

THE ARGUMENT OF THE EPISTLES IN GENERAL.

After the Ghospels, which is a storie of Chrift himfelfe, and after the *Actes of the Apostles*, which is a storie of Chriftes Church: now follow the *Epiftles of the Apostles*, which they wrote of fuch matters, as they had then occafion to write of. For, being the Founders and the Doctours of the Church, they did in their time, as the Doctours that fucceeded them, did after them: who from the beginning vnto this day, haue written Epiftles & Bookes againft herefies, euer as they arofe, and of al other Ecclefiaftical matters, as they had occafion miniftred vnto them. Of which their doing the Apostles firft gaue here the enfample: as alfo S. Luke in the *Actes of the Apostles*, led the way to al the Writers of the Ecclefiaftical Hiftorie after him. For although there be no comparifon between them for authoritie, for asmuch as thefe are Canonical Scripture, and fo are not any writings of their Succeffours; yet the occafions and matters (as I haue faid) are like.

*Eufeb.
li. 2. Eccl.
hift. c. 23.*

Moſt of the Epiftles are S. Paules Epiftles: the reſt are called *Catholicæ Epiftolæ*, the *Epiftles Catholike*. For S. Paul writeth not any Epiftle to al (howbeit euery one of them is for al the Church:) but ſome to particular Churches of the Gentils; as to the Romanes, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colofians, to the Theſſalonians: ſome to particular Perſons, as to Timothee, to Tite (who were Bishops among the Gentils, to wit, of Ephesus, and of Crete) and to Philemon, and then one to the Hebrewes, who were the Iewes of Hieruſalem & Iurie. But the Epiftles of the other Apostles, that is, of S. Iames, S. Peter, S. Iohn, and S. Iude, are not ſo intituled to any one Church or perſon (except S. Iohns two later ſhort Epiftles, which yet might not be ſeparated from his firſt, becauſe they were al of one Authour) and therefore they are termed *Catholike*, that is *vniuerſal*. For ſo writeth S. Iames: *To the twelue Tribes that are in diſpeſion, greeting.* And S. Peter in his firſt Epiftle, thus: *To the*

elect ftrangers of the difperſion of Pontus, Galatia, Capadocia, Afia, & Bithynia; in his ſecond, thus: To them that haue obtained equal faith with vs. Likewiſe S. Iude: To them that are in God the Father beloued, & in Ieſus Chriſt preferred, & called. S. Iohns firſt is without title.

Now, for the occaſions of their writing, whereby we ſhal perceiue the matters of arguments that they handle; it muſt be remembred (as the Storie of that time in the Actes of the Apoſtles doth at large declare) that the Church then beginning, was planted by the Apoſtles not only in the Iewes, but alſo in the Gentils: yea and ſpecially in the Gentils. Which thing offended the Iewes many waies. For, they could not abide to ſee ſo much as their owne Countrie to receiue him for CHRIST, whom they had reiected and crucified; much leſſe, to ſee them preach him to the Gentils alſo: that offended euen thoſe Iewes alſo, that beleeued him to be Chriſt. Howbeit ſuch of them as were Catholikes, and therefore not obſtinate, were ſatiſfied when they vnderſtood by the Apoſtles that it was Gods pleaſure, as *Act. 11.* we read. But others of them became heretikes, & preached to the Chriſtian Gentils, that it was neceſſary for them to receiue alſo the Iewes religion. Of ſuch we read *Act. 15. Vnles you be circumcized, you can not be ſaued.* And as theſe did ſo preach againſt the truth, ſo did the vnchriſtned Iewes not only themſelues perfecute, but alſo ſtirre vp the Idolatrous Gentils euery where to perfecute the Chriſtians; by ſuch obſtinacie prouoking God to reprobate their Nation: which yet they thought vnpoſſible to be done, becauſe they were the ſeed of Abraham, and were circumcized, and had receiued the Law by Moyſes. For ſuch carnal reſpects they truſted in themſelues, as though God and Chriſt were vnſeparably bound vnto them: attributing alſo ſo much to their owne workes, (which they thought they did of themſelues, being holpen with the knowledge of their law,) that they would not acknowledge the death of Chriſt to be neceſſarie for their ſaluation: but looked for ſuch a Chriſt, as ſhould be like other Princes of this world, and make them great men temporally.

Hereupon did S. Paul write his Epiftles, to shew both the vocation of the Gentils, and the reprobation of the Iewes. Moreouer, to admonish both the Chriftian Gentils, not to receiue Circumcifion and other ceremonies of Moyfes law, in no wife: and the Iewes alfo, not to put their truſt in the fame, but rather to vnderſtand, that now Chrift being come, they muſt ceaſe. Againe, to ſhew the neceſſitie of Chriſts comming and of his death, that without it neither the Gentils could be ſaued; no nor the Iewes, by no workes that they could doe of themſelues, although they were alſo holpen by the Law: telling them what was good & what bad: for ſo much as al were finners, and therefore alſo impotent or infirme, and the law could not take away finne and infirmitie, and giue ſtrength to fulfil that which it gaue knowledge of. But this was God only able to doe, and for Chriſts ſake only would he doe it. Therefore it is neceſſarie for al to beleue in Chrift, and to be made his members, being incorporate into his Body which is his Catholike Church. For ſo (although they neuer yet did good worke, but al il) they ſhal haue remiſſion of their finnes, and new ſtrength withal, to make them able to fulfil the commandements of Gods law, yea & their workes after this ſhal be ſo gracious in Gods fight, that for them he wil giue them life euerlaſting. This is the neceſſitie, this is alſo the fruit of Chriftian Religion. And therefore he exhorteth al, both Gentils and Iewes, as to receiue it humbly, ſo alſo to perfeuer in it conſtantly vnto the end, againſt al ſeduction of hereſie, and againſt al terrour of perfecution: and to walke al their time in good workes, as now God had made them able to doe.

The ſame doctrine doth the Catholike Church teach vnto this day moſt exactly: to wit, that no workes of the vnbeleeuing or vn baptized, whether they be Iewes or Gentils, can ſaue them: no nor of any Heretike, or Schiſmatike, although he be baptized, becauſe he is not a member of Chrift. Yea more then that, no worke of any that is not a liuely member of Chrift, although otherwiſe he be baptized, and continue within his Church,

The doctrine of the Cath. Church concerning good workes.

yet becaufe he is not in grace but in mortal finne, no worke that he doth, is meritorious or able to faue him.

This very fame is S. Paules doctrine: he denieth to the workes of fuch as haue not the Spirit of Chrif, al vertue to iuftifie or to faue; neither requireth he a mā to haue had knowledge of the Law, or to haue kept it aforetime, as though otherwife he might not be faued by Chrif: but yet when he is Chriftned, he requireth of necefsitie, that he keep Gods commandements, by auoiding of al finne, and doing good workes: and to fuch a mans good workes he attributeth as much vertue as any Catholike of this time.

S. Paules doctrine concerning faith and good workes.

Neuertheleffe there were certaine at that time (as alfo al the Heretikes of this our time) whom S. Peter termeth *vnlearned and vnstable*, who reading S. Paules Epiftles, did misconfter his meaning, as though he required not good workes no more after Baptifme, then before Baptifme; but held that only Faith did iuftifie and faue a man. Thereupon the other Apoftles wrote their

2. Pet. 3.

Aug. de
fide & oper.

ca. 14. Et

præf. pſal. 31.

Epiftles, as S. Auguftin noteth in theſe wordes: *Therefore becaufe this opinion (Ad falutem obtinendam fufficere ſolam fidem, that only faith is ſufficient to obtaine ſaluation) was then riſen, the other Apoſtolicall Epiftles, of Peter, Iohn, Iames, Iude, doe againſt it ſpecially direct their intention: to auouch vehemently, fidem ſine operibus nihil prodeſſe, that faith without workes profiteth nothing. As alſo Paul himſelf did not define it to be quamlibet fidem, qua in Deum creditur, whatſoeuer manner of faith wherewith we beleue in God, but that holeſome & expreſſe Euangelical faith, whoſe workes proceed from loue, and the faith (quoth he) that worketh by loue. Wherevpon that faith, which ſome thinke to be ſufficient to ſaluation, he ſo affirmeth to profit nothing, that he ſaieth: If I ſhould haue al faith, ſo that I could remoue mountaines, and haue not charitie, I am nothing.*

Gal. 5.

1. Cor. 13.

He therefore that wil not erre in this point, nor in any other, reading either S. Paules Epiftles, or the reſt of the holy Scriptures, muſt fticke faſt to the doctrine of the Catholike Church, which Church S. Paul termeth *the*

1. Tim. 3.

pillar & ground of the truth: Affuring himself that if any thing there found to him as contrarie hereunto, he faileth of the right fenſe; and bearing alwaies in his mind the admonition of S. Peter, ſaying: *As alſo our moſt deare brother Paul according to the wiſedom giuen to him, hath written to you: as alſo in his Epiftles, ſpeaking in them of theſe things, in the which are certaine things hard to vnderſtand, which the vnlearned and vnſtable deprauē, as alſo the reſt of the Scriptures, to their owne perdition. You therfore, Brethren, foreknowing, take heed leſt ye be led amiſſe by the errour of the vnwife, and fal away from your owne ſtedfaſtnes.*