes ingemiscimus et dolemus."

This formal declaration of Cyprian, which is followed by several long periods of admonition and censure, is alone sufficient to expose the scandalous vices of some of the Confessors, and the disingenuous behaviour of my concealed adversary.

After this example, which I have fairly chosen as one of the most specious and important of his objections, the candid Reader would excuse me if from this moment I declined the Gentleman's acquaintance. But as two topics have occurred, which are intimately connected with the subject of the preceding sheets, I have inserted each of them in its proper place, as the conclusion of the fourth article of my answers to Mr. Davis, and of the first article of my reply to the confederate Doctors, Chelsum and Randolph.

It is not without some mixture of mortification and regret, that I now look back on the number of hours which I have consumed, and the number of pages which I have filled, in vindicating my literary and moral character from the charge of wilful Misrepresentations, gross Errors, and servile Plagiarisms. I cannot derive any triumph or consolation from the occasional advantages which I may have gained over three adversaries, whom it is impossible for me to consider as objects either of terror or of esteem. The spirit of resentment, and every other lively sensation, have long since been extinguished; and the pen would long since have dropped from my weary hand, had I not been

¹¹³Remarks, p. 100

¹¹⁴Remarks, p. 15.

¹¹⁵Remarks, p.111.

¹¹⁶Remarks, p. 72-88.

¹¹⁷Remarks, p. 90,91.

¹¹⁸Gibbon Chapter 16 Note 91.

supported in the execution of this ungrateful task, by the consciousness, or at least by the opinion, that I was discharging a debt of honour to the Public and to myself. I am impatient to dismiss, and to dismiss FOR EVER, this odious controversy, with the success of which I cannot surely be elated; and I have only to request, that, as soon as my Readers are convinced of my innocence, they would forget my Vindication.

Bentinck-Street, February 3, 1779.

NB. If any slips of the pen, or errors of the press, should still remain in this second Edition, I must make my appeal, not to the candour of my Adversaries, but to the indulgence of the Public.

Postscript to the First Edition

While the sheets of this Vindication were in the press, I was informed that an anonymous pamphlet, under the title of A Few Remarks, &c. had been published against my History in the course of the last summer. The unknown writer has thought proper to distinguish himself by the emphatic, yet vague, appellation of A Gentleman: but I must lament that he has not considered, with becoming attention, the duties of that respectable character. I am ignorant of the motives which can urge a man of a liberal mind, and liberal manners, to attack without provocation, and without tenderness, any work which may have contributed to the information, or even to the amusement of the public. But I am well convinced, that the author of such a work, who boldly gives his name and his labours to the world, imposes on his adversaries the fair and honourable obligation of encountering him in open day-light, and of supporting the weight of their assertions by the credit of their names. The effusions of wit, or the productions of reason, may be accepted from a secret and unknown hand. The critic who attempts to injure the reputation of another, by strong imputations which may possibly be false should renounce the ungenerous hope of concealing behind a mask the vexation of disappointment, and the guilty blush of detection.

After this remark, which I cannot make without some degree of concern, I shall frankly declare, that it is not my wish or my intention to prosecute with this *Gentleman* a literary altercation. There lies between us a broad and unfathomable gulph, and the heavy mist of prejudice and superstition, which has in a great measure been dispelled by the free inquiries of the present age, still continues to involve the mind of my Adversary. He fondly embraces those phantoms (for instance, an imaginary Pilate ¹¹⁹), which can scarcely find a shelter in the gloom of an Italian convent; and the resentment which he points against me, might frequently be extended to the most enlightened of the PROTESTANT, or, in his opinion, of the HERETICAL cities. His observations are divided into a number of unconnected paragraphs, each of which contains some quotation from my History, and the angry, yet commonly trifling expression of his disapprobation and displeasure. Those sentiments I cannot hope to remove; and as the religious opinions of this *Gentleman* are principally founded on the infallibility of the Church ¹²⁰, they are not calculated to make a very deep impression on the mind of an English reader. The view of *facts* will be materially affected by the contagious influence of *doctrines*. The man who refuses to judge of the conduct of Lewis XIV. and Charles V. towards their Protestant subjects ¹²¹, declares himself incapable of distinguishing the limits of persecution and toleration. The devout Papist, who has implored on his knees the intercession of St. Cyprian, will seldom presume to examine the actions of the Saint by the rules of historical evidence and of moral propriety. Instead of the homely likeness which I had exhibited of the Bishop of Carthage, my Adversary has substituted a life of Cyprian ¹²², full of what the French call *anction*, and the English, *canting* (See Jortin's Remarks, Vol.ii. p. 239.): to which I can only reply, that those who are dissatisfied with the principles of Mosheim and Le Clerc, must view with eyes very different from mine, the Ecclesiastical History of the third century. It would be an *endless* discussion (*endless* in every sense of the word), were I to examine the cavils which start up and expire in every page of this criticism, on the inexhaustible topic of opinions, characters, and intentions. Most of the instances which are here produced, are of so brittle a substance that they fall in pieces as soon as they are touched: and I searched for some time before I was able to discover an example of some moment where the *Gentleman* had fairly staked his veracity against some positive fact asserted in the two last Chapters of my History. At last I perceived that he has absolutely denied ¹²³ that any thing can be gathered from the Epistles of St. Cyprian, or from his treatise *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, to which I had referred, to justify my account of the spiritual pride and licentious manners of some of the Confessors ¹²⁴. As the *numbers* of the Epistles are not the same in the edition of Pamelius and that of Fell, the Critic may be excused for mistaking my quotations, if he will acknowledge that he was ignorant of ecclesiastical history, and that he never heard of the troubles excited by the spiritual pride of the Confessors, who usurped the privilege of giving letters of communion to penitent sinners. But my reference to the treatise *De Unitate Ecclesiae* was clear and direct; the treatise itself contains only ten pages, and the following words might be distinctly read by any person who understood the Latin language.

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¹²⁰Remarks p.15.

¹²¹Id. p.111.

¹²²Id. p.72-88.

¹²³Remarks, p. 90, 91.

¹²⁴Gibbon, p. 661, Note 91

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I stand accused, though not indeed by Mr Davis, for profanely depreciating the promised Land, as well as the chosen People. The Gentleman without a name has placed this charge in the front of his battle, ¹²⁵ and if my memory does not deceive me, it is one of the few remarks in Mr Apthorpe's book, which have any immediate relation to my History They seem to consider in the light of a reproach, and of an unjust reproach, the idea which I had given of Palestine, as of a territory scarcely superior to Wales in extent and fertility; ¹²⁶ and they strangely convert a geographical observation into a theological error. When I recollect that the imputation of a similar error was employed by the implacable Calvin, to precipitate and to justify the execution of Servetus, I must applaud the felicity of this country, and of this age, which has disarmed, if it could not mollify, the fierceness of ecclesiastical criticism (see *Dictionaire Critique de Chaffeupié*, tom. iv. p. 223).

As I had compared the narrow extent of Phoenicia and Palestine with the important blessings which those celebrated countries had diffused over the rest of the earth, their minute size became an object not of censure but of praise.

Ingentes animos angusto in pectore versant.

The precise measure of Palestine was taken from Templeman's Survey of the Globe: he allows to Wales 7011 square English miles, to the Morea, or Peloponnesus, 7220, to the Seven United Provinces 7546, and to Judaea or Palestine 7600. The difference is not very considerable, and if any of these countries has been magnified beyond its real size, Asia is more liable than Europe to have been affected by the inaccuracy of Mr Templeman's maps. To the authority of this modern survey, I shall only add the ancient and weighty testimony of Jerom, who passed in Palestine above thirty years of his life. From Dan to Bershebah, the two fixed and proverbial boundaries of the Holy Land, he reckons no more than one hundred and sixty miles (*Hieronym. ad Dardanum*, tom. iii. p. 66), and the breadth of Palestine cannot by any expedient be stretched to one half of its length (see *Reland, Palestin. 1. ii. c. 5. p. 425*).

The degrees and limits of fertility cannot be ascertained with the strict simplicity of geographical measures. Whenever we speak of the productions of the earth, in different climates, our ideas must be relative, our expressions vague and doubtful; nor can we always distinguish between the gifts of Nature and the rewards of Industry. The Emperor Frederick II., the enemy and the victim of the Clergy, is accused of saying, after his return from his Crusade, that the God of the Jews would have despised his promised land, if he had once seen the fruitful realms of Sicily and Naples (See *Giannone Istoria Civile del Regno di Napoli*, tom. ii. p. 245). This raillery, which malice has perhaps falsely imputed to Frederick, is inconsistent with truth and piety; yet it must be confessed, that the soil of Palestine does not contain that inexhaustible, and as it were spontaneous, principle of fecundity, which, under the most unfavourable circumstance, has covered with rich harvests the banks of the Nile, the fields of Sicily, or the plains of Poland. The Jordan is the only navigable river of Palestine: a considerable part of the narrow space is occupied, or rather lost, in the Dead Sea, whose horrid aspect inspires every sensation of disgust, and countenances every tale of horror. The districts which border on Arabia partake of the sandy quality of the adjacent desert. The face of the country, except the sea-coast and the valley of the Jordan, is covered with mountains, which appear for the most part as naked and barren rocks; and in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem there is a real scarcity of the two elements of earth and water (See *Maundrel's Travels*, p. 65, and *Reland Palestin. tom. i. p. 238-395*). These disadvantages, which now operate in their fullest extent, were formerly corrected by the labours of a numerous people, and the active protection of a wise government. The hills were clothed with rich beds of artificial mould, the rain was collected in vast cisterns, a supply of fresh water was conveyed by pipes and aqueducts to the dry lands, the breed of cattle was encouraged in those parts which were not adapted for tillage, and almost every spot

¹²⁵Remarks, Page 1.

¹²⁶Gibbon p. 53

was compelled to yield some production for the use of the inhabitants. (See the same testimonies and observations of Maundrel and Reland.)

Pater ipse colendi Haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque per artem Movit agros; curi acuens mortalia corda Nec torpere gravi passus SUA REGNA veterno.

Such are the useful victories which have been achieved by MAN on the lofty mountains of Switzerland, along the rocky coast of Genoa, and upon the barren hills of Palestine; and since Wales has flourished under the influence of English freedom, that rugged country has surely acquired some share of the same industrious merit and the same artificial fertility. Those Critics who interpret the comparison of Palestine and Wales as a tacit libel on the former, are themselves guilty of an unjust satire against the latter, of those countries. Such is the injustice of Mr Apthorpe and of the anonymous Gentleman: but if Mr Davis (as we may suspect from his name) is himself of Cambrian origin, his patriotism on this occasion has protected me from his zeal.

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Yet I shall not attempt to conceal a formidable army of Christians and even of Martyrs, which is ready to inlist under the banners of the confederate Doctors, if they will accept their service. As a specimen of the extravagant legends of the middle age, I had produced the instance of ten thousand Christian soldiers supposed to have been crucified on Mount Ararat, by the order either of Trajan or Hadrian. ¹²⁷ For the mention and for the confutation of this story, I had appealed to a Papist and a Protestant, to the learned Tillemont (*Mem. Ecclesiast. torn. ii. part ii. p. 438*), and to the diligent Geddes (*Miscellanies, vol. ii. p. 203*), and when Tillemont was not afraid to say that there are few histories which appear more fabulous, I was not ashamed of dismissing the Fable with silent contempt. We may trace the degrees of fiction as well as those of credibility; and the impartial Critic will not place on the same level the baptism of Philip and the donation of Constantine. But in considering the crucifixion of the ten thousand Christian soldiers, we are not reduced to the necessity of weighing any internal probabilities, or of disproving any external testimonies. This legend, the absurdity of which must strike every rational mind, stands naked and unsupported by the authority of any writer who lived within a thousand years of the age of Trajan, and has not been able to obtain the poor sanction of the uncorrupted Martyrologies which were framed in the most credulous period of Ecclesiastical History. The two Protestant Doctors will probably reject the unsubstantial present which has been offered them: yet there is one of my adversaries, the anonymous Gentleman, who boldly declares himself the votary of the ten thousand Martyrs, and challenges me

”to discredit a FACT which hitherto by many has been looked upon as well established.” ¹²⁸

It is pity that a prudent confessor did not whisper in his ear, that, although the martyrdom of these military Saints, like that of the eleven thousand Virgins, may contribute to the edification of the faithful, these wonderful tales should not be rashly exposed to the jealous and inquisitive eye of those profane Critics, whose examination always precedes, and sometimes checks, their Religious Assent.

FINIS.

¹²⁷Gibbon Chapter 16 Note 74,

¹²⁸Chelsum's Remarks, p. 65,66,67.