upon it without preparing the means of ſucceſs. Firſt of all, we will draw up together a hiſtory of the pretended apparitions of our common Maſter. Thoſe who have the beſt inventions ſhall be employed in it ; the reſt of us ſhall reviſe and correct the work ; and all muſt ſtrongly imprint on their memories the pretended facts and diſcoveries which ſhall be agreed upon ; becauſe we muſt never think of re­tracting, and the leaſt contradiction in our evidence would be of fatal conſequence @@(I). To this labour we muſt join another, which requires more knowledge of the Scriptures than we poſſess ; but we will ſupply our deficiencies by ſtudy. Our rulers, and indeed our countrymen in general, ex­pect that the Meſſiah ſhall be a great and invincible hero ; that he ſhall deliver his country from the dominion of the Romans ; that he ſhall conquer all nations, and eſtabliſh on earth an univerſal monarchy, of which Jeruſalem is to be the capital. As ſuch (they ſay) he is foretold by the prophets; but the perſon whom we mean to impose upon them as the Meſſiah, expreſsly diſclaimed all worldly greatneſs, and made the ſufferings of himſelf and his followers one test of the truth of his pretenſions to the character which he affirmed. Some of the moſt subtile among us therefore muſt carefully examine the books of Moſes, the Pſalms, and the Prophets, and wreſt all the prophecies of the true Meſſiah in favour of him whom we know to be an impoſtor. The enterpriſe, as it is directly oppoſed, not only by truth, but alſo by all the prejudices and hopes of the nation, is indeed bold : but what is the whole of our deſign but the exceſs of boldneſs ?

" We have hitherto believed that the religion of our fore­fathers is true, and was given by God to Moſes. It is cer­tainly the moſt ancient, the moſt authorized, the pureſt re­ligion in the world ; and the only one founded on divine re­velation, or that boaſts of ſuch a foundation. But if we are to preach to the whole world, that our Maſter, whom we know to be an impoſtor, is the true and only Meſſiah ; and if we are to apply to him prophecies which have another object, we muſt necessarily deſpife this moſt ancient religion, which our fathers and we have hitherto deemed divine and incontrovertible ; and this is the ultimate point to which it has been my aim to bring you. I deſire not that you ſhould conſent immediately, for to abandon one’s religion is a thing which ſhould not be done without maturely weighing the conſequences ; but what I deſire is, that you will diligently compare all the parts of the plan which I have ſuggeſted to you, examine their ſtrict and necessary union, and ſatisfy yourſelves completely, that we muſt *adopt* the whole or reject the whole ; for it is obvious that modifications and ex­ceptions are here abſolutely impoſſible.

“ I hope you will not deliberate long on my propoſal ; for we ſhall have much to do after your reſolution is form­ed, and the time in which I propoſe to concert and finiſh the whole ſcheme is very ſhort. We have but the interval betwixt the preſent moment and the feaſt of Pentecoſt in which to prepare the order of falſe apparitions, and fix it in the memories of our numerous coadjutors, male and fe­male ; to ſtudy in the Scripture all that relates to the Meſ­ſiah ; to form the plan and adjuſt the parts of a new reli-

@@@(I) Deiſtical writers have laboured ſtrenuouſly, though in vain, to find ſuch contradictions in the different accounts of the circumſtances attending the reſurrection as may diſcredit the evidence of the evangeliſts to the principal fact.— This gave occaſion to Mr West’s admirable *Obſervations on the Resurrection ;* and were there any candour or modesty among our minute philoſophers, the appearance of that book would have ſilenced them for ever. This, however, it has not done. The old cavils have, without the leaſt notice of Mr West, been again brought forward by Thomas Paine, and again obviated by the Biſhop of Landaff in his maſterly *Apology for the Bible.* “ If the writers of the Goſpels (says Paine) had gone into any court of juſtice to prove an *alibi* (for it is of the nature of an alibi that is here at­tempted to be proved, namely, the abſence of a dead body by ſupernatural means), and had given their evidence in the ſame contradictory manner as it is here given, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropt for perjury, and would have juſtly deſerved it.” In reply to this impious ſarcaſm, the right reverend apologiſt thus addresses its author ; “ As we cannot have this *viva voce* examination of all the witneſſes, let us call up and queſtion the evangeliſts as witnesses to a ſupernatural alibi.—Did you find the ſepulchre of Jeſus empty? One of us actually ſaw it empty, and the reſt heard from eye-witnesses that it was empty.—Did you, or any of the followers of Jeſus, take away the dead body from the ſe­pulchre ? All anſwer, No.—Did the soldiers, or the Jews, take away the body ? No.—How are you certain of that ? Be­cauſe we ſaw the body when it was dead, and we ſaw it afterwards when it was alive. — How do you know that what you ſaw was the body of Jeſus ? We had been long and intimately acquainted with Jeſus, and knew his perſon perfectly. —Were you not affrighted, and miſtook a ſpirit for a body ? No ; the body had fleſh and bones ; we are ſure that it was the very body which hung upon the croſs, for we ſaw the wound in the side, and the print of the nails in the hands and feet.—And all this you are ready to ſwear ? We are ; and we are ready to die alſo, ſooner than we will deny any part of it.—This is the teſtimony which all the evangeliſts would give, in whatever court of juſtice they were examined ; and this, I apprehend, would ſufficiently eſtabliſh the alibi of the dead body from the ſepulchre by ſupernatural means.”

“ The book of Matthew ſays Paine) continues its account, that at the end of the Sabbath, as it began to *dawn,* to­wards the firſt day of the week, came *Mary Magdalene* and the other *Mary* to see the ſepulchre. Mark says it was ſunriſing, and John says it was dark. Luke ſays it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and *Mary the mother of James,* and *other women,* that came to the ſepulchre. And John ſays that Mary Magdalene came alone. So well do they agree about their firſt evidence ! they all appear, however, to have known moſt about Mary Magdalene ; ſhe was a woman of a large acquaintance ; and it was not an ill conjecture that ſhe might be upon the stroll.”

“ This (replies the Biſhop) is a long paragraph, and I will anſwer it diſtinctly : Firſt, There is no diſagreement of evidence with reſpect to the time when the women went to the ſepulchre ; all the evangeliſts agree as to the day on which they went ; and as to the time of the day, it was early in the morning : what court of juſtice in the world would ſet aſide this evidence as inſufficient to ſubſtantiate the fact of the womens having gone to the ſepulchre, becauſe the witnesses differed as to the degree of twilight which lighted them on their way ? Secondly, There is no diſagreement of evidence with reſpect to the perſens who went to the ſepulchre. John ſtates that Mary Magdalene went to the ſepulchre ; but he does not ſtate, *as you make him state,* that Mary Magdalene went alone ; ſhe might, for any thing you have proved or can prove to the contrary, have been accompanied by all the women mentioned by Luke. Is it an unuſual thing to diſtinguiſh by name a principal perſon going on a viſit or an embaſſy, without mentioning his ſubordinate atten-