



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

Section IV.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597)

SECTION IV.

- I. Character of the times in which the Christian religion was propagated:
- II. And of many who embraced it.
- III. Three eminent and early instances.
- IV. Multitudes of learned men who came over to it.
- V. Belief in our Saviour's history, the first motive to their conversion.
- VI. The names of several Pagan Philosophers, who were Christian converts.

I T happened very providentially to the honour of the Christian religion, that it did not take its rise in the dark illiterate ages of the world, but at a time when arts and sciences were at their height, and when there were men who made it the business of their lives to search after truth, and sift the several opinions of Philosophers and wise men, concerning the duty, the end, and chief happiness of reasonable creatures.

II. Several of these therefore, when they had informed themselves of our Saviour's history, and examined with unprejudiced minds the doctrines and manners of his disciples and followers, were so struck and convinced, that they professed themselves of that sect; notwithstanding, by this profession in that juncture of time, they bid farewell to all the pleasures of this life, renounced all the views of ambition, engaged in an uninterrupted course of severities, and exposed themselves to publick hatred and contempt, to sufferings of all kinds, and to death itself.

III. Of this sort we may reckon those three early converts to Christianity, who each of them was a member of a Senate famous for its wisdom and learning. *Joseph the Arimathean* was of the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, *Dionysius* of the *Athenian Areopagus*, and *Flavius Clemens* of the *Roman Senate*; nay at the time of his death Consul of *Rome*. These three were so thoroughly satisfied of the truth of the Christian religion, that the first of them, according to all the reports of antiquity, died a martyr for it; as did the second, unless we disbelieve *Aristides*, his fellow-citizen and contemporary; and the third, as we are informed both by *Roman* and Christian Authors.

IV. Among

IV. Among those innumerable multitudes, who in most of the known nations of the world came over to Christianity at its first appearance, we may be sure there were great numbers of wise and learned men, beside those whose names are in the Christian records, who without doubt took care to examine the truth of our Saviour's history, before they would leave the religion of their country and of their forefathers, for the sake of one that would not only cut them off from the allurements of this world, but subject them to every thing terrible or disagreeable in it. *Tertullian* tells the *Roman* Governors, that their corporations, councils, armies, tribes, companies, the palace, senate, and courts of judicature were filled with Christians; as *Arnobius* asserts, that men of the finest parts and learning, Orators, Grammarians, Rhetoricians, Lawyers, Physicians, Philosophers, despising the sentiments they had been once fond of, took up their rest in the Christian religion.

V. Who can imagine that men of this character did not thoroughly inform themselves of the history of that person, whose doctrines they embraced? for however consonant to reason his precepts appeared, how good soever were the effects which they produced in the world, nothing could have tempted men to acknowledge him as their God and Saviour, but their being firmly persuaded of the miracles he wrought, and the many attestations of his divine mission, which were to be met with in the history of his life. This was the ground-work of the Christian religion, and, if this failed, the whole superstructure sunk with it. This point therefore, of the truth of our Saviour's history, as recorded by the Evangelists, is every where taken for granted in the writings of those, who from *Pagan* Philosophers became Christian Authors, and who, by reason of their conversion, are to be looked upon as of the strongest collateral testimony for the truth of what is delivered concerning our Saviour.

VI. Besides innumerable Authors that are lost, we have the undoubted names, works, or fragments of several *Pagan* Philosophers, which shew them to have been as learned as any unconverted heathen Authors of the age in which they lived. If we look into the greatest nurseries of learning in those ages of the world, we find in *Athens*, *Dionysius*, *Quadratus*, *Aristides*, *Athenagoras*; and in *Alexandria*, *Dionysius*, *Clemens*, *Ammonius*, *Arnobius*, and *Anatolius*, to whom we may add *Origen*; for though his father was a Christian martyr, he became, without all controversy, the most learned and able Philosopher of his age, by his education at *Alexandria*, in that famous seminary of arts and sciences.

SECTION