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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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Duris ut ilex tonsa bipennibus

Nigræ feraci frondis in Algido

Per damna, per cædes ab ipso

Ducit opes animumque ferro.

Hor.

AS I am one, who, by my Profession, am obliged to look into all kinds of men, there are none whom I consider with so much pleasure, as those who have any thing new or extraordinary in their characters, or ways of living. For this reason I have often amused my self with Speculations on the race of people called *Jews*, many of whom I have met with in most of the considerable towns which I have passed through in the course of my travels. They are, indeed, so disseminated through all the trading parts of the world, that they are become the instruments by which the most distant nations converse with one another, and by which mankind are knit together in a general correspondence: they are like the pegs and nails in a great building, which, though they are but little valued in themselves, are absolutely necessary to keep the whole frame together.

That I may not fall into any common beaten tracks of observation, I shall consider this people in three views: first, with regard to their number; secondly, their dispersion; and, thirdly, their adherence to their religion: and afterwards endeavour to shew, first, what natural reasons, and, secondly, what providential reasons may be assigned for these three remarkable particulars.

The *Jews* are looked upon by many to be as numerous at present, as they were formerly in the land of *Canaan*.

This is wonderful, considering the dreadful slaughter made of them under some of the *Roman* Emperors, which historians describe by the death of many hundred thousands in a war; and the innumerable massacres and persecutions they have undergone in *Turkey*, as well as in all Christian nations of the world. The *Rabbins*, to express the great havoc

vock which has been sometimes made of them, tell us, after their usual manner of hyperbole, that there were such torrents of holy blood shed, as carried rocks of a hundred yards in circumference above three miles into the sea.

Their dispersion is the second remarkable particular in this people. They swarm over all the *East*, and are settled in the remotest parts of *China*: they are spread through most of the nations of *Europe* and *Africa*, and many families of them are established in the *West-Indies*: not to mention whole nations bordering on *Prestor John's* country, and some discovered in the inner parts of *America*, if we may give any credit to their own writers.

Their firm adherence to their religion, is no less remarkable than their numbers and dispersion, especially considering it as persecuted or contemned over the face of the whole earth. This is likewise the more remarkable, if we consider the frequent apostacies of this people, when they lived under their Kings, in the land of *Promise*, and within sight of their temple.

If in the next place we examine, what may be the natural reasons for these three particulars which we find in the *Jews*, and which are not to be found in any other religion or people, I can, in the first place, attribute their numbers to nothing but their constant employment, their abstinence, their exemption from wars, and, above all, their frequent marriages; for they look on celibacy as an accursed state, and generally are married before twenty, as hoping the *Messiah* may descend from them.

The dispersion of the *Jews* into all the nations of the earth, is the second remarkable particular of that people, though not so hard to be accounted for. They were always in rebellions and tumults while they had the temple and holy city in view, for which reason they have often been driven out of their old habitations in the land of *Promise*. They have as often been banished out of most other places where they have settled, which must very much disperse and scatter a people, and oblige them to seek a livelihood where they can find it. Besides, the whole people is now a race of such Merchants as are wanderers by profession, and, at the same time, are in most, if not all, places incapable of either lands or offices, that might engage them to make any part of the world their home.

This dispersion would probably have lost their religion, had it not been secured by the strength of its constitution: for they are to live all in a body, and generally within the same enclosure, to marry among themselves,

elves, and to eat no meats that are not killed or prepared their own way. This shuts them out from all table-conversation, and the most agreeable intercourses of life; and, by consequence, excludes them from the most probable means of conversion.

If, in the last place, we consider what providential reason may be assigned for these three particulars, we shall find that their numbers, dispersion, and adherence to their religion, have furnished every age, and every nation of the world, with the strongest arguments for the christian faith, not only as these very particulars are foretold of them, but as they themselves are the depositaries of these and all the other prophecies, which tend to their own confusion. Their number furnishes us with a sufficient cloud of witnesses, that attest the truth of the old bible. Their dispersion spreads these witnesses through all parts of the world. The adherence to their religion makes their testimony unquestionable. Had the whole body of *Jews* been converted to christianity, we should certainly have thought all the prophecies of the Old Testament, that relate to the coming and history of our Blessed Saviour, forged by Christians, and have looked upon them, with the prophecies of the *Sibyls*, as made many years after the events they pretend to foretell.

N^o 499. *Thursday, October 2.*

-----*Nimis uncis*
Naribus indulges-----

Perf.

MY friend WILL. HONEYCOMB has told me, for above this half year, that he had a great mind to try his hand at a *Spectator*, and that he would fain have one of his writing in my works. This morning I received from him the following Letter, which, after having rectified some little orthographical mistakes, I shall make a Present of to the public.

Dear