J. J. Coleridge, 171, Berner’s Street

The MSS. Notes by W. Coleridge.
and it is added, "The current of zeal and devotion, as it was "contracted into a narrow channel, ran with the strength, and "sometimes with the fury, of a torrent." i. 538.

What are we to understand by all this? Does Mr Gibbon speak in his own character, or in that of an unbeliever?

Was it reasonable that the Jews should associate with the Mosaical institutions a mythology unsupported by proof, and whose usurped authority the wisest amongst the Heathens had disclaimed; and would it not have been absurd for them to have assumed any part of a garb which did not fit easy on those who had long used it?

This, however, is not all. The Jews could not associate the "elegant" mythology of the Greeks with the institutions of "Moses;" for the Greeks were Polytheists, and the Jews professed pure Theism. Now, I should wish to know, how the belief and worship of many gods could be harmoniously united with the belief and worship of the One God? It is hard then to accuse that unfortunate people of fullness and obstinacy, for not endeavouring to accomplish impossibilities.

Of old, indeed, they went a considerable length in the way of accommodation. They resorted to Egypt, Phcenicia, and Syria, to the magazines from which the Greeks got the "elegancies" of their mythology, and with Jehovah they associated any other divinity whose worship happened to be fashionable amongst the neighbouring nations: for they vainly imagined, that the One and SELF-EXISTENT, when he condescended to be, in an especial manner, the God of a particular people, would communicate his honour to idols, the representation of deified men, or of material objects.

prejudices of their subjects; and he remarks, that "the polite Augustus condescended "to give orders, that sacrifices should be offered for his prosperity, in the temple of "Jerusalem." Decline and Fall, i. 538.

B

If
Luther at first rejected the authority of the Apocalypse, which
the church of Rome herself acknowledged *.

* There are different prefaces to the Apocalypse prefixed to different editions of
Luther's translation of the Bible.

The editions of Luther's translation of the Bible which contain his original preface
to the Apocalypse, are not to be found in Britain; at least they have been searched
for without success, as well in the Bodleian Library as in the British Museum.

By the favour of a worthy and eminent person, whom I am not at liberty to
name, I have obtained from the Divinity Professor at Helmstadt the following accurate
version of what Luther says of the Apocalypse in his first edition, 1522.


"De hoc libro pariter tum cuique salutum reclinu judicium, nec semper cuique
sententiam aut opinionem obstrucere cupio. Tantum declaro quid mihi videatur.
Equidem pluris defendor, cur neque Apostolicum cenfam, neque Propheticum.
Primum, idque maximum, dubium inde ortur, quod Apostoli non vidi inhereire,
sec perficuis ac differis verbis vaticinari solent, quemadmodum etiam Petrus, Paulus,
Christus in evangelio; atque ita munus apostolicurn decebat, perficui et citra
imaginis aut vidi, de Christo et gestis ejus loqui.

Preretere, nemo Prophetarum Veteris, sedem Novi Testamenti, ita totus ess in vidi
atque imaginibus, ut viro posset quin quarto libro Ebrae illum similim statuam, neque
omnino vestigium inspirationis sanctioris reperiam.

Accedunt, quod, ut mihi quidem videatur, nihilium fuit libro arrogat, illumque e-
xixius, quam in alioullo libro ex numero sanctorum (qui multo majoris erant momenti)
factum ess, commendat, subjucetam comminationem, qui quidquam adeomens de eo,
de illo etiam Deum admittere esse, &c. contra ca, beatos fore, qui contenta observa-
tionem; quamvis nemo quid continent esse, nemum observare, posset, et perinde sit,
ac si totum non haberemus, multque alii finis librini observanti longe praebemus.

Fuerunt etiam ex patribus olim multi, qui librum hunc rejeceirent; et quamquam
Hieronymus in eo commendando verborum ess, illumque, ultra omnem predicationem,
sublime effici, inimo tota mysteria continere quam verba, affirmat, fidem tamen
dicto facere non potuerit, et alius quoque locis in laudando liberalior esse soleat.

Denique euloget ita licebit de hoc libro judicare, quemadmodum animo se ferri
sentier. Meus quidem animus parum cum isthoc libro congruuit; mihique ad tanti
non faciendum hae ratio sufficit, quod nec doceri, nec agnoscere in eo videam Christum;
in quo tanum prime cernuntur partes Apostoli, quemadmodum, Act. 1.
"Teles mihi estes," posuitulat. Itaque coe teneto libros, qui mihi Christum exhibeunt,
claro ac purae spectandum."

The
CHAPTER II.

Afterwards, indeed, he seems to have inclined more to the received opinion: but still it is plain, from the style of his later prefaces, and from the apologies made for him by his followers*, that Luther never had an uncommon veneration for the mysterious book.

The other great reformer, Calvin, had no doubts as to the authority of the Apocalypse, yet he cautiously abstained from writing any commentaries on it. Nay more, although in his Insti-

The very same words occur in the edition 1524.—But in the edition 1535, the strong passages are omitted, and the book is acknowledged to be divine, with some doubt, however, about its author, and with the offer of an hypothesis by which the visions might be interpreted.

In a later edition he thus speaks: "The third kind of prophecy is that which foretells by bare images and figures without interpretation, like this book of the Ap-

"prophecy. So long as such prophecy receives no certain interpretation, it is a hidden and dumb prophecy, unprofitable and unfruitful to Christians. And thus it has hitherto fared with this book. Many, indeed, have attempted to explain it, but still they have advanced nothing certain; and they have rather hatched out of their own fancies a variety of things incoherent and incongruous. On account of such uncertain interpretations and hidden enigmas, I have hitherto left it untouched; and this the more especially, because some of the ancient fathers thought it was not written by John the Apostle. See Esch. Hœb. Ecles. iii. 25. For my part, I leave the matter thus doubtful, that no one may be hindered to believe the book to be the work of St John, or to do as he chooses."

In another preface to the same book, Luther speaks more favourably of it, but still in general terms; and he concludes thus: "If the Scriptures ought always to be read with humility, modesty, and reverence, such a frame of mind is peculiarly requisite for the perusal of this book, that we may not sink into an abyss of the dreams and fancies, as many inquisitive men have lately done, who imagine that they have searched out all those secrets which God hath referred to himself, until he shall gradually disclose their meaning, so far as his own glory and our welfare require." These versions have been communicated to me by a respectable friend, on whose skill in the German language I can rely.

* "Lutherum quod attinet, quicquid alius scripsit in veteri prefatione, in ea sibi que hodie in codicibus legitur nihil de Apocalypsi afferit aliud, quia in dubio et relinquere utrum fit Joannis Apostoli, quod nonnulli ex vetustioribus patribus id in se hincuntant, nihil tamen hoc ipsi se prejudicari velles aliis." Chr. Kestel, de canon. Script. sanct. c. 18.
CHAPTER II.

...he laboured to prove that the Pope, or rather Papal dominion, was Antichrist, yet he produced no passage from the Apocalypse as tending to support that favourite tenet.*

We may now conclude, from the evidence produced, that neither Luther nor Calvin ever used this ally against the see of Rome; and therefore Mr Gibbon will allow us to add some words to his proposition, and then it will run thus: "The advantage of turning those mysterious prophecies against the see of Rome, was rejected or disregarded by Luther and Calvin, the chief leaders amongst the Protestants; but it inspired the other Protestants with uncommon veneration for so useful an ally."

Mr Gibbon must admit the fairness of this addition, for the truth of it has been proved; and yet the addition does so much impair his intended inference, that, had he been aware of the fact, he would, I persuade myself, have omitted this precipitated note.

The short matter is this: the Protestants in general, notwithstanding the doubts and reserve of their leaders, admitted the authority of the Apocalypse, as they found it fully and unambiguously established; and it would have been the height of absurdity for them to have attempted to expel from the sacred canon, a book, whose prophecies seemed to justify their secession from the church of Rome †.

* "Quant. S. Jean. cft reprins par l'ange, de ce qu'il s'efloit agenouillé devant lui, Apoc. v. 14. Infl. l. i. c. 12. § 3.

† Perhaps Mr Gibbon meant to say no more than what is here affirmed. If so, he has expressed himself in words ill-chosen, and of dubious interpretation. If we hold the Apocalypse to be, in plain language, an undigested fiction, it remains for Mr Gibbon, an avowed Protestant, to explain how it should have become an useful ally to the Protestant cause.
CHAPTER III.

We know nothing of the time and manner in which the gospel was originally propagated amongst nations ignorant of the Greek and Roman languages, and of that dialect of Syria familiar to the Apostles, as inhabitants of Palestine; and therefore it would be presumptuous to say, how the gift of tongues was exercised amongst those nations, or when it ceased.

Another of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, was that of the discerning of spirits.

"Amongst the various endowments of the church, some of which were to convict gain-sayers, and others to edify believers, there was one of the latter kind of special use to support the dignity, and to distinguish the divine original of all the rest. And this the Apostle calls the discerning of spirits; a virtue which, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear in the poet, laid bare the deformity of imposture. With this Peter detected Simon the magician, and Paul confounded Elymas the sorcerer."

But when the thing itself had ceased, the pretence to inspi-

...
CHAPTER III.

ejected out of them, while, in truth, they were, without human means, relieved from a state of lunacy, it does not follow, that no miraculous power was displayed in their cure.

The hypothesis here suggested will not diminish the number of the cures, although it may remove some of them from one class into another.

This leads us to consider "the miraculous power exerted in the "healing of diseases."

And here it must be premised, that the number of the miracles supposed to have been wrought in the second and third centuries, would not be diminished, although some of them should have been wrought on lunatics, and not on persons possessed. For it is no less a miracle to cure lunacy, at once, and by no other means but prayer, than it is to expel evil spirits. So, if the observations just now made have any weight, the result will be, that the primitive Christians more rarely expelled evil spirits, and more frequently cured natural diseases, than they are reported to have done.

Mighty things are said of the power of imagination; but that it should instantaneously restore lunatics to a sound mind, is something so very incredible*, that he who can persuade himself to believe it, will have small cause for insulting the Christians on account of their easy faith.

The ecclesiastical writers of the second and third centuries invariably assert, that many diseases were healed by the prayers of the Christians. As they often speak on the credit of others, and not from their own observation, it is possible that, in some of their reports, there may be circumstances exaggerated, and even mistakes; and it must be admitted, that their evidence loses much

* There may, possibly, be some very rare examples of this; but I speak, as one ought to speak on such occasions, of daily experience, and the ordinary course of things.
CHAPTER III.

Mr Gibbon steps beyond Dr Middleton's conjecture, and supposes that there was no cure at all; but that Severus just persuaded himself that he got "some benefit" by oil with which "one of his slaves anointed him." Nay more, Mr Gibbon leaves it uncertain, whether this benefit, however small or ambiguous, was of a "spiritual nature," or something which merely respected the health of the patient.

Notwithstanding the authority of Dr Middleton, Mr Gibbon, and many other writers, I incline to think that the cure was wrought, or supposed to have been wrought, on Euhodus, and not on Severus; and that Severus having heard of the relief which his favourite had obtained, sought after Proculus, and kept him about his person.

The words in Tertullian may as well imply, that Proculus cured Euhodus, as that he cured Severus.

When the phrase "Proculus requiescit" is considered, it seems inconsistent with the notion of Proculus having cured Severus himself. The Emperor, had he been cured by oil which Proculus administered, would have had no occasion to seek after or inquire for his physician.

It is probable that hitherto my readers, in general, will see no great cause to controvert the facts and circumstances which I have endeavoured to establish.

But now there occurs an observation, which, if well founded,

on medicines administered. "Mensa benedicta," in the language of Jerom's age, is "a table at which grace has been said," and "cibus benedictus" is "food for which a blessing has been asked," not "a consecrated table," or "consecrated food."

It is impossible to discover the source of this anecdote. Tertullian says no such thing; and he is equally silent as to "some benefit, perhaps of a spiritual nature, which Severus persuaded himself" that he had received from the anointing with oil. Indeed, he says, which Mr Gibbon has overlooked, that, in the times of Severus, eminent persons of both sexes professed the Christian religion, but he makes no mention of Proculus as a Christian. He,

might
CHAPTER III.

might supersede all further inquiry into the nature of the cure wrought by Proculus.

One of the writers in the controversy concerning The miraculous powers, thus speaks: "Tertullian, who relates the story, makes no mention at all of a miracle in the case. His words are these:

"A Christian named Proculus, cured the Emperor Severus of a certain distemper by the use of oil; for which service the Emperor was favourable to the Christians, and kept Proculus, as long as he lived, in his palace."

If Tertullian, who lived at the time when the cure was performed, made no mention at all of a miracle, it would be preposterous for us, in the eighteenth century, to attempt to discover more in the story than this, that Proculus cured Euhodos or Severus by oil.

It appears, however, from the context, although not from Dr Middleton's quotation, that Tertullian supposed that the cure by oil, and the cures of the epilepsy and other diseases which he mentions, were all of the same nature, the operation of God through the ministry of the Christians.

We learn from the work of Serenus Sammonicus, a celebrated physician at the court of Severus, that oil of various sorts

* Defence of Dr Middleton's Free Inquiry, by Frederick Tull, A. M. p. 98.
† De Sereni Sammonicico de Medicina liber.—H. Stephan. d. Med. princeps confounds him with his son, who was preceptor to the younger Gordian, and who left in legacy to his pupil a library of sixty-two thousand volumes, "Jud. Capitolinorum." Gordianus junior, p. 159. that very library of which Mr Gibbou thus speaks, "Twenty-two concubines, and a library of sixty-two thousand volumes, attested the variety of his inclinations; and from the productions which he left behind him, it appears that the former as well as the latter were designed for use rather than for ornament," vol. i. p. 215. Pity that Gordian had not collected four thousand volumes in addition to the legacy; then it might have been said, that for every three thousand of volumes in his library, he had one concubine and three ballards, and the antithesis would have been complete.
"of them considerable too: and, if my testimony be admitted as credible, I myself have seen them.""

Another passage, in the same work, is remarkable on many accounts. Origen says, "I am of opinion that the miracles of Jesus, which Celsus calumnioulsy says he learnt among the Egyptians to perform, afford evidence of the Holy Spirit having appeared in the likeness of a dove; and, in support of my opinion, I argue not only from them, but also, with probable grounds, from those which the Apostles of Jesus performed.

And indeed, without the operation of miracles, the Apostles could not have moved men, who had new notions and new doctrines proposed to them, to abandon the religious rites of their country, and, with hazards even unto death, to admit what those teachers taught: and still the vestiges of that Holy Spirit, which appeared in the likeness of a dove, are preferred among Christians; for they expel ☼ demons, and perform many cures; and, as the word [9590] willeth, they foresee some things: and, however much Celsus, or the Jew whom he has introduced, may scoff at it, this shall be said, that many persons have been converted to Christiinity, as if against their will, through some inspiration, acting with energy upon them.

* "Εν τοις ἢλθεν μετὰ τὴν Ἰωάννην ἑπετμείνας, ἦλθεν καταλαμπμένος πάντως. Μηδὲν ἐξελάχω τὸ μὲν πᾶσαν ἀφροδίτινα ἀδιακός ἑωρακός, ἀλαθὴς μὴν εἰσήγητο τὸ ἦλθεν τῇ τινὶ ζώοις ἐπὶ πάντα, τὸ γὰρ μετὰ τὰ νέα ἐκεῖνα, κατάκειται, ὡς τὰ γένεια: τὰ πάντα ἐκεῖνα κατάκειται, ἢ λαμβάνει Ἔρμην, ἢ ἐν παντί ἡγεῖται, ἢ τινὰ καὶ Τρώαν, ἢ τινὰ Εἰρήνην ἢ Ἡρακλῆς. Contra Celsum, L. ii. p. 62.

In the same book, p. 80, he speaks, in general terms, of persons having been healed in the name of Christ: μείζονες ἑμανθον τῇ τεκτονίᾳ τῷ Θεῷ ἑαυτῷ. Contra Celsum, L. ii. p. 62.

† The word expel is used, although not a proper translation of ἐξελάχω. The verb ἐξελάχω, however uncommon, is classical. Origen, on this occasion, has been more studious of the purity of his Greek, than of correctness in theological language. He ought not to have spoken of charms, or, rather, if the word may be admitted, of decantation.
CHAPTER III.

If all circumstances considered, what Bede relates of Cuthbert, and Bernard of Malachi, be not less credible than what Justin M. and Irenæus relate of miraculous powers in their own times, we ought not to deny them the same degree of confidence. But, before coming to that conclusion, it is fit that we should make ourselves acquainted with the nature of the stories related by Bede and Bernard.

If, under the phrase, "ecclesiastical history," the history of the New Testament be comprehended, every one acquainted with the Scriptures can decidedly answer this acute query in the affirmative.

Mr Gibbon, probably, meant to except the apostolical times from this query; but as his words are wide enough to comprehend them also, it may be fit to observe, that St Matthew affirms, that "he himself possessed the gift of miracles," for he thus speaks: "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases:" chap. x. 1. Here he affirms that Jesus bestowed the gift of miracles on the twelve Apostles; and, if the name, he mentions himself as one of that chosen number; so he must have possessed that gift of miracles which Jesus bestowed on him.

Again, St Paul positively affirms, that "he himself possessed the gift of miracles," for he thus speaks: "I am become a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles, though I be nothing. Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds;" 2 Cor. xii. 11. 12. Mr Anthony Collins is reported to have said, "I think so well of St Paul, who was both a man of sense and a gentleman, that if he had asserted that he had wrought miracles himself, I would have believed him," Biographia Britannica, v. i. p. 626, not. G., 2d edit. This anecdote, if authentic, proves that Mr Collins, although one of the shrewdest adversaries of Christianity, had read the epistles of St Paul with little attention. The gift of miracles, of which I have been speaking, must be distinguished from the other divine gifts bestowed on the Apostles, and frequently alluded to by them; as in 1 Pet. i. 12.; John, vii. 39.; xx. 22.; Apoc. i. 10. Sec. 1, 1 Cor. xiv. 18.; 2 Cor. vi. 7.; and in many other passages.

Justin M. is mentioned here, because Mr Gibbon mentions him; yet there is hardly any thing in the works of Justin M. which relates to a power of working miracles bestowed on any individual in the Christian church.
should seem, a parallel between polytheism and polygamy; and, consequently, having no relation to second marriages.

"Tertullian," says Barbeyrac, "in answering the accusations of lewdness brought against the Christians, observes, that so far from abandoning themselves to any thing of that nature, they limited to one woman the natural use of the sex in marriage; and, after he had given himself up to Montanism, he did but express the like sentiments in stronger words."

The quotation from the Apology of Tertullian is very obscure; or, to speak more properly, it is unintelligible.

Barbeyrac might have produced many passages in which Tertullian condemns, and even execrates second marriages. The very first words of his treatise de Monogamia are, "The heretics take away marriage, the carnal men reiterate it; the former do not marry at all, the latter marry more than once."

By "the heretics," he is understood to mean the followers of Marcion; and there can be no doubt that the phrase "carnal men," describes those whom, in common language, we should call "orthodox Christians," that is, those who remained within the pale of the church, instead of following Tertullian, who held

---

* ἐν τῇ ὕσσος ἐν τῷ πολλῷ ἕτοματι ἐν Θεῷ. ὡς ἐν τῷ γάμῳ ἐν πολλῷ ἐν εὐσεβείᾳ. Strom. i. iii. c. 12.

† "Tertullian, dans son Apologetique, répond aux accusations d'imprécié intentionées contre les Chrétiens, que bien loin de s'abandonner à rien d'approchant, ils bornent même à une seule femme l'usage naturel du sexe dans le mariage. Quand ce Pere est donné dans le Montanisme, il ne fait que s'exprimer plus fortement sur ce sujet." c. iv. § 16.

‡ "Christianus ad sexum nec feminae mutat." Apol. c. 48. Here some words have been either omitted or incorrectly copied by transcribers.

"Hereticis nuptias susurrit, Psysici ingerunt. Illi nec semel, illi non semel nunt." De Monogamia, in pr.

that
that Montanus was the Comforter [Paracletus] promised by our Lord*

From the tenor of Tertullian’s treatise de Monogamia, it is plain that the Christians of his age, or, at least, of his country, entered into second marriages without scruple or hesitation, and that he himself was imbued in fanaticism and hereby. In evidence of this, some passages are added in a note †. In general, they are

It was bold in Tertullian thus to apply a phrase, which St Paul uses to describe those who have no right to the name of Christians. Ψυχος ας άνθρωπος και άγγελος το θανάτος Των Χριστιάνων. I. Cor. ii. 14. That by Ψυχος Tertullian meant the Christians, is plain from his own words, adversus Ptolemaion, c. 1. *Et nos quidem poeta e aegypto Paracletum atque defensor dictum est ait Ψυχος.* It may be observed, in passing, that Tertullian takes the divine mission of Montanus for granted, and imagines that the whimsies of that visionary ought to give law to the Apostles.

† "[Ψυχος] Monogamiae disciplinam in harenae exprombat, nec ulla magis ex causa Paracleta negotia coguntur, quin in eum existimant novar disciplinam institutum, solum, et quidem durissima illis, ut jam de huius primum confessionem fit in general retinactus, an eum Paracletum aliquid talem docuit, quod nee novum deputari possit adversus Catholicae teadidinem, aut non alium adversus levens (sic) canem Domini? De utroque autem ipse Dominus pronuntiavit, dicens [i. d. isni]

enim, adhibe multa habebo qua leguar ad vos, sed non dixi potissimum portare ca: quum venerate Spiritus Sanctus, ille vos ducet in omnem veritatem: fatis utique præter si sem o sciam illum que est nova existimari poaller, ut nunquam retro edita, non aliqa quasio onerosa, ut idcirco non edita, "d. Monogamiae, c. 2. After having vainly endeavored to elude the arguments in favor of second marriages drawn from the doctrines of St Paul, Tertullian has recourse to a desperate hypothesis: "ita res exigeat, ut [Paulus] omnibus omnim facer, quos omnes lucerencam, parturient illis donec formenuitur Christus in ipsis, et caelestibus, tanquam in DataContext, parvulos illuc.

descendo quem dam professis, non per imperium, (si uere enim indulgere, alius jubere), proinde temporalem licentiam permittens, demod ubi etiam prope infirmat.

tem carnis, quae nostrom Moyeis repudianti proper duritiam emula. Et hic itaque reddamus supplementum seminis illius: si enim Christus abulitique quod Moyes praecipit, quia ab initio non fuit dies, nec de idea ubi venire virtute reputabant

Christus, cui non et Paracletus abulitique, quod Paulus indulgit? quia et secunque

* dum
are too absurd to admit of a translation, which might offend many, and could edify none. I venture, however, to translate one passage, which plainly indicates the situation of the unfortunate man’s mind. “Dido, the Queen of Carthage, shall rise up in judgment against Christian women; for she, being a fugitive in a foreign soil, and about to become the chief foundress of a mighty state, had good reason to feck to be united in wedlock,

dum matrimonium ab initio non fuit, nec ideo suspicat habendus sit, quas spiritus alienus, tantum ut Deo et Christo dignum sit quod superinducitur. Si Deo et Christo dignum fuit duritiam cordis tempore expleto comperere, cur non dignum sit et Deo et Christo tempore collectio ducere? Si iustum est, matrimonium non separari, utique et non iterare honetum sit. Denique apud seculum ursumque in bona disciplina deputatur, aliquid concordiae nominis, aliquid pudicitiae. Regnavit duritiam usque ad Christum, regnavit et infirmitas carnis usque ad Paracletum. Nova lex abutuit repudiwm, habuit quod auferret: nova prophetia, secundum matrimonium, non minus repudium prioris, sed facilius duritia cordis cessit, quam infirmitas carnis,” ib. c. 14. There is much more raving to the like purpose, and the tendency of the whole is to prove that the perfection of Christian morals is only to be found in the rhapsodies of Montanus.

Motheim says, “Montanus was not so devoid of reason as to suppose himself to have been the Paraclete, or the Holy Spirit; he only affirmed, that the Holy Spirit spake by him: But the obscure language of Tertullian, who very often calls Montanus by that name, has been the sole cause of the inaccurate manner in which both ancients and moderns have treated this subject.” [Quod vero et veteres et recentiores sententiam fuisse ambiguam, nec fatis hue soliter expresserunt, Tertulliani uli obsecritas effortit, qui Montanum sperham Paracletum nominavit: cujus quidem verba et sermonis genus imitati sunt.] d. Reb. Christian. ante Constat. M. p. 413. After having thus contradicted every body, and laid all the blame on the obscurity of Tertullian’s language, he thus concludes: “All that remains for us to suppose is, that Montanus was deceived both in body and mind, and perhaps might be charged with a pious fraud.” [Hoc unum relinquitur, ut animo hominem et corpore etiam agrotaffe credamus, nihil fortis fraudis eum arguere velimus.] And thus Motheim unravels his whole web; for, if we suppose Montanus to have been disordered in his judgement, and suspect him of knavery, all that Tertullian and other writers have said of him will be abundantly probable.
Chapter V.

Be this as it may, the human character having returned by degree to its natural level, "resumes those passions that seem the "most adapted to its present condition." And now we may expect to see the Christians act just as other men, neither exalted, by enthufiasm, above the state of humanity, nor junk, by the like enthufiasm, below the standard of right reafon.

The fifth secondary caufe of the rapid progres of Chriftianity is faid to have been "the union and discipline of the Chriftian re-"public, which gradually formed an independent and increafing "state in the heart of the Roman empire." What Mr Gibbon had faid just before, explains the meaning of the word gradually; for he observes, that "the Chriftian religion grew up in silence "and obscurity."

And here a quefion arifes: If the union and discipline of the church were established in confequence of the human character returning by degree to its natural level; if the Chriftian religion grew up in silence and obscurity; and if it gradually formed an independent and increafing republic; how are these things confient with its rapid progres? Yet the rapid progres of Chriftianity is the fact admitted, and the purpose of Mr Gibbon's inquiry is to difcover what were its secondary caufes.

Every intelligent and attentive reader will obferv, that, in treating of this fifth caufe, Mr Gibbon does not confine his reafhears to the early times of Chriftianity, but that he "blends "in eloquent confusion" the events which are faid to have happened at different times.

* Mr Gibbon paints after a fketch given by Voltaire. "Les affemblées secrètes, "qui braveent d'abord, dans des caves et dans des grottes, l'autorité des Empereurs "Romains, formèrent peu à peu un état dans l'état." Secrle de Louis XIV.

† This is an expression which Mr Gibbon employs in speaking of Burnet, the au-"tor of the Theory of the Earth, i. 565. and not without caufe; for, in flowery lan-"guage and bad reafoning, that work can hardly be paralleled.

Thus
CHAPTER V.

189

disliked war as a trade, and that they had no ambition to rise to military commands*.

It seems that such men were not sufficiently occupied; and therefore, in order to amuse their idleness, or gratify their love of action, they invented ecclesiastical government.

Granting, for a moment, that the primitive Christians were not only excluded from civil offices of trust and emolument, but that they held all war to be unlawful, and absolutely refused to bear arms; it remains to be explained, why a deep-laid and wide plan of ecclesiastical policy should have been devised, perfected in, and executed by such men.

Experience does not lead us to the conclusion which Mr Gibbon has formed. The Menonites, for instance, and the people called Quakers, are debarred, by their principles, from civil offices; and they hold all war, defensive as well as offensive, to be unlawful; yet their love of action never excited them to undertake what the primitive Christians, in circumstances supposed to be similar, are said to have accomplished.

Mr Gibbon, in treating of ecclesiastical government, seems to hold the antiquity of what he calls Episcopal Presbyters: But I know not whether the Old Diffenters of England will chance to admit him as a profyte from Episcopacy, or rely on him as their champion in defence of the classical form; for the controversy in his hands is equally poised.

He thinks that the Episcopal form of government was introduced before the end of the first century; and, as he explains himself

* "The situation of the first Christians," says Mr Gibbon, "coincided very happily with their religious scruples; and their aversion to an active life contributed rather to excuse them from the service, than to exclude them from the honours of the state and army," i. 591. and yet his own book demonstrates, that in the decline of the Roman empire, no rank, however obscure, excluded men from those honours.

Much, very much, may be urged against this proof, by examples. Mr. Gibbon himself, almost demonstrably, makes the admirable expansion on inferior of the Quakers, and has before this time considered the influence power of various causes, the different effects of new sects of Dissenters had on each other, and the opposite state army to produce
CHAPTER V.

by the Apostles themselves, were, for some time, consult-

ed.*

Granting that Mr Gibbon did right in pronouncing positively where Mosheim hesitated, yet still it must be obvious, that the independence and equality of different religious societies could never have promoted "the union of the Christian republic."

Mr Gibbon proceeds thus: "The want of discipline and hu-

man learning was supplied by the occasional adjutance of the

* "Hierofolymitane quidem ecclesie per tempus aliquot magnus fuit dignitas et

auctoritas, quod ex Actis Apostolorum patet. Antiocheni controversiam suam de

legis Mosaiæ præstantia ecclesie hujus judicio subjiciebant, Act. xv. Idem alias

felixe ecclesias, veritatemque eorum. Paulus, divinitatis lictor ad obsevandum Apostoli

munus vocatus, id tamen in præsens agens, ut se suamque disciplinam Apostolica et

cœtui Hierofolymitano probaret et commendaret, Galat. i. 18. ii. 7. 8. 9. Verum

hujus auctoritatis radix non tam in ecclesias quam Hierofolymitana, quæ nuncupat

supra reliquas eminere voluit, quàm in Apostolica Iesu Christi, quia Hierofolymitano

cœtui praeficabant, judicisque Christo rerum ad religionem pertinentium con-

stituti erant. Apostolos propriè confitebant, non Hierofolymitanorum coeptum.

Quamquam, ut verum factum, et ipse hic coeptus, absentibus etiam Apostolis, ma-

gis quæm reliquæ Christianorum familiaris, rebus in dubìs, in consilium vocari po-

terat. Multò enim plures, quàm in ceteris ecclesiis, homines erant Hierofolymis

lumine divino aliisque donis conscripti instructi, quorum non in Apostolos tan-

tum, verùm etiam in universum, qui tum Christum ibi profitebatur, populum Spiritu

Sancto mirabiliter delapsus erat, Act. ii. i. &c. Non dubito, Ephesios eccle-

siis, dum S. Johannes in illa via, parem inter Asiaticas auctoritatem iussit;

innocentissime ecclesiis, quibus aliquamuis Apostolorum aliquis præfuit, hunc ha-

bitum eis honoribus opinavisse ut vincente ab illis ecclesiis docendi agendi ergo ex-

emplum interdum pereant. Hoc etiam plus, nec enim prater rem difficiles ero, lar-

gior, si quis velit; concedamus nihilum omnibus ecclesiis Apostolicis, id est, il-

lius, quæ ipse Apostoli confuxerant et erudierant, hoc, per tempus aliquod, da-

sum fuisset, ut novis fortius de religionis conscientias proposerit et disputations com-


This work of Mosheim is little known with us; and, therefore, it was judged proper to print the original passage at large, that it might be compared with the translation. It is not very easy to render the verbose language of Mosheim into tolerable English.

B. B.

"Prophetis,"

verbo in the iapam, &c., in the modern language, &c., it appears the same through the same words with equal clearness, &c., and the affectionate

memorandum style of Mosheim.
"that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and
your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream
'dreams,' your young men shall see visions." For, when the
miraculous gift of tongues was bestowed, St Peter declared the
prophecy of Joel to be accomplished; although the old men had
not dreamed dreams, neither had the young men and the daugh-
ters of Jerusalem uttered prophecies, or seen visions.

I cannot discover, from Scripture, that, in the apostolical times,
boys and girls were endued with the gifts of prophecy, in any
sense of the word.

It is possible that, by "prophets," Mr Gibbon meant not "fore-
tellers of events," but "interpreters of Scripture;" for he gives
them the ambiguous appellation of "prophetical teachers."

That, in the apostolical times, persons, "without distinction
"of age or of sex," were admitted to be teachers in a public as-
sembly of Christians, may well be questioned; for it is not
clear, that boys and girls were admitted to the conferences spoken
of in i. Cor. xiv.

St Paul would not suffer married women to speak in church, or
even to propose difficulties, and ask a solution of them there.

"Let them keep silence," said he; and in support of this injunction,
he appealed to the judgement of his hearers, in these words,
"It is a shame for a woman to speak in the church."  

* Joel, ii. 28. The meaning of the prophecy, as explained by St Peter, is, "That
"the operations of the Holy Spirit shall be made manifest."
† Philip the deacon had "four daughters, virgins, [παρυφα], who prophesied,"
Acts, xxii. 9. But παρυφα properly signifies one grown up or arrived at woman's
estate; and hence was that whimsical etymology of the word devised, παρφαίον τα
παραμαθαιαν νυν ἐσται. Besides, it is not certain in what sense the daughters of
Philip are said to have prophesied.
‡ i. Cor. xiv. 34. 35; i. Tim. ii. 11. 12. On this occasion, as on others, St Paul
spake in conformity with established notions and manners. This will account for
the strong expression, "it is a shame," [ἀμὴν ἐν γυναῖκι], literally, "It is a foul deed."

From
CHAPTER V.

"to the merit than to the distress of the object, very materially " conduced to the progress of Christianity." i. 595.

So far he says well. It was reasonable for humane Pagans, when they saw the pious liberality of believers, to inquire into the nature and evidences of the Religion of Love. Such inquiries can never hurt the cause of Christianity, and, in general, are favourable to it. If, in this way, any Pagans were converted, their conversion might be said to have been owing to the virtues of the Christians.

What follows in Mr Gibbon is more exceptionable: "The Pagans," says he, "who were actuated by a sense of humanity, "while they derided the doctrines, acknowledged the benevolence "of the new sect."

It seems, then, that the humane Pagans, while they did justice to the benevolence of the new sect, continued to deride its doctrines; so that it was not by the means which I have supposed, that Christian benevolence "very materially conduced to the pro- "gress of Christianity."

Mr Gibbon adopts a different system. He says, "The prospect "of immediate relief, and of future protection, allured into the "hospital of the church many of those unhappy persons "whom the neglect of the world would have abandoned to the "miseries of want, sickness, and of old age." i. 595. That is, the Heathens, who dreaded poverty, sickness, and old age, sought that relief from the liberality of Christians which they could not expect even from the other Heathens, "who were actuated by a sense of "humanity;" and so they professed their belief in Christ!

It will be remembered, that this, according to the hypothesis of Mr Gibbon himself, could not possibly have happened in the early ages of the church, when it was composed of poor and mean persons. The Christians must have become opulent before their liberality could have bribed the Heathens to seek their protection, the protection.