to which it was only introductory and ſubſervient; and of courſe, that the obligation of the law was henceforth diſſolved (chap. vii. 18. to the end). Then recapitu­lating what he had already demonſtrated concerning the fuperior dignity of Chriſt’s prieſthood, he thence illuſtrates the diſtinguiſhed excellence of the new cove­nant, as not only foretold by Jeremiah, but evidently enriched with much better promiſes than the old (ch. viii. throughout): Explaining farther the doctrine of the prieſthood and interceſſion of Chriſt, by comparing *it* with what the Jewiſh high-prieſts did on the great day of atonement (chap. ix. 1—14) Afterwards he enlarges on the neceſſity of ſhedding Chriſt’s blood, and the ſufficiency of the atonement made by it (chap ix. 15. to the end); and proves that the legal ceremonies could not by any means purify the confidence: whence he infers the inſufficiency of the Moſaic law, and the neceſſity of looking beyond it chap. x. 1—15. i He then urges the Hebrews to improve the privileges which ſuch an high-prieſt and covenant conferred on them, to the purpoſes of approaching God with confidence, to a confiant attendance on his worſhip, and moſt benevo­lent regards to each other (chap x 15—25).

The apoſtle having thus obviated the inſinuations and objections of the Jews, for the ſatisfaction and ehabliſhment of the believing Hebrews, proceeds,

II. To prepare and fortify their minds againſt the ſtorm of perſecution which in part had already befallen them, which was likely to continue and be often renewed, he reminds them of thoſe extremities they had endu­red, and of the fatal effects which would attend their apoſtacy (chap x. 26. to the end); calling to their remembrance the eminent examples of faith and forti­tude exhibited by holy men, and recorded in the Old Teſtament (chap. xi. 1—29). He concludes his diſcourſe with glancing at many other illuſtrious wor­thies; and, beſides thoſe recorded in Scripture, refers to the caſe of ſeveral who ſuſſered under the perſecution of Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Maccab. chap. viii. &c. chap. xi. 30. xii. 2).

Having thus finiſhed the argumentative part of the Epiſtle, the apoſtle proceeds to a general application; in which he exhorts the Hebrew Chriſtians to patience, peace, and holineſs (Chap. xii. 3—14.): cautions them againſt ſecular views and ſenſual gratifications, by lay­ing before them the incomparable excellence of the bleſſings introduced by the goſpel, which even the Jew­iſh economy, glorious and magnificent as it was, did by no means equal; exhorts them to brotherly affection, purity, compaſſion, dependence on the divine care, ſtedfaſtneſs in the proſeſſion of truth, a life of thankfulneſs to God, and benevolence to man: and concludes the whole with recommending their pious miniſters to their particular regard, intreating their prayers, ſaluting and granting them his uſual benediction.

The ſeven following Epiſtles, one of James, two of Peter, three of John, and one of Jude, have been di­ſtinguiſhed by the appellation of *catholic* or *general* epiſ­tles, becauſe moſt of them are inſcribed, not to parti­cular churches or perſons, but to the body of Jewiſh or Gentile converts over the world. The authenticity of ſome of theſe has been frequently queſtioned, viz. the Epiſtle of James, the ſecond of Peter, the Epiſtle of Jude, and the ſecond and third of John. The ancient Chriſtians were very cautious in admitting any books into their canon whoſe authenticity they had any reaſon to ſuſpect. They rejected all the writings forged by heretics in the name of the apoſtles, and certainly, there­fore, would not receive any without firſt ſubjecting them to a ſevere ſcrutiny.@@ Now, though theſe five epiſtles were not immediately acknowledged as the writings of the apoſtles, this only (hows that the perſons who doubted had not received complete and inconteſtable evidence of their authenticity. But as they were af­terwards univerſally received, we have every reaſon to conclude, that upon a ſtrict examination they were found to be the genuine productions of the apoſtles. The truth is, ſo good an opportunity had the ancient Chriſtians of examining this matter, ſo careful were they to guard againſt impoſition, and ſo well founded was their judgment concerning the books of the New Teſtament, that, as Dr Lardner obſerves, no waiting which they pronounced genuine has yet been proved ſpurious, nor have we at this day the leaſt reaſon to believe any book genuine which they rejected.

That the Epiſtle of James was written in the apoſtolical age is proved by the quotations of ancient authors. Clemens Romanus and Ignatius ſeem to have made references to it. Origen quotes it once or twice.

There are ſeveral reaſons why it was not more generally quoted by the firſt Chriſtian writers. Being written to correct the errors and vices which prevailed among the Jews, the Gentiles might think it of leſs importance to them, and therefore take no pains to procure copies of it. As the author was ſometimes denominated James the Juſt, and often called biſhop of Jeruſalem, it might be doubted whether he was one of the apoſtles. But its authenticity does not ſeem to have been ſuſpected on account of the doctrines which it contains. In modern times, indeed, Luther called it a ſtrawy epiſtle *(epistola straminea),* and excluded it from the ſacred writings, on account of its apparent oppoſition to the apoſtle Paul concerning juſtification by faith.

This Epiſtle could not be written by James the Elder, the ſon of Zebedee, and brother of John, who was be­headed by Herod in the year 44, for it contains paſſages which refer to a later period. It muſt, therefore, have been the compoſition of James the Leſs, the ſon of Alpheus, who was called *the Lord’s brother,* becauſe he was the ſon of Mary, the ſiſter of our Lord’s mother. As to the date of this Epiſtle, Lardner fixes it in the year 61 or 62.

James the Leſs ſtatedly reſided at Jeruſalem, whence he hath been ſtyled by ſome ancient fathers biſhop of that city, though without ſuſſicient foundation.@@ Now James being one of the apoſtles of the circumciſion, while he confined his perſonal labours to the inhabitants of Judea, it was very natural for him to endeavour by his writings to extend his ſervices to the jewiſh Chris­tians who were diſperſed abroad in more diſtant re­gions. For this purpoſe, there are two points which the apoſtle ſeems to have principally aimed at, though he hath not purſued them in an orderly and logical me­thod, but in the free epiſtolary manner, handling them jointly or diſtinctly as occaſions naturally offered. And theſe were, “to correct thoſe errors both in doctrine and practice into which the Jewiſh Chriſtians had fallen, which might otherwiſe have produced fatal conſequen-

@@@[mu] Macknight on the Epistles.

@@@[mu] Doddridge's Family Expositor.