ral ſupply which they had ſent him, as it was ſo con­vincing a proof of their affection for him, and their concern for the ſupport of the goſpel, which he pre­ferred far above any private ſecular intereſt of his own; expreſsly diſclaiming all ſelfiſh, mercenary views, and aſſuring them with a noble ſimplicity, that he was able upon all occaſions to accommodate his temper to his circumſtances; and had learned, under the teachings of Di­vine grace, in whatever Ration Providence might ſee fit to place him, therewith to be content. After which, the apoſtle, having encouraged them to expect a rich ſupply of all their wants from their God and Father, to whom he devoutly aſcribes the honour of all, con­cludes with ſalutations from himſelf and his friends at Rome to the whole church, and a ſolemn benediction, (verſe 10. to the end); and declares, that he rejoiced in their liberality chiefly on their own account.

The Epiſtle to the Coloſſians was written while Paul was in priſon (chap. iv. 3.), and was therefore probably compoſed in the year 62. The intention of the apoſtle, as far as can be gathered from the Epiſtle itſelf, was to ſecure the Coloſſians from the influence of ſome doc­trines that were ſubverſive of Chriſtianity, and to ex­cite them to a temper and behaviour worthy of their ſacred character. A new ſect had ariſen, which had blended the oriental philoſophy with the ſuperſtitious opinions of the Jews.

They held, 1. That God was ſurrounded by demons or angels, who were mediators with God, and therefore to be worſhipped. 2. That the foul is defiled by the body; that all bodily enjoyments hurt the ſoul, which they believed to be immortal, though they ſeem to have denied the reſurrection of the body, as it would only render the ſoul ſinful by being reunited to it. @@3. That there was a great myſtery in numbers, parti­cularly in the number ſeven; they therefore attributed a natural holineſs to the ſeventh or Sabbath day, which they obſerved more ſtrictly than the other Jews. They ſpent their time moſtly in contemplation; abſtained from marriage, and every gratification of the ſenſes; uſed waſhings, and thought it ſinful to touch certain things; regarded wine as poiſon, &c.

The arguments againſt theſe doctrines are managed with great skill and addreſs. He begins with expreſſing great joy for the favourable character which he had heard of them, and aſſures them that he daily prayed for their farther improvement. Then he makes a ſhort digreſſion, in order to deſcribe the dignity of Jeſus Chriſt; declares that he had created all things, whether thrones or dominions, principalities and powers; that he alone was the head of the church, and had reconciled men to the Father. The inference from this deſcription is evident, that Jeſus was ſuperior to angels; that they were created beings, and ought not to be worſhipped. Thus he indirectly confutes one doctrine before he for­mally oppoſes it. Paul now returns from his digreſſion in the 21ſt verſe to the ſentiments with which he had introduced it in the 13th and 14th verſes, and again expreſſes his joy that the Philippians remained attach­ed to the goſpel, which was to be preached to the Gentiles, without the reſtraints of the ceremonial law. Here again he ſtates a general doctrine, which was inconſiſtent with the opinions of thoſe who were zealous for the law of Moſes; but he leaves the Coloſſians to draw the inference, (chap, i.)

Having again aſſured them of his tender concern for their welfare, for their advancement in virtue, and that they might acknowledge the myſtery of God, that is, that the goſpel was to ſuperſede the law of Moſes, he proceeds directly to caution them againſt the philoſophy of the new teachers, and their ſuperſtitious adherence to the law; ſhows the ſuperiority of Chriſt to the an­gels, and warns Chriſtians againſt worſhipping them. He cenſures the obſervation of Sabbaths, and rebukes thoſe who required abſtinence from certain kinds of food, and cautions them againſt perſons who aſſume **a** great appearance of wiſdom and virtue, (chap, ii.)

In the 3d chapter he exhorts them, that, inſtead of being occupied about external ceremonies, they ought **to** cultivate pure morality. He particularly guards them againſt impurity, to which they had before their converſion been much addicted. He admoniſhes them againſt indulging the iraſcible paſſions, and againſt committing falſehood. He exhorts them to cultivate the benevolent affections, and humility, and patience. He recommends alſo the relative duties between huſbands and wives, parents and children, maſters and ſervants. He enjoins the duties of prayer and thankſgiving (ch. iv. 2.), and requeſts them to remember him in their petitions. He enjoins affability and mild behaviour to the unconverted heathens (verſe 6th); and concludes the Epiſtle with matters which are all of a private nature, except the directions for reading this Epiſtle in the church of Laodicea, as well as in the church of Coloſſe.

This Epiſtle is addreſſed to the inhabitants of Theſſalonica, the capital of Macedonia, a large and populous city. It appears from the Acts, chapter xvii. 1. that the Chriſtian religion was introduced into this city by Paul and Silas, ſoon after they had left Philippi. At firſt they made many converts; but at length the Jews, ever jealous of the admiſſion of the Gentiles to the ſame privileges with themſelves, ſtirred up the rabble, which aſſaulted the houſe where the apoſtle and his friends lodged; ſo that Paul and Silas were obliged to flee to Berea, where their ſucceſs was ſoon interrupted by the ſame reſtleſs and implacable enemies. The apoſtle then withdrew to Athens; and Timothy, at his deſire, returned to Theſſalonica (1 Theſſi iii. **2.)** to ſee what were the ſentiments and behaviour of the inhabitants after the perſecution of the Jews. From Athens Paul went to Corinth, where he ſtayed a year and ſix months; during which, Timothy returned with the joyful tidings, that the Theſſalonians remained ſtedfaſt to the faith, and firmly attached to the apoſtle, notwithſtanding his flight. Upon this he ſent them this Epiſtle, A. D. 52, in the 12th year of Claudius.

This is generally reckoned the firſt Epiſtle which Paul wrote; and we find he was anxious that it ſhould be read to all the Chriſtians. In chap. v. 27. he uſes theſe words; “I adjure you by the Lord, that this Epiſtle be read unto all the holy brethren.” This di­rection is very properly inſerted in his firſt Epiſtle.

The intention of Paul in writing this Epiſtle was evi­dently to encourage the Theſſalonians to adhere to the Chriſtian religion. This church being ſtill in its in­fancy, and oppreffed by the powerful Jews, required to be eſtabliſhed in the faith. St Paul, therefore, in the three firſt chapters, endeavours to convince the Theſſalonians of **the truth and divinity of his goſpel, both by**

**@@@ [mu]** Percy's Key to the New Testament.