



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

Section VIII.

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

rent countries and conditions, who for near 300 years together made this glorious confession of their faith, in the midst of tortures, and in the hour of death: I must conclude, that they were either of another make than men are at present, or that they had such miraculous supports as were peculiar to those times of Christianity, when without them perhaps the very name of it might have been extinguished.

VII. It is certain, that the deaths and sufferings of the primitive Christians had a great share in the conversion of those learned *Pagans*, who lived in the ages of Persecution, which with some intervals and abatements lasted near 300 years after our Saviour. *Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Lactantius, Arnobius*, and others, tell us, that this first of all alarmed their curiosity, roused their attention, and made them seriously inquisitive into the nature of that religion, which could endue the mind with so much strength, and overcome the fear of death, nay raise an earnest desire of it, though it appeared in all its terrors. This they found had not been effected by all the doctrines of those Philosophers, whom they had thoroughly studied, and who had been labouring at this great point. The sight of these dying and tormented Martyrs engaged them to search into the history and doctrines of him for whom they suffered. The more they searched, the more they were convinced; till their conviction grew so strong, that they themselves embraced the same truths, and either actually laid down their lives, or were always in a readiness to do it, rather than depart from them.

SECTION VIII.

- I. *The completion of our Saviour's prophecies confirmed Pagans in their belief of the Gospel.*
- II. *Origen's observation on that of his Disciples being brought before Kings and Governours;*
- III. *On their being persecuted for their religion;*
- IV. *On their preaching the Gospel to all nations;*
- V. *On the destruction of Jerufalem, and ruin of the Jewish oeconomy.*
- VI. *These arguments strengthened by what has happened since Origen's time.*

I. **T**HE second of those extraordinary means, of great use to the learned and inquisitive *Pagans* of the three first Centuries, for evincing the truth of the history of our Saviour, was the completion of such prophecies as are recorded of him in the Evangelists. They could not indeed form any arguments from what he foretold, and was fulfilled during his life, because both the prophecy and the completion were over before they were published by the Evangelists; though, as *Origen* observes, what end could there be in forging some of these predictions, as that of *St. Peter's* denying his master, and all his Disciples forsaking him in the greatest extremity, which reflects so much shame on the great Apostle, and on all his companions? Nothing but a strict adherence to truth, and to matters of fact, could have prompted the Evangelists to relate a circumstance so disadvantageous to their own reputation; as that Father has well observed.

II. But to pursue his reflections on this subject. There are predictions of our Saviour recorded by the Evangelists, which were not completed till after their deaths, and had no likelihood of being so, when they were pronounced by our blessed Saviour. Such was that wonderful notice he gave them, that they should be brought before Governours and Kings for his sake, for a testimony against them and the *Gentiles*, *Mat. 10. 28.* with the other like prophecies, by which he foretold that his Disciples were to be persecuted. Is there any other doctrine in the world, says this Father, whose followers are punished? Can the enemies of *Christ* say, that he knew his opinions were false and impious, and that therefore he might well conjecture and foretell what would be the treatment of those persons who should embrace them? Supposing his doctrines were really such, why should this be the consequence? what likelihood that men should be brought before Kings and Governours for opinions and tenets of any kind, when this never happened even to the *Epicureans*, who absolutely denied a Providence; nor to the *Peripateticks* themselves, who laughed at the prayers and sacrifices which were made to the Divinity? Are there any but the Christians who, according to this prediction of our Saviour, being brought before Kings and Governours for his sake, are pressed to their latest gasp of breath, by their respective judges, to renounce Christianity, and to procure their liberty and rest, by offering the same sacrifices, and taking the same oaths that others did?

III. Consider the time when our Saviour pronounced those words, *Matt. 10. 32. Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before*

before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven. Had you heard him speak after this manner, when as yet his Disciples were under no such tryals, you would certainly have said within your self, If these speeches of *Jesus* are true, and if, according to his prediction, Governors and Kings undertake to ruin and destroy those who shall profess themselves his Disciples, we will believe (not only that he is a Prophet) but that he has received power from God sufficient to preserve, and propagate his religion; and that he would never talk in such a pe-remptory and discouraging manner, were he not assured that he was able to subdue the most powerful opposition, that could be made against the faith and doctrine which he taught.

IV. Who is not struck with admiration, when he represents to himself our Saviour at that time foretelling, that his Gospel should be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, or as St. *Origen* (who rather quotes the sense than the words) to serve for a conviction to Kings and people, when at the same time he finds that his Gospel has accordingly been preached to *Greeks* and *Barbarians*, to the learned and to the ignorant, and that there is no quality or condition of life able to exempt men from submitting to the doctrine of *Christ*? As for us, says this great Author, in another part of his book against *Celsus*, "When we see every day those events exactly accomplished which our Saviour foretold at so great a distance: That his Gospel is preached in all the world, *Matthew* 24. 14. That his Disciples go and teach all nations, *Matthew* 28. 19. And that those, who have received his doctrine, are brought for his sake before Governors, and before Kings, *Matthew* 10. 18. we are filled with admiration, and our faith in him is confirmed more and more. What clearer and stronger proofs can *Celsus* ask for the truth of what he spoke?"

V. *Origen* insists likewise with great strength on that wonderful prediction of our Saviour, concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, pronounced at a time, as he observes, when there was no likelihood nor appearance of it. This has been taken notice of and inculcated by so many others, that I shall refer you to what this Father has said on the subject in the first book against *Celsus*. And as to the accomplishment of this remarkable prophecy, shall only observe, that whoever reads the account given us by *Josephus*, without knowing his character, and compares it with what our Saviour foretold, would think the historian had been a Christian, and that he had nothing else in view but to adjust the event to the prediction.

VI. I cannot quit this head without taking notice, that *Origen* would still have triumphed more in the foregoing arguments, had he lived an age longer, to have seen the *Roman* Emperors, and all their Governors and provinces, submitting themselves to the Christian religion, and glorying in its profession, as so many Kings and Sovereigns still place their relation to *Christ* at the head of their titles.

How much greater confirmation of his faith would he have received, had he seen our Saviour's prophecy stand good in the destruction of the temple, and the dissolution of the *Jewish* œconomy, when *Jews* and *Pagans* united all their endeavours under *Julian* the Apostate, to baffle and falsify the prediction? The great preparations that were made for re-building the temple, with the hurricane, earthquake, and eruptions of fire, that destroyed the work, and terrified those employed in the attempt from proceeding in it, are related by many historians of the same age, and the substance of the story testified both by *Pagan* and *Jewish* writers, as *Ammianus Marcellinus* and *Zemath-David*. The learned *Chrysostome*, in a sermon against the *Jews*, tells them this fact was then fresh in the memories even of their young men, that it happened but twenty years ago, and that it was attested by all the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, where they might still see the marks of it in the rubbish of that work, from which the *Jews* desisted in so great a fright, and which even *Julian* had not the courage to carry on. This fact, which is in it self so miraculous, and so indisputable, brought over many of the *Jews* to Christianity; and shows us, that after our Saviour's prophecy against it, the temple could not be preserved from the plough passing over it, by all the care of *Titus*, who would fain have prevented its destruction, and that instead of being re-edified by *Julian*, all his endeavours towards it did but still more literally accomplish our Saviour's prediction, that not one stone should be left upon another.

The ancient Christians were so entirely persuaded of the force of our Saviour's prophecies, and of the punishment which the *Jews* had drawn upon themselves, and upon their children, for the treatment which the *Messiah* had received at their hands, that they did not doubt but they would always remain an abandoned and dispersed people, an hissing and an astonishment among the nations, as they are to this day. In short, that they had lost their peculiarity of being God's people, which was now transferred to the body of Christians, and which preserved the Church of *Christ* among all the conflicts, difficulties and persecutions, in which it was engaged, as it had preserved the *Jewish* government and œconomy

oeconomy for so many ages, whilst it had the same truth and vital principle in it, notwithstanding it was so frequently in danger of being utterly abolished and destroyed. *Origen*, in his fourth book against *Celsus*, mentioning their being cast out of *Jerusalem*, the place to which their worship was annexed, deprived of their temple and sacrifice, their religious rites and solemnities, and scattered over the face of the earth, ventures to assure them with a face of confidence, that they would never be re-established, since they had committed that horrid crime against the Saviour of the world. This was a bold assertion in the good man, who knew how this people had been so wonderfully re-established in former times, when they were almost swallowed up, and in the most desperate state of desolation, as in their deliverance out of the *Babylonish* captivity, and the oppressions of *Antiochus Epiphanes*. Nay, he knew that within less than a hundred years before his own time, the *Jews* had made such a powerful effort for their re-establishment under *Barchocab*, in the reign of *Adrian*, as shook the whole *Roman* empire. But he founded his opinion on a sure word of prophecy, and on the punishment they had so justly incurred; and we find, by a long experience of 1500 years, that he was not mistaken, nay that his opinion gathers strength daily, since the *Jews* are now at a greater distance from any probability of such a re-establishment, than they were when *Origen* wrote.

SECTION IX.

- I. *The lives of primitive Christians, another means of bringing learned Pagans into their religion.*
- II. *The change and reformation of their manners.*
- III. *This looked upon as supernatural by the learned Pagans,*
- IV. *And strengthened the accounts given of our Saviour's life and history.*
- V. *The Jewish prophecies of our Saviour, an argument for the heathens belief.*
- VI. *Pursued :*
- VII. *Pursued.*

I. **T**HERE was one other means enjoyed by the learned *Pagans* of the three first centuries, for satisfying them in the truth of our Saviour's history, which I might have flung under one of the foregoing heads; but as it is so shining a particular, and does

so