and ſuch epiſtles as thoſe of Paul, cannot be overcome by all the genius, learning, and induſtry, of any in­dividual or ſociety of men that ever lived. They con­tain a purer ſyſtem of ethics than all the ancient philoſophers could invent: They diſcover a candour and modeſty unexampled: They exhibit an originality in the character of Jeſus, and yet ſuch a conſiſtency as the imagination of our beſt poets has never reached. Now it is a very remarkable circumſtance, that hiſtories writ­ten by four different men ſhould preſerve ſuch dignity and conſiſtency, though frequently relating different ac­tions of Jeſus, and deſcending to the moſt minute circumſtances in his life. The ſcene of action is too extenſive, and the agreement of facts with the ſtate of the times as repreſented by other hiſtorians is too cloſe, to admit the poſſibility of forgery.

The ſcene of action is not confined to one country, it is ſucceſſively laid in the greateſt cities of the Roman empire; in Rome, in Antioch, in Corinth, in Athens, as well as in Jeruſalem and the land of Paleſtine. In­numerable alluſions are made to the manners and opi­nions of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews; and reſpecting the Jews, they extend even to the trifles and follies of their ſchools. Yet after the ſtricteſt examina­tion, the New Teſtament will be found to have a won­derful coincidence and harmony with Joſephus, the principal hiſtorian of theſe times, and an enemy of Chriſtianity.

It has been a queſtion who the ſoldiers were who are ſaid in the goſpel of Luke to have addreſſed John the Baptiſt in theſe words, W*hat ſhall we do?* An anſwer to this queſtion may be found in Joſephus@@\*. Herod the tetrarch of Galilee was engaged in a war with his father-in-law Aretas, a petty king in Arabia Petræa, at the very time that John was preaching in the wilder­ness; and the road from Galilee to Arabia running through that w!ldernefs, the ſoldiers on their march had this interview with the Baptiſt. A coincidence like this, which has been overlooked by all the commentators, would not probably be attended to in a forgery.

Another inſtance of an agreement no leſs remarkable we ſhall quote from the valuable work of Michaelis@@. It has been a queſtion of ſome difficulty among the learned, who was the Ananias who commanded St Paul to be ſmitten on the mouth when he was making his de­fence before the council in Jeruſalem @@\*. Krebs, in his remarks taken from Joſephus, has ſhown him to have been the ſon of Nebedeni. But if ſo, how can it be reconciled with chronology, that Ananias was, at that time, called high prieſt, when it is certain from Joſe­phus that the time of his holding that office was much earlier? And how comes it to paſs that St Paul ſays, "I wiſt not, brethren, that he was the high prieſt?” The ſacerdotal garb muſt have diſcovered who he was: a jeſt would have ill-ſuited the gravity of a tribunal; and a falſehood is inconſiſtent with the character of St Paul.

All theſe difficulties vaniſh as ſoon as we examine the ſpecial hiſtory of that period: “Ananias the ſon of Nebedeni was high prieſt at the time that Helena queen of Adiabene ſupplied the Jews with corn from Egypt, during the famine which took place in the fourth year of Claudius, mentioned in the eleventh chapter of the Acts. St Paul therefore, who took a journey to Jeru­ſalem at that period, could not have been ignorant of

the elevation of Ananias to that dignity. Soon aſter the holding of the firſt council, as it is called, at Jeru­ſalem, Ananias was diſpoſſeſſed of his office, in conſequence of certain acts of violence between the Samari­tans and the Jews, and ſent priſoner to Rome; but being afterwards releaſed, he returned to Jeruſalem. Now from that period he could not be called *high-ρriest* in the pro­per ſenſe of the word, though Joſephus has ſometimes given him the title of αζχιεϧευς, taken in the more extenſive meaning of a prieſt, who had a ſeat and voice in the Sanhedrim; and Jonathan, though we are not ac­quainted with the circumſtances of his elevation, had been raiſed in the mean time to the ſupreme dignity in the Jewiſh church. Between the death of Jonathan, who was murdered by order of Felix, and the high- prieſthood of Iſmael, who was inveſted with that dignity by Agrippa, elapſed an interval during which the ſacerdotal office was vacant. Now it happened preciſely in this interval that St Paul was apprehended in Jeruſa­lem: and, the Sanhedrim, being deſtitute of a preſident, he undertook of his own authority the diſcharge of that office, which he executed with the greateſt tyranny. It is poſſible therefore that St Paul, who had been on­ly a few days in Jeruſalem, might be ignorant that Ananias, who had been diſpoſſeſſed of the prieſthood, had taken upon himſelf a truſt to which he was not intitled; he might therefore very naturally exclaim, ‘I wiſt not, brethren, that he was the high-prieſt!’ Admitting him on the other hand to have been acquainted with the fact, the expreſſion muſt be conſidered as an indirect reproof, and a tacit refuſal to recognize uſurped authority.”

Could ſuch a correſpondence as this ſubſiſt between truth and falſehood, between a forgery and an authen­tic hiſtory? or is it credible that theſe events could be related by any perſon but a contemporary?

Impreſſed with the love of truth, and feeling con­tempt as well as deteſtation at pious frauds, we heſitate not to acknowledge, that in ſome particular facts there is a difference either real or apparent between Joſephus and the writers of the New Teſtament. The objec­tions ariſing from theſe differences are of two kinds: 1. Such as would prove a book not to have been writ­ten by the author to whom it is aſcribed. 2. Such as would prove that the author was miſtaken, and there­fore not divinely inſpired. To the firſt claſs belongs the following objection: St Paul fays (2 Cor. xi. 32.) that the governor of Damaſcus was under Aretas the king: but if we are to judge from the 18th book of the Jewiſh Antiquities, which correſponds with the period of St Paul’s journey to Damaſcus, this city muſt have belonged at that time to the Romans; and what authority could Aretas, a petty king in Arabia Petræa, have in ſuch a city? In anſwer to this queſtion, J. G. Hyne, in a diſſertation publiſhed in 1755, has ſhown it to be highly probable that Aretas, againſt whom the Romans, not long before the death of Tiberius, made a declaration of war, which they neglected to put in exedition, took the opportunity of ſeizing Damaſcus, which had once belonged to his anceſtors; an event omitted by Joſephus, as forming no part of the Jewiſh hiſtory, and by the Roman hiſtorians as being a matter not flattering in itſelf, and belonging only to a dictant province. Secondly, That Aretas was by religion a Jew; a circumſtance the more credible, when we reflect that

@@@[m]\* Antiq. Lib. LVIII. Cap. 5. Sect. 1, 2.

@@@[mu] Chap. iii. Sect. 11.

@@@[m]\* Acts xxiii. 2-5.