cauſe when the choice is made, a relation is formed between the will and the object of choice, which, from being origi­nally indifferent, now becomes a favourite object. But nei­ther his Grace, nor any other asserter of human liberty, has ever affirmed or ſuppoſed, that any man or body of men could deliberately chooſe *evil* for its *own ſake,* or enter zealouſly upon a tedious and difficult enterpriſe, from which *no good* could possible *arise,* and from which *unmixed miſery* was *clearly foreseen* as the *neceſſary result of every step of the progreſs.* Such, however, muſt have been the choice and the conduct of the apoſtles, when they reſelved to preach a new religion founded on the reſurrection of Jeſus, if they did not certainly know that Jeſus had riſen from the dead. And this conduct muſt have been adopted, and in oppoſition to every motive which can influence the human mind ; have been persevered in by a great number of men and women, without the ſmalleſt contradiction having ever appeared in the various teſtimonies, which at different times, and under the cruelleſt tortures, they all gave to a variety of circumstances, of which not one had its foundation in truth. He who can admit this ſuppoſition, will not ſurely object to the incredibility of miracles. The reſurrection of a man from the dead is an event ſo different indeed from the common courſe of things, that nothing but the moſt complete evi­dence can make it an object of rational belief ; but as the reſurrection of Jeſus has always been ſaid to have had God for its Author, it is an effect which does not exceed the power of the cauſe aſſigned, and is therefore an event poſ­ſible in itſelf and capable of proof It is a deviation from the laws of nature, but it is not contradictory to any one of thoſe laws.

That a great number of men and women ſhould delibe­rately form a plan of ruin and miſery to themſelves, with­out a proſpect of the ſmalleſt advantage either in this world or in the next, is as different from the common courſe of things as the reſurrection from the dead ; and therefore in itſelf at leaſt as great a miracle : but that they ſhould persiſt in proſecuting this plan in the midſt of torments ; that they ſhould ſpread themſelves over the whole world, and everywhere publiſh a number of falſehoods, without any one of them contradicting the rest ; that truth ſhould never eſcape them cither in an unguarded moment, or when ling­ering on the rack, and yet that all their lies ſhould be in perfect agreement with each other ; that they ſhould every one of them court ſufferings for a perſon whom they knew to be an impoſtor ; that not one of the number—not even a single woman—ſhould have ſo much compassion for a fel­low-creature, as to reſcue him from the flames by confessing a truth which could injure nobody — not even the ſuffering deceivers themſelves ;—all this is not only different from the common courſe of things, but directly contrary to the moſt known laws of nature, and is therefore not miraculous, but may be pronounced impoſſible. Yet this impoſſibility we muſt admit, or acknowledge, that as “ Chriſt died for our ſins, according to the Scriptures, and was buried ; ſo he roſe again the third day according to the Scriptures ; that he was ſeen of Cephas, then of the twelve ; after that oſ above five hundred brethren at once ; after that of James ; then of all the apoſtles ; and that he was laſt of all ſeen of St Paul@@\*,” who was converted by the viſion to preach the faith which till then he had perſecuted.

Thus are we assured, that “ thoſe who have fallen aſleep in Chriſt are not loſt, ſince he is riſen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that ſlept. For ſince by man came death, by man came alſo the reſurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive. But every man in his own order : Chriſt the first- fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming ; for all that are in the graves ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good unto the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the reſurrection of dam­nation@@\*.”

Our blessed Lord having converſed familiarly with the eleven apoſtles for forty days after his reſurrection, inſtructing them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God; having extended their authority as his miniſters, by giving them a commiſſion to teach all nations, and make them his diſciples, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt; and having promised them power from on high to enable them to diſcharge the duties of ſo laborious an office—led them out as far as Be­thany, that they might be witnesses of his aſcenſion into heaven. “ When they therefore were come together, they aſked of him, ſaying, Lord, wilt thou at this time reſtore again the kingdom to Iſrael ? And he ſaid, it is not for you to know the times and the ſeaſons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye ſhall receive power after that the Holy Ghoſt is come upon you ; and ye ſhall be witnesses unto me, both in Jeruſalem, and in all Judea, and in Sama­ria, and unto the uttermoſt parts of the earth. But tarry ye in the city of Jeruſalem, until ye be endued with power from on high ; and he lilt up his hands and blessed them ; and it came to paſs while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked ſtedfaſtly towards heaven, as he went up, be­hold, two men ſtood by them in white apparel ; who alſo ſaid, ye men of Galilee, why ſtand ye gazing up into hea­ven ? This ſame Jeſus, who is taken up from you into hea­ven, ſhall ſo come, in like manner as ye have ſeen him go into heaven. And they worſhipped him, and returned to Jeruſalem with great joy@@\*."

That our blessed Lord aſcended into heaven, will hardly be denied in the preſent age by any one who admits that he roſe from the dead. The aſcenſion was indeed the natural conſequence of the reſurrection ; for we cannot ſuppoſe that a man would be called back from the grave to live for ever in a world where all other men fall in ſucceſſion a prey to death. The purpoſe for which he died was to recover for the deſcendants of Adam every privilege which they had forfeited through his tranſgreſſion ; and if, as has been ge­nerally believed, mankind were by the terms of the first co­venant to enjoy eternal life in heaven, ſome proof was neceſ­ſary that Chriſt by his death and reſurrection had opened the kingdom of heaven to all faithful obſervers of the terms of the second. Hence it was propheſied@@\* *of* the Meſſiah, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, that “ he ſhould aſcend on high, lead captivity captive, and sit on the right hand of God until his enemies ſhould be made his footſtool.” It was therefore of the greateſt importance to the apoſtles to have ſufficient proof of their Master’s ex­altation to the right hand of the Majeſty on high ; for otherwie they could neither have looked for an entrance into heaven themſelves, by a new and living way, as the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews expresses it, nor have preached Jeſus as the Meſſiah promiſed to their fathers, ſince they could not have known that in him theſe prophecies were fulfilled. But the proof vouchſafed them was the moſt complete that the nature of the thing would bear. The ſpectators of the aſcenſion were many ; for, according to the hiſtory of St Luke@@\*, thoſe who returned from the Mount oſ Olives to Jeruſalem, and prepared themſelves for the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, were in number about six ſcore ; and to ſuch a cloud of witnesses the evangelist would not have appealed, had not the fact he was recording been very generally known. Yet theſe were perhaps but part of the witnesses ; for ſince Chriſt had told to his diſciples that he was to aſ-

@@@[m]\* I Cor. xv. 3-9.

@@@[m]\* I Cor. xv. 20-21. and St John w. 28, 29.

@@@[m]\* St Luke xiv. 49-53. and Acts i. 6-12.

@@@[m]\* Ps. lxvii. 18. cx. I. Micah ii. 13.

@@@[m]\* Acts i. 12-16.