

some are incorrect. Let us fix our attention upon a few particulars.

I. *The difference in question ought not to be attributed to any thing particularly favourable to the reception of the gospel in the spirit and genius of primitive times.*

The human heart, till subdued by grace, is at enmity with God ; and this is the character of our whole world. We are not, then, in any circumstances, to expect a moral predisposition in the hearts of men to embrace the gospel. But still there may be many things in the state of the public mind, and in the institutions of society, which facilitate or obstruct the progress of the truth. These favorable or unfavorable circumstances may be found in the religion, the morals, the politics, and the philosophy of a people. Indeed, there are nameless modifications of human life and human opinions which may become the occasions of the reception or the rejection of the gospel. These things may form the very point on which the whole matter may turn—and turn, too, both for time and eternity. But what was the state of the apostolic age in this respect? What do we find, on a minute inquiry, in the existing condition of the world, which can be assigned as a reason why the gospel took such deep and fast hold of the mental and moral energies of man? It is true, God, in his providence, had prepared the world for the coming of Christ; and there were certain grand traits in the features of society which had a bearing upon the means and facilities of propagating the gospel. The universality of the Roman empire was a fact of this character. By this, channels of intercourse were opened between different nations, whose ignorance or enmities would otherwise have separated them from each other, as if impassable mountains or unnavigable seas had intervened. Another kindred in its operation—was the prevalence of the Greek language, in that age. It had become a kind of universal language in the Roman empire, and by this means the early christian teachers were enabled to address a vast population originally consisting many different nations, without the slow process of studying a variety of languages, and without the intervention of a miracle. The dispersion of the Jews, and their final settlement, in different parts of the Roman empire, and especially in the populous cities, is another circumstance which ought not to be omitted. Their synagogues opened the first pulpits for the heralds of the cross, and among the descendants of Abraham, the gospel, even remote from Jerusalem, gained its earliest victories. And sometimes its rejection by the Jews, became the occasion of its reception by the Gentiles. But these peculiarities of that age, though they constituted