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AN
INQUIRY
INTO THE
KNOWLEDGE OF
THE
ANTIEN T HEBREWS,
CONCERNING
A
FUTURE STATE.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY,
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P R E F A C E

BY THE
EDITOR.

THE author of this small tract, besides his distinction in the philosophical world, has been through life an eminent teacher, and advocate of true religion, with the purest views to serve the interests of truth, and of piety and virtue among mankind. This is seen in the large catalogue of his valuable writings, which will continue to promote these great ends, in his native country; and in America, and wherever the english language shall prevail, when he shall be no more: a rare privilege of heaven's chosen favourites and the truly good! Scarcely was he landed on the American shores, to which he was driven by the violence of his enemies, when he was called upon to counteract the unfavourable impressions on the minds of men, which Mr. Paine's manner of attack on Christianity in his *Age of Reason*, that had been recently sent over to that country, and was cir-

culated with great zeal and industry, was calculated to produce. Accordingly, in October 1794, the year in which he left England, he published, "An Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, being a continuation of Letters to the philosophers and politicians of France on the subject of religion, and of the Letters to a philosophical unbeliever." With what candour and liberality these Letters were penned, and of the weight of his remarks and arguments, the readers will judge.

If any wish to know how usefully in various ways, his hours have been employed, during his abode in America, I would refer them to what is briefly related in a note, pag. 6. of an excellent Discourse delivered the last Summer, on a public occasion, by Mr. Belsham, printed by Johnson, St. Paul's Church yard: of which it is sufficient recommendation to mention, that he is the Author of the admirable Review of Mr. Wilberforce's late Treatise, in Letters to a Lady.

In a Preface to Dr. Priestley's Answer to the *Age of Reason*, reprinted here by Mr. Johnson in 1795, some things were offered to remove undue prejudice, and vindicate his fair name from unworthy abuse cast upon him, interspersed with some account of his voyage to America,

America, and first settlement there. And many who love and esteem him, and highly venerate his character, will be gratified by the following extract of a letter from himself to a friend, dated no longer ago than the end of October last.

Having been led just before to speak of the "Giver of all good," he proceeds;—"This hand I endeavour to respect daily and hourly, and it is a neverfailing consolation under all my troubles, which have been many since my settlement here. I am thankful they did not come at an earlier period, when I should have been less able to bear them, and when they would have impeded more than they now do, the course of my studies. I am thankful that in this remote, and in some respects unfavourable situation, I have both the *power*, the *will*, and especially the *leisure*, to do something both in theology and philosophy, on the whole hardly less than I have done at any period of my life. But my uncertain and slow communication with Europe is a great damper. I have not yet heard of your having received my *Essay on the knowledge of a future state among the antient Hebrews*; my interpretation of the 18th. of Isaiah, and the philosophical pieces I sent. I find, however, by a notice from the Royal Society, that my treatise on phlogiston had arrived.

rived. I have several articles of considerable importance, as they appear to me, which I would send if I had a good opportunity, and I am continually adding to what will be at the discretion of my Executors.”

“ In my last I think I mentioned to you a young man in this place of an excellent character ; who is become a zealous unitarian. By his means chiefly I have now a class of fourteen very promising young men, to whom I have great satisfaction in giving lectures as I used to do in England from my Institutes ; And I have also been encouraged to open a place of public worship in a School room near my house where I have a small congregation. Many persons, I was told, would come to hear me, if I would preach out of my own house, and I find it to be so. I principally expound the Scriptures, reading one portion of the Old Testament, and another from the New. I am now reading Isaiah, and the history of the gospels from my Harmony.”

Concerning this Essay he speaks with great modesty ; “ I did not expect that all my arguments would, at first especially, strike you as they do me ; but on the calmest reflection, I am quite satisfied with them. In whatever way you dispose of the piece, it will be equally agree-

agreeable to me. I am glad it is thought worth publishing in any way."

The editor begs leave only to add, that perhaps it may be of importance on the subject of this Essay, to consider, that the divine lawgiver was not delivering a system of religion founded on abstract principles, but such as was suited to the circumstances and situation of the people he was to govern. And knowing, that the belief of a future state of some sort was universal, especially among his own people, being part of the *primitive religion* derived from Noah, he held it not needful to insist upon it. But as the heathen nations, in the midst of whom the Israelites lived, who had retained the knowledge of one supreme God from the same source, had adopted the idolatrous notion of many inferior deities besides, who were the managers and dispensers of all things here below: His chief business was to impress his own nation with the knowledge of the one true God, and the duty of looking up to and worshipping him alone, and no other besides him, in opposition to the heathen ideas, that they were unregarded by the supreme Being, and under the government of tutelar deities; and to teach them particularly by a code of laws for the constant regulation of their conduct, that the Divine Being had a special regard to this world, and the moral

con-

conduct of his creatures in it; and made their present good and prosperity, to depend upon a strict adherence to him and to his statutes and commandments: but this did not preclude their being at the same time influenced by a view to the divine favour, or the fear of his displeasure in a future world. So that *virtually* a future life was the sanction of the law of Moses.

This accounts for the omission of the express mention of a future state by Moses, without any of those ingenious hypotheses which have been framed for the solution of the difficulty.

T. L.

E R R A T A.

N. B. (b) means from the bottom.

Page 20. line 9. for in, read, into.

— 29. — 16. after another, a period.

— 30. — 1c. for extraction, read, extinction.

— 31. — 8. — writer — writers.

— Ibid. — 9. — speaks — speak.

— Ibid. (b). — 4. after dead, a Note of interrogation.

— Ibid. — 5. — thanks — do.

AN INQUIRY INTO THE KNOWLEDGE OF
THE ANTIENT HEBREWS, CONCERNING A
FUTURE STATE.

SECTION I.

*Presumptive arguments in favour of the antient
Hebrews having the knowledge of a
future state.*

IT is the opinion of many Christians that the antient Hebrews had no knowledge of a future state, consequently that a view to such a state had no influence on their conduct, and that there are no traces of such a belief, or influence, in the books of the Old Testament. But that this should be the case appears to me exceedingly improbable for the following obvious reasons ;

I. That there is a state after death, and that it is more or less a state of retribution, in which virtue will be rewarded and vice punished, ever has been, and is now, the be-

lief of all the rest of mankind ; and can it be supposed that the antient Hebrews were the only exception ? How came they to be ignorant of a truth that was known to all other nations ; or, if it was an error, and a prejudice, how came they only to be exempted from it ?

II. Since there is no evidence whatever of a future state for man, or that he shall survive the grave, any more than for other animals, from natural appearances ; the doctrine of a future state must have come originally from revelation ; and is it at all probable that the nation which has been most favoured with divine revelations, and by whom they have been communicated to the rest of mankind, should be more ignorant of this most important of all truths than any other people ? May it not rather be presumed that they must have had more just ideas on the subject than any other nation, and more agreeable to those which we find in the New Testament ; while among other nations which had not the advantage of divine revelation this knowledge became obscured, being tinged with superstition and absurdity, though it was not wholly lost.

Since

III. Since this revelation must have been made to man in a very early period, it is natural to expect it in a state the least deviating from the truth in the remotest ages, and among the oldest nations, and to have become mixed with fable and absurdity in a course of time. And though the Hebrews were not the oldest of all nations, yet having a much more distinct history of the great ancestors of their nation, than any other people whatever, they may be considered as having had better means of information than any other. To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a doctrine known to the Egyptians, Hindoos, and Chinese, could not be unknown, or not accurately understood.

IV. The Hebrews had more just ideas of the moral attributes, and moral government of God than any other people, as is evident from their writings. They considered the Supreme Being not only as the maker, but as the righteous governor of the world; that being righteous himself, he was a lover and a rewarder of righteousness in his creatures; and yet they could not but see, yea, they expressly acknowledge, that this his preference of the righteous was not always mani-

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fested in this life ; and they represent the wicked not only as frequently living, but as dying in great prosperity, while the righteous suffered much affliction. They must necessarily therefore have believed, that there was a life of retribution after this, in which the ways of God would be justified, notwithstanding any present unpromising appearances. In these circumstances their adherence to virtue must have been supported by their faith in a life to come.

There is no occasion to cite many passages from the Old Testament to show that the antient Hebrews had the highest ideas of the divine regard to virtue, and of the justice and equity of his administration. They are innumerable. I shall however, produce a few. Ps. cxix. 137. “ Righteous
 “ art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judg-
 “ ments. The righteous Lord loveth right-
 “ teousness, and hateth all the workers of
 “ iniquity. Ps. xcvi. 11. “ Light is sown
 “ for the righteous, and gladness for the
 “ upright in heart.” All the Israelites must have known, that the inhabitants of the old world were destroyed by a flood, and those of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven,

von, on account of their wickedness. On this latter occasion Abraham says, Gen. xviii. 25. "The judge of all the earth will do that which is right."

It is equally evident that the antient Hebrews did not consider the rewards of virtue and the punishments of vice as always taking place in this life. Their complaints of the prosperous condition of the wicked, and of the afflictions of the righteous, are frequent: as Ps. xii. 8. "The wicked walk on every side while the vilest of men are exalted." The Psalmist complains, Ps. xvii. 13. of the wicked as "having their portion in this life," and that God "fills their belly with hidden treasures: they are," he says, "full of children to whom they leave their substance."

In the writings of Solomon, there are passages still more expressly to this purpose. Ecc. viii. 14. "There is a just man to whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked, and again there is a wicked man to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." vii. 15. "There is a just man that perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man

“ that prolongeth his life in wickedness.”
 ix. 1, “ No man knoweth love or hatred
 “ by that which is before him. All things
 “ come alike to all. There is one event to
 “ the righteous and to the wicked, to him
 “ that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth
 “ not. As is the good so is the sinner, and
 “ he that sweareth as he that feareth an
 “ oath. This is an evil among all the
 “ things that are done under the sun, that
 “ there is one event unto all.”

V. Another presumptive evidence, and I think a decisive one, in favour of the antient Hebrews having had a knowledge of a future state, and even that of a resurrection, is that, with the exception of the Sadducees only, who though generally rich, were not numerous, it was the belief of the Jewish nation in the time of our Saviour, and in that of the Maccabees and others after the time of Malachi.

Of the former no doubt can be entertained from the history of the *Evangelists*, and the *Acts of the Apostles*, and of the latter there is sufficient evidence both from express testimony, and undisputed facts. For what could possibly induce men, and especially so
 many

many as were the martyrs in the persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, to lay down their lives, and even in torture, rather than sacrifice to the heathen gods, and thereby renounce their religion, but the firmest persuasion that by so doing they ensured a happier lot in another life.

That these, and all those who were eminent for their piety in former times, were actuated by this *faith*, was certainly the opinion of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews. After enumerating many striking instances of the power of faith, he says Ch. xi. 35, “Others were tortured not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.”

The Apocryphal book entitled *Wisdom* shews the sentiments of its author, and probably that of his nation in general, on the subject. And it is evident, that by them it was taken for granted, that the righteous were destined to come to life at a future period, and then to possess the kingdom mentioned in the book of Daniel, as reserved for the “faints of the most High.” Ch. iii. 4. “The souls (or lives) of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall
“ no

“ no torment touch them. In the sight of
 “ the unwise they seemed to die, and their
 “ departure is taken for misery, and their go-
 “ ing from us to be utter destruction. But
 “ they are in peace. For though they be
 “ punished in the sight of men, yet is their
 “ hope full of immortality ; and having been
 “ a little chastised, they shall be greatly re-
 “ warded, for God proved them, and found
 “ them worthy for himself. As gold in the
 “ furnace he has tried them, and received
 “ them as a burnt offering. And in the
 “ time of their visitation they shall shine,
 “ and run to and fro as sparks among the
 “ stubble. They shall judge the nations,
 “ and have dominion over the people, and
 “ their Lord shall reign for ever.” This
 happy lot, it is evident, was not supposed to
 take place immediately after death but at a
 future period.

Whoever it was who made the translation
 of the book of Job that is now in the 70,
 he must have lived in the interval between
 the writing of the books of the Old and those
 of the New Testament ; and to this we find
 the following remarkable addition. “ It is
 “ written of him that he shall rise again, with
 “ those.

“ those whom the Lord raiseth up ;” which shows that the belief of a resurrection was general among the Jews in his time.

That this doctrine should have been received by the Jews from the Chaldeans at Babylon, or from any other heathen nation, is altogether incredible. Though there are some faint traces of the doctrine of a resurrection among the antient Chaldeans, it soon became evanescent in the heathen world in general. Among the heathens the doctrine of a *separate soul*, which never dies, but survives the body, soon became universal ; and this is in reality inconsistent with the doctrine of a resurrection. And though it gradually gained ground among the speculative Jews, who had intercourse with the Greeks, and adopted the principles of their philosophy, such as Philo and Josephus, it certainly was not the belief of the Jewish nation in general in the time of our Saviour ; but that of a resurrection only. When Jesus said to Mary, with a view to comfort her on the death of her brother, John xi. 23. “ Thy brother will rise again,” she replies, “ I know that he will rise again at the resurrection, at the last day ;” which evidently im-

implies that she had no belief of any kind of life, or enjoyment for her brother in the intermediate time.

If then, the Jews did not receive their doctrine from the Heathens, they must have derived it from revelation. And at what time can we suppose that this greatest of all discoveries was made to them? Certainly not after the time of Moses; for then there would no doubt, have been some record of it in some of the books of the Old Testament; every other divine communication recorded in his writings, and those of the subsequent prophets, being of little moment compared to this. But though from the time of Moses the history of the nation, and the succession of prophets, was uninterrupted, we have no mention of any such communication, or of any circumstances connected with it. It is impossible, therefore, not to conclude that it must have been known to all the great ancestors of that nation, and probably to those of all mankind, prior to any history; and being universally believed, there might not have been any particular occasion for the writers to mention it.

Arguing in this manner *a priori*, it can hardly be doubted but that the antient Hebrews must have had the knowledge of a future state, and of a resurrection; and if so, they must have been influenced in their conduct by it. It may, therefore, be presumed, that there are allusions to it, though no express mention of it, in their *moral writers*, though without this previous knowledge of their sentiments, their meaning might be doubtful; so that no certain inference could have been drawn from their language only. As to their *historians* and their *prophets*, we have no particular reason to expect any reference to this doctrine in their writings, since the occasion of their writing did not require it. I shall therefore consider some passages in their moral writings, as the books of *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, and *Ecclesiastes*, as well as the book of *Job*, as I think they may be reasonably supposed to have been written with a belief of a future state, and to have a reference to it.

VI. There are however, two circumstances in the historical books of the Old Testament which clearly imply that there is another state of existence for man besides the

present. I mean the translations of Enoch and Elijah. For it could not be supposed that these men were taken up to heaven to die there, or any where else. It must have been to enjoy life to more advantage. To be taken up to heaven, which is supposed to be the residence of God, must have given the Hebrews the idea of their being admitted to the more immediate presence of God. And this explains these passages of scripture in which the presence of God implies a state of greater felicity than any man can attain to in this life as Ps. xvi. 11. "In thy presence is fulness of joy. At thy right hand are pleasures evermore." And as these two men were eminent for their virtue and piety, it would necessarily be inferred that this state of superior happiness would be the portion of the righteous only. Hence also might come the apprehension that "no man could see God and live," this being reserved for a state after death.

These translations of Enoch and Elijah would not give any idea of there being a soul in man, capable of existing, and of enjoying happiness, independently of the body ;

dy ; since the whole of these men were translated, the body not being left behind. It would, however, be concluded that, if there be a future life for other men, it must be after a resurrection from a state of death, and not a continuation of the present life, a mere change in the mode of existence, and no interruption of it.

SECTION II.

Of the allusions to a future judgment in the books of the Old Testament.

I. **T**HE office of *judge*, or of hearing and deciding causes, having always belonged to that of *king*, as we see in the example of David and Solomon, either of them, in the language of scripture, implies the other ; and the terms themselves are often used promiscuously, as being synonymous. Of this we have an example in the second Psalm v. 10. “ Be wise there-

“ fore, O ye kings, be instructed ye judges of
“ the earth.”

Whenever, therefore, the divine Being is represented under the character of a king, or governor, as he always is, we may conclude that the writer considered him as a judge, and a righteous judge, of the conduct of men ; and consequently that at some time or other he would render to every man according to his works, that being righteous himself, and a lover of righteousness in others, persons of this character would not finally go without reward ; and being a hater of iniquity, the wicked would not always go unpunished.

When therefore, the Psalmist says, Pf. ciii. 19. “ The Lord hath prepared his throne in
“ the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over
“ all,” (and language similar to this, is frequent in the Psalms) he must have had a view to a time in which God would appear in the character, and discharge the office of judge, rewarding the righteous, and punishing the wicked.

II. But besides this there is frequent and express mention of a future judgment in the books of the Old Testament, and this necessarily

cessarily implies a future life. Many of these occur in the Psalms ; and it is evident that in the idea of the writer this judgment could not take place in this life, in which, by his own acknowledgment, all things in general fall alike to all, and the wicked not only live, but frequently die in great prosperity, while the righteous were oppressed by them. I shall recite the principal of the passages in which they occur. Some of them are more, and others less, definite, but all sufficiently to the purpose.

Pf. i. 5. “ The ungodly shall not stand
 “ in the judgment, nor sinners in the con-
 “ gregation of the righteous. For the Lord
 “ knoweth the way of the righteous, but the
 “ way of the ungodly shall perish.”

Pf. ix. 7. “ The Lord shall endure for
 “ ever. He has prepared his throne for
 “ judgment. He shall judge the world in
 “ righteousness, and shall minister judgment
 “ to the people in uprightness.

Pf. i. 4. “ He shall call to the hea-
 “ vens from above, and to the earth, that he
 “ may judge his people, v. 22, Consider this
 “ ye that forget God, lest he tear you in
 “ pieces, and there be none to deliver.”

Pf. 1. 1. The mighty God, even the
 “ Lord hath spoken, and called the earth
 “ from the rising of the sun to the going
 “ down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfec-
 “ tion of beauty, God hath shined. Our
 “ God shall come, and shall not keep silence.
 “ A fire shall devour before him, and it shall
 “ be very tempestuous round about him.
 “ He shall call to the heavens from above,
 “ and to the earth, that he may judge his
 “ people. Gather my saints together unto
 “ me, those who have made a covenant with
 “ me by sacrifice; and the heavens shall de-
 “ clare his righteousness. For God is judge
 “ himself.

Pf. lxxvii. 3. “ Let the people praise thee,
 “ O God, yea let all the people praise thee.
 “ O let the righteous be glad, and sing for
 “ joy. For thou shalt judge the people
 “ righteously, and govern the nations upon
 “ the earth.—Then shall the earth yield
 “ her increase, and God even our God shall
 “ bless us. God shall bless us, and all the
 “ ends of the earth shall fear him.”

Pf. lxxii. 13. “ Unto thee O Lord, be-
 “ longeth mercy, for thou renderest to every
 “ man according to his works.”

Pf. xcvi. 11. " Let the heavens rejoice
 " and let the earth be glad, &c. before the
 " Lord. For he cometh to judge the earth.
 " He shall judge the world with righte-
 " ousness, and the people with his truth."

Pf. xcvi. 9. " Let the hills be joyful
 " together before the Lord. For he com-
 " eth to judge the earth. With righteouf-
 " nefs will he judge the world, and the peo-
 " ple with equity.

It is equally evident that Solomon had a view to a future judgment, when, after expressly and repeatedly saying that in this life there is " one event to the righteous and to the wicked," he recommends the precepts of religion as the great duty, and the highest interest of man. He also speaks of a future judgment in the most express term.

Ecclef. iii. 17. " I said in my heart, God
 " will judge the righteous and the wicked.
 " For there is a time for every purpose, and
 " for every work.

Ecclef. viii. 6. " To every purpose there
 " is a time, and judgment."

Ecclef. xi. 5. " Rejoice O young man,
 " in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee
 " in the days of thy youth, and walk in
 " the

“ the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of
 “ thine eyes. But know then that for all
 “ those things God will bring thee into
 “ judgment.”

Eccles. xii. 13. “ Let us hear the con-
 “ clusion of the whole matter. Fear God
 “ and keep his commandments; for this is
 “ the whole duty of man. For God will
 “ bring every work in judgment, and every
 “ secret thing, whether it be good, or whe-
 “ ther it be evil.”

III. The absolute assurances of the final happiness of the righteous, and of the certain destruction of the wicked, which are frequent in the scriptures of the Old Testament, could not have been given in any consistency with the frequent complaints of the prosperous condition of the wicked and the sufferings of the righteous in this life, without a view to a future state of recompence. I shall only quote a few of such passages, out of numberless that might be produced.

Pf. lxxxiv. 11. “ The Lord is a sun and
 “ a shield. The Lord will give grace and
 “ glory, and no good thing will he withhold
 “ from them that walk uprightly.”

Pf. xcvi. 11. “ Light is sown for the
 “ righte-

“ righteous, and gladness for the upright in
“ heart.”

Pf. ciii. 17. “ The mercy of the Lord is
“ from everlasting to everlasting to them
“ that fear him.”

On the other hand, the anger of God, and
some dreadful punishment, are always said
to await all the wicked and ungodly, what-
ever be their lot in this life. Pf. lxxv. 7.
“ God is the judge. In the hand of the
“ Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red.
“ It is full of mixture, and he will pour out
“ of the same. But the dregs thereof all the
“ wicked of the earth shall wring them out
“ and drink them.”

When the prosperous state of the wicked
is particularly mentioned, the most express
assurance is, notwithstanding, given, that the
lot of the righteous will finally be much bet-
ter than theirs, and therefore that they are
not to be envied.

Pf. xxxvii. 5. “ Commit thy way unto
“ the Lord, Trust also in him, and he shall
“ bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth
“ thy righteousness as the light, and thy
“ judgment as the noon day. Rest in the

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“ Lord,

“ Lord, and wait patiently for him. Fret
 “ not thyself because of him who prof-
 “ pereth in the way, because of the man
 “ who bringeth wicked devices to pass.
 “ v. 9. Evil doers shall be cut off. But
 “ they that wait on the Lord shall inherit
 “ the earth. For yet a little while and the
 “ wicked shall not be. Yea thou shalt di-
 “ ligently consider his place, and it shall not
 “ be. But the meek shall inherit the earth,
 “ and delight themselves in the abundance
 “ of peace. The wicked plotteth against
 “ the just, and gnasheth upon him with his
 “ teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him, for
 “ he seeth that his day is coming.”

Ps. xlix. 16. “ Be not thou afraid when
 “ one is made rich, when the glory of his
 “ house is increased. For when he dieth
 “ he shall carry nothing away. His glory
 “ shall not descend after him. Tho whilst
 “ he lived he blessed his soul—he shall go to
 “ the generation of his fathers. They shall
 “ never see light.”

In one remarkable passage the case of the
 prosperous wicked is particularly considered,
 and in it they are represented as in a state
 proper to excite envy even till the time of
 their

their death ; so that the destruction with which they are threatened must necessarily be in a future state.

Pf. lxxiii. 1. “ As for me, my feet were
 “ almost gone. My steps had well nigh
 “ slipped. For I was envious at the foolish,
 “ when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
 “ For there are no bands in their death, but
 “ their strength is firm—When I thought
 “ on this it was too painful for me, until I
 “ went into the sanctuary of the Lord.
 “ Then understood I their end. Surely thou
 “ didst set them in slippery places. Thou
 “ castest them down into destruction. How
 “ are they brought unto desolation, as in a
 “ moment. They are utterly consumed
 “ with terrors. As a dream when one awak-
 “ eth, so, O Lord, when thou awakest thou
 “ wilt despise their image. v. 24. Thou
 “ wilt guide me with thy council, and af-
 “ terwards bring me to glory—v. 26. My
 “ heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the
 “ strength of my heart and my portion for
 “ ever—v. 27. They that are far from thee
 “ shall perish. Thou hast destroyed them
 “ that go a whoring from thee.” What
 could be the glory that he expected when

“ his heart and flesh failed,” but a state of happiness after death ?

We find the same representation of the possible happiness of the wicked in this life, even to the utmost term of it, accompanied with an assurance of superior advantage to be enjoyed by the righteous, in the writings of Solomon.

Ecclef. viii. 11. “ Because sentence
 “ against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men
 “ is set in them to do evil. Though a
 “ sinner do evil a hundred times, and his day
 “ be prolonged ; yet surely I know it shall
 “ be well with them that fear God, that
 “ fear before him. But it shall not be well
 “ with the wicked, neither shall he prolong
 “ his days, which are as a shadow, because
 “ he feareth not before God.” By “ prolonging his days” in this place cannot be meant in this life, because they were said to be prolonged before. It must, therefore, respect his existence in a state after this.

IV. There is no express mention of a life after death in the books of Moses, but only of “ life and death” in general. But it is evident that the Jews understood these terms of

of a future life and death, or of future happiness and misery.

Deut. xxx. 13. " I call heaven and earth
 " to witness against you this day, that I have
 " set before you life and death, blessing and
 " cursing, Therefore chuse life."

That a view to a future life was the real sanction of the laws of Moses seems to have been understood by our Saviour, as well as by the Jews of his time. For when " a
 " certain lawyer came to him saying, Luke x. 25. " What shall I do to inherit eternal
 " life, he said unto him What is written in
 " the law? How readest thou? And he
 " answered, Thou shalt love the Lord thy
 " God with all thy heart, and with all thy
 " strength, and with all thy mind, and thy
 " neighbour as thyself. And he said unto
 " him, Thou hast answered right. This do,
 " and thou shalt live." It is evident that they both understood the life spoken of by Moses of "eternal life," as a state after death. Our Saviour also says John v. 39. " Search
 " the scriptures, for in them ye think ye
 " have eternal life."

I am much inclined to think that the phrase, so frequently used by Moses, of be-
 ing

ing “cut off from their people,” or “from their congregation,” which is denounced as the punishment of wilful transgression of the law, respects a future state; and that it is in opposition to the phrase being “gathered to their fathers,” which, it is remarkable, is never used but with respect to good men, and is sometimes promised as a reward of their virtue, even after the longest term of human life, when, if there was no life after this, no proper reward could possibly await them.

In the writings of Moses not only is the nation of the Israelites threatened with heavy judgments on the case of their addictedness to idolatry, but individual persons; and yet it is evident from their history, that individuals were not punished in any remarkable manner; nor does it appear that any judgments were inflicted till the apostacy was become general, and the crime a national one. Moses however, says Deut. xxix. 18. “Left there be among you man, or woman, or family or tribes, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God;—saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to
“ add

“add drunkenness to thirst, the Lord will
 “not spare him, but then the anger of the
 “Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against
 “that man, and all the curses that are writ-
 “ten in this book shall come upon him, and
 “the Lord shall blot out his name from un-
 “der heaven, the Lord shall separate him
 “unto evil.”

That the Jews in later times understood
 the promises contained in the books of Mo-
 ses, and consequently the judgments de-
 nounced against transgressors, to respect a
 future life, is evident from the account that
 Josephus gives of the sanctions of his laws.
 In his treatise against Apion, Lib. II. C. 31.
 he says. “The reward of such as live ex-
 “actly according to the laws is not silver
 “nor gold. It is not a garland of olive
 “branches, or of smallage, nor any such pub-
 “lic sign of commendation. But every good
 “man has his own conscience bearing wit-
 “ness to himself; and by virtue of our le-
 “gislator’s prophetic spirit, and of the firm
 “security that God himself affords such an
 “one, he believes that God has made this
 “grant to those that observe these laws,
 “even though they be obliged to die for
 “them,

“ them, that they shall come into being
 “ again ; and at a certain revolution of
 “ things shall receive a better life than they
 “ had enjoyed before. Nor would I ven-
 “ ture to write thus at this time, were it not
 “ well known to all, by our actions, that
 “ many of our people have many a time
 “ bravely resolved to endure any sufferings
 “ rather than speak one word against our
 “ law.”

V. In the book of Jeremiah the wicked
 are threatened with some heavy judgments
 in their “ latter end” אחרית (*Achareth*)
 which, as he saw were not inflicted in this
 life, he must have understood as taking place
 in another. Jer. xvii. 11. “ He that ga-
 “ thereth riches and not by right shall leave
 “ them in the midst of his days, and in his
 “ latter end shall be a fool. v. 13. All that
 “ forsake the Lord shall be ashamed, and
 “ they that depart from thee shall be writ-
 “ ten in the earth ; because they have for-
 “ saken the Lord, the fountain of living
 waters.”

Here *shame* is represented as the punish-
 ment of the wicked ; and this is a circum-
 stance particularly mentioned by Daniel,
 when

when he is speaking of the resurrection, Ch. xii. “ Many of them that sleep in the
 “ dust of the earth shall awake, some to ever-
 “ lasting life, and some to shame and ever-
 “ lasting contempt.” This no doubt, is the
 “ weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth”
 that occurs so often in our Saviour’s account
 of future punishment. On the contrary,
 of good men it is said by the apostle that
 “ they will not be ashamed at the coming of
 “ Christ.”

VI. The solemn warnings given by Eze-
 kiel to individual sinners, who certainly, nei-
 ther in his time, nor in any other, were pu-
 nished in this life, must necessarily refer to
 another Ch. xviii. 4. “ All souls are mine.
 “ As the soul of the father, so also is the
 “ soul of the son. The soul that sinneth it
 “ shall die. The son shall not bear the ini-
 “ quity of the father, neither shall the fa-
 “ ther bear the iniquity of the son. The
 “ righteousness of the righteous shall be up-
 “ on himself, and the wickedness of the
 “ wicked shall be upon himself.” v. 26.
 “ When a righteous man turneth from his
 “ righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and
 “ dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath

“ done shall he die. And when the wicked
 “ man turneth away from his wickedness
 “ that he hath committed, and doth that
 “ which is lawful and right, he shall save his
 “ soul alive.” v. 30. “ For I will judge you,
 “ O house of Israel, every one according to
 “ his ways, saith the Lord God.” By *life*
 in this remarkable passage must necessarily
 be understood happiness in a future state,
 and by *death* either extraction of being, or
 misery in that state. In v. 26. it is remark-
 able that the death with which the sinner
 is threatened is after his natural death; for
 he is represented as dying in his iniquity,
 previous to his punishment.

SECTION IV.

Of the belief of the antient Hebrews in a resurrection.

AS the antient Hebrews believed in a future state of retribution, it is equally evident that it was upon the principle of a “ resurrection of the dead ” at a future period, and not on that of the soul surviving the body, and living independently of it ; a principle that was adopted by the heathens, and irreconcilable with it. The writer of the Old Testament always speaks of the state of death as that of absolute insensibility. Ps. vi. 5. “ In death there is no remembrance “ of thee. In the grave who shall give thee “ thanks.” lxxxviii. 10. “ Wilt thou shew “ wonders to the dead. Shall the dead rise “ and praise thee ? Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faithfulness in destruction ? Shall thy wonders

“be known in the dark, and thy righte-
 “ousness in the land of forgetfulness?” cxv.
 17. “The dead praise not the Lord, neither
 “they that go down into silence.” Eccles. ix.
 5. “The dead know not any thing, neither
 “have they any more a reward (meaning
 “no doubt, in this life) for the memory of
 “them is forgotten : neither have they any
 “more portion for ever of any thing that is
 “done under the sun.” v. 10. “Whatsoever
 “thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy
 “might, for there is no work, nor devise,
 “nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave
 “whither thou goest.”

It is farther evident that the belief of the
 antient Hebrews in a future state was upon
 the principle of a resurrection of the body,
 because the righteous are described as living
 upon the earth, and inheriting it for ever.
 Of this there is frequent mention in the
 xxxviii. Psalm. v. 10. “For yet a little
 “while and the wicked shall not be. Yea
 “thou shalt diligently consider his place,
 “and it shall not be. But the meek shall
 “inherit the earth, and delight themselves
 “in the abundance of peace.” This pas-
 sage our Saviour refers to, understanding it
 in

in this sense, Mat. v. 5 v. 28. "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever:" v. 34. "Wait on the Lord and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off thou shalt see it." Ps. lxxix. 35. "For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah, that they may dwell therein, and have it in possession. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it, and they that love thy name shall dwell therein."

The correspondence of this passage to two others in the book of Isaiah adds much to the probability of this prophet speaking of a real resurrection of the righteous dead at the restoration of the Israelites to their own country, as the Jews always understood them. Is. xxvi. 19. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust. For their dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." The word here rendered the *dead* is *rephaim*, which usually denotes the impious dead, such as perished in the deluge. The image in the former part of the passage

is that of the roots of plants buried in the ground, and reviving by means of moisture.

The same idea occurs Ch. lxvi. 17. "Their heart shall rejoice, and their bones shall flourish like an herb." Though now dry, and showing no sign of life, they will revive as plants seemingly dead revive by means of refreshing showers. In this sense it is evident that the passage was understood by the writer of the book of Ecclesiasticus, who says concerning the twelve minor prophets, Ch. xlix. 16. "Let their memory be blessed, and let their bones flourish again out of their place." When this was written they were all dead.

This also gives considerable probability to Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones denoting not merely a revival of the nation of the Israelites, as from a state of death, but the actual resurrection of those of them that were dead. It concludes in this remarkable manner. Ch. xxxvii. 12. "Therefore prophecy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that
"I

“ I am the Lord when I have opened your
 “ graves, O my people, and have brought
 “ you up out of your graves, and shall put
 “ my spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I
 “ will place you in your own land. Thou
 “ shall know that I the Lord have spoken
 “ it, and have performed it, saith the Lord.”

The Prophet was addressing himself to the men of his own times, as to be convinced of the truth of his prophecy when they should be witnesses of the fulfilment of it. Such, at least, is the most natural interpretation of the passage.

That there is the most express mention of a resurrection in the book of Daniel cannot be questioned without the greatest straining of the text, and reducing the plainest language to figures of speech. Ch. xii. “ At
 “ that time thy people shall be delivered,
 “ every one that shall be found written in
 “ the book. And many of them that sleep
 “ in the dust of the earth shall awake, some
 “ to everlasting life, and some to shame and
 “ everlasting contempt. And they that be
 “ wise shall shine as the brightness of the
 “ firmament, and they that turn many unto
 “ righte-

“righteousness as the stars for ever and
“ever.”

Daniel himself is particularly promised a place in this resurrection v. 13. “But
“go thou thy way till the end be. For
“thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at
“the end of the days. This could not refer to any future period in the life of Daniel. For this vision was in the reign of Darius the Mede, when he was extremely old, and in as much power as he ever had been, or as he was in under Cyrus who succeeded Darius; a degree of credit, and power, which he could not, according to the course of nature, enjoy much longer. Besides, there is a reference to an interruption of the happy state of Daniel. He was to go and *wait* till the end be; whereas, he continued in power from this time till his death. as is most probable from what is said of him. Ch. vi. 28. “So this Daniel professed in the reign of Darius, and in the
“reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

With this evidence of the belief of a future life, and of a resurrection among the antient Hebrews, we need not hesitate to interpret literally several passages in the
Psalms

Psalms, to which some ingenious commentators, who entertained a different opinion, have, with tolerable plausibility, given a figurative interpretation; as Ps. xvi. 10. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption;" meaning that he should not continue for ever in that state. "Thou wilt shew me the path of life," i. e. of eternal life. "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures evermore." This language does not correspond to any thing that can be enjoyed in this world, but only in the state to which Enoch was translated.

The Psalmist, speaking of the wicked, says, Ps. xlix. 14. "Like sheep they are laid in the grave. Death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning," i. e. the morning of the resurrection. "And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me." Ps. lxxi. 20. "Thou who hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt
 F "bring

“ bring me up again from the depths of the
“ earth. Thou wilt increase my greatness,
“ and comfort me on every side.” David
lived only eight years after the rebellion of
Absalom, which was the source of the great-
est of all his troubles ; and from several cir-
cumstances it is probable that he had no
great enjoyment of the last years of his life.
He was extremely feeble, and two years be-
fore his death was the pestilence which fol-
lowed his numbering of the people. His
great consolations must have been derived
from his prospects of a state after this.

SECTION V.

Of the doctrine of the book of Job.

ALL the later commentators on the book of Job represent him and his friends as unacquainted with the doctrine of a future state, and as arguing on principles which exclude the idea of it. But this is contrary to all the more early interpreters, and to natural probability.

Job and his friends were Arabs, and appear to have lived in the patriarchal times, when all other nations had a knowledge of a future state, and held it in greater purity than it obtained afterwards. There is also abundant evidence of the Arabs in general before the time of Mahomet being well acquainted with this doctrine. Can it be supposed then that Job and his friends, all men of religion, should have been ignorant of it?

It is alleged that had they been acquainted with this doctrine there would have been no room for any controversy between Job and his friends, which they say related to the vindication of the ways of God to men. But this is a mistake of the question; which was simply whether Job was a wicked man or not; his friends arguing that he must have been so, from the uncommon calamities in which he had been so suddenly involved, and which they considered as divine judgments. But how many persons at this day, when the doctrine of a future state is unquestioned, argue in the same manner; thinking that very great crimes will not pass unpunished in this life, and that it behoves the Divine Being to make speedy examples of such wretches as a warning to the rest of the world?

In reply to them, Job not only asserts his own innocence, and even his exemplary virtue, which he says he should do in the presence of God himself; but shows that the administration of providence in this world is by no means so equal as they pretended: for that many good men suffered, and many wicked

wicked men were prosperous, even to the latest term of life.

The friends of Job speak in such high terms of the rectitude and the justice of God, his love of virtue, and his hatred of vice, as is inconsistent with their belief of there being no future state, in which that justice and regard to virtue would be more manifest than they could pretend that it was in this life. Job himself enlarges on this head, as much as his friends.

It is evident that Job is represented as having no expectation of surviving his misfortunes. On the contrary, he earnestly wishes for death, being without hope of any thing favourable to him in life; and yet it cannot be denied that the passage in this book which is generally considered as expressive of his belief of a future state, shews at least that he was confident of something favourable to him taking place at some future time; that notwithstanding his present afflictions, which he, as well as his friends, considered as coming from the hand of God, the Supreme Being would finally appear as his friend and saviour. Where then in these circumstances, could this, in his idea,
be,

be, but at some time after death? The common interpretation, therefore, whether the passage be rendered exactly in our translation or not, is *a priori* the most natural. This celebrated passage is as follows.

Job. xix. 23. “ Oh that my words were
 “ now written, Oh that they were printed in
 “ a book! that they were graven with an iron
 “ pen and lead, in the rock for ever! For
 “ I know that my redeemer liveth, and that
 “ he shall stand at the latter day upon the
 “ earth; and though after my skin worms
 “ destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I
 “ see God, whom I shall see for myself, and
 “ mine eyes shall behold, and not ano-
 “ ther, though my veins be consumed with-
 “ in me.”

Dr. Kennicott supposes that Job expected that God would appear in a miraculous manner to bear testimony to his innocence before he died. But besides that this is not consistent with his repeatedly wishing for death, as the completion and termination of all his sufferings (for then he would have died in triumph) and with his supposing, as in this very passage, that his body would be

wholly

wholly consumed by his disorder, what reasonable expectation could it be supposed that he, or any man, could have of such a miraculous interposition in his favour? It is, however, something to which he appeals with the greatest confidence, as an event with respect to which he entertained no doubt.

What Job says on this occasion was not to vindicate the ways of providence, but only a solemn appeal to a future judgment with respect to his innocence; being confident that he should be acquitted there, though not by his friends here; and to this his accusers could not have any thing to say, and therefore they had no occasion to notice it. It was only a peculiar mode of declaring his innocence, and contradicting what they had urged against him.

The writer of this book had no more a belief in the conscious state of the soul, while the body was in the grave, than David or Solomon. He ever speaks of death as a state of insensibility, and by no means desirable, except as a termination of affliction. But Job expresses his hope of a change in his favour after death. This appears to me to be

be clearly intimated in the following passage.

Ch. xiv. 7. “ There is hope of a tree
 “ if it be cut down, that it will sprout again,
 “ and that the tender branch thereof will
 “ not cease. Though the root thereof wax
 “ old in the earth, and the stock thereof die
 “ in the ground, yet through the scent of
 “ water it will bud, and bring forth boughs
 “ like a plant ;” that is, it will presently re-
 appear, and be the same that it was before.
 “ But man dieth, and wasteth away, yea
 “ man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?
 “ As the waters fail from the sea, and the
 “ flood decays and drieth up ;” that is, he
 is like to a rivulet in Arabia, which disap-
 pears in the heat of summer, so that there is
 no trace of it left, though it will be found
 again at the return of the proper season of
 the year. “ So man lieth down, and rises
 “ not again, till the heavens be no more.
 “ They shall not awake, nor be raised out of
 “ their sleep,” that is “ till the heavens be
 “ no more,” till a very distant period, like
 the rivulet to which he compares him. He
 wishes for death, but in hope of a future
 change in his favour, and therefore he adds,

“ O,

“ O, that thou wouldest hide me in the
 “ grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret
 “ until thy wrath be passed ; that thou
 “ wouldest appoint me a set time, and re-
 “ member me.”

It is evident that he hoped not to be forgotten when he was dead. If “ a man die, shall he live again ?” that is immediately, as he now does. Man does not die like a tree, but only disappears for a time, like an Arabian rivulet. With this idea he proceeds to say. “ All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.” This was, no doubt, a change in his favour ; and therefore he wished for it. “ Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee. Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands.” That is, after a state of insensibility in death he would be called to a new life, free from the troubles and distresses of this.

It must have been with a full persuasion of a future life that he said, Ch. xiii. 15. “ Though he slay me yet will I trust in him. But I will maintain my own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation ; for a hypocrite shall not come before him, or

“stand in his presence.” Here he speaks of trust in God, and of salvation, after he was dead, What could a Christian say more? This language is exactly correspondent to that of David quoted before.

To the same purpose he says, Ch. xxvii. 8. “What is the hope of a hypocrite though
“he have gained, when God taketh away
“his soul,” i. e. “his life.” The meaning evidently is, that how prosperous soever a wicked man may be in this life, which he elsewhere supposes he might be in the highest degree, and till the day of his death, he can have no hope of happiness after death, which the righteous man has. He likewise says, Ch. xxvii. 19. “The rich man shall
“lie down. but shall not be gathered. He
“openeth his eyes, and he is not.” To be
“gathered” in this place must mean something more than merely dying, and it is evidently some privilege which the wicked had not, and therefore must refer to something after death. It is, as I have observed, a phrase that is never used but with respect to the deaths of good men. He could hardly have spoken more intelligibly if he had said that when the wicked man dies he has no

expectation of a future happy life, which is reserved for the righteous, and when he opens his eyes at the resurrection, it is to receive the doom of the wicked, which is generally denoted by the phrase "destruction," or by language of the same import.

Zophar too seems to consider the crimes of the wicked as rendering them liable to punishment after death, when he says, Ch. xx. 11. "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." Why does he speak of his sins as going with him to the grave, but with the idea of their appearing against him hereafter. Thus of good men it is said, Rev. xiv. 13. "that their works follow them," when they die.

Job seems to warn his uncandid friends of a future judgment, though the exact meaning of the language he uses is not obvious, Ch. xix. 29. "Be ye afraid of the sword. For wrath bringeth the punishment of the sword, that ye may know that there is a judgment." This he seems to intimate would be more favourable to him than it would be to them.

Considering that the sufferings of Job could not well have been greater than they were in this life, he must necessarily refer to something after it when he expresses his dread of some other divine judgment if the charges of his accusers had been well founded. Ch. xxxi. 13. “ If I despised the cause
 “ of my man servant, or of my maid servant
 “ when they contended with me, what shall
 “ I do when God riseth up, and when he vi-
 “ siteth me what shall I answer him ?” Here the phrase “ rising up” seems to be what is called “ juridical,” referring to the customs of courts of justice, in which the judge stood up when he pronounced a sentence. He therefore supposes that there is a future judgment, to which he would be amenable after death.

SECTION VI.

Of the fate of the wicked at the resurrection.

IT is observable that the punishment of the wicked is always described in the Old Testament in language that implies “destruction,” or the extinction of being.

Job says Ch. xxi. 30. “The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction. They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.” Ch. xxxi. 3. “Is not destruction to the wicked? and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?” v. 23. “Destruction from God was a terror to me.”

This language is frequent in the book of Psalms. Pf. v. 5. “The foolish shall not stand in thy fight. Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity. Thou wilt destroy them that speak leasing.” xxxvii. 20. “The wicked shall perish, and the enemies
“ of

“ of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs.
 “ They shall consume : into smoke shall
 “ they consume away.” v. 28. “ The
 “ Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh
 “ not his saints. They shall be preserved
 “ for ever. But the seed of the wicked shall
 “ be cut off.” Iv. 23, “ Thou Lord, shalt
 “ bring them down to the pit of destruction.
 “ Bloody and deceitful men shall not live
 “ out half their days.” By this he could
 not mean that they would not live to the na-
 tural term of human life, for he often says
 the contrary. He must therefore refer to a
 future existence, Iviii. 9, “ He will take
 “ them away as with a whirlwind, both li-
 “ ving, and in his wrath. The righteous
 “ shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance ;
 “ so that a man shall say, Verily there is a
 “ reward for the righteous. Verily there
 “ is a God that judgeth in the earth.” lxviii.
 I, “ Let God arise, Let his enemies be
 “ scattered. Let them also that hate him
 “ flee before him, As smoke is driven away
 “ so drive them away. As wax melteth be-
 “ fore the fire, so let the wicked perish at
 “ the presence of the Lord. But let the
 “ right-

" righteous be glad. Let them rejoice be-
 " fore the Lord. Yea let them exceedingly
 " rejoice." Ixix. 28. " Let them be blot-
 " ted out of the book of the living, and not
 " be written with the righteous." This
 text receives illustration from Dan. xii. 1.
 " At that time thy people shall be deliver-
 " ed, every one that shall be found written
 " in the book" Pf. xcii. 9. " For thine
 " enemies, O Lord, shall perish. All the
 " workers of iniquity shall be scattered."
 civ. 35. " Let the sinners be consumed out
 " of the earth, and let the wicked be no
 " more."

Solomon makes use of language of the
 same import. Pr. xxiii. 17. " Let not thy
 " heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear
 " of the Lord all the day long. For surely
 " there is an end (*acherith*) and thy expect-
 " tation shall not be cut off." By *acherith*,
 in this and several other places, must, I
 think, be meant a future state in which,
 and not before the wicked will be punished.
 The prophet Isaiah adopts the same langu-
 age, Ch. lxvi. 17. " They who sanctify
 " themselves, and purify themselves, in the
 "gar-

“ gardens, behind one tree in the midst,
 “ eating swine’s flesh, and the abomination,
 “ and the mouse” (by which circumstances
 he describes the idolaters) “ shall be confu-
 “ med together, saith the Lord.”

By the term *destruction* we are not, how-
 ever, necessarily to understand utter annihi-
 lation. For the Israelites are threatened
 with destruction in case of apostacy, when
 they were only to be dispersed, and suffer a
 long time, in a state of exile from their own
 country, to which they were to be restored
 in due time. Deut. iv. 26. “ I call hea-
 “ ven and earth to witness against you this
 “ day, that ye shall soon * utterly perish
 “ from

* Here the word *soon* is probably used for *certainly*, and a similar interpretation will remove several considerable difficulties from other passages of scripture, especially that of our Saviour’s promising the penitent thief that he should be with him in paradise *on that day*; when his meaning probably only was, that he should *certainly* be with him, without intending to give any idea of the time when they should be there. So in Rev. iii. 11. and xxii. 20, he says *surely I come quickly* tho almost two thousand years are passed, and he is not yet come. Even when he says, Matt. xxiv. 34. that *that generation would not pass* before his predictions

“ from off the land whereunto ye go over
 “ Jordan to possess it. Ye shall not pro-
 “ long your days upon it, but shall be ut-
 “ terly destroyed.” It is added however,
 v. 30. “ When thou art in tribulation,
 “ and all these things are come upon thee,
 “ even in the latter days, if thou turn to
 “ the Lord thy God, and be obedient to his
 “ voice (for the Lord thy God is a merci-
 “ ful God) he will not forsake thee, neither
 “ destroy thee.”

There is therefore, reason to hope that notwithstanding the *destruction* with which the wicked in general, like the idolatrous Israelites are threatened, mercy may be shewn to them at a distant period, provided the pu-

concerning his second coming, as well as that of the desolation of Judea, should be fulfilled, he might only mean to say that those events would take place as certainly as if those who then heard the prediction should themselves see the fulfilment of it. For as to the time when he should actually come he expressly says that he did not know it. In Luke xviii. 7. the term *speedily* is, no doubt, used for certainly. For in the application of the parable of the unjust judge Jesus says, that God would *speedily* *avenge his elect*, though he had just before said that he would a *long time forbear to do it*; so that their patience would be exercised by waiting.

H nishment

nishment denoted by the phrase *destruction* have its proper effect upon them. And happily, this cannot be doubted while the general principles of human nature remain the same, that they are now. In that state of suffering they will want neither *knowledge*, nor *experience*; and it is only for want of these that any persons are drawn into sin, and become the proper objects of punishment.

An Attempt to explain the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah.

MUCH of the attention of learned christians has of late been given to that part of the prophecies of Isaiah which is contained in the eighteenth chapter, which is with justice considered as one of the most obscure of his or any other prophecies; and since the interpretations that have been given of it are very different, I shall hope to be excused if I propose another.

Notwithstanding the uncertainty there may be in the sense of particular words and phrases, in this or other prophecies, it may not be difficult to ascertain the general sense of them from collateral evidence; so that though those words and phrases may remain of doubtful interpretation, there may be no great uncertainty with respect to any thing of much importance in the prophecy.

There is abundant evidence of the Hebrew text of the prophetic books of scripture being considerably corrupted by frequent transcribing. To this the necessary obscurity of these parts of scripture, would greatly contribute, while the obvious sense of the historical books would secure their correctness to a transcriber who understood the language. On this account it may be allowed to call in the aid of the antient versions; since at the time in which they were made the copies might be more correct. Consequently, if any of them give a clear meaning, consistent with the context, it may be adopted, in preference to the Hebrew text of which no certain or good sense can be made. Even conjectural emendations, without the authority of any antient version, or MS, may sometimes be allowed, though this should be done very sparingly; since many of the most plausible of those emendations have appeared, on farther consideration, to be unnecessary; the present text being capable, on a more critical examination, of a clear and unexceptionable interpretation.

Having

Having premised these observations, which respect the prophetic writings in general, I shall proceed to others which may tend to throw some light upon this part of them in particular.

I. At the time that Isaiah began to prophecy, the kingdom of Judah was threatened with an invasion by the kings of Israel and Syria, and afterwards, in the reign of Hezekiah, with a more formidable one by the king of Assyria. But notwithstanding these unfavourable appearances, it is the great burden of the prophecies of Isaiah, that the promises of God to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and repeated by Moses, viz. that they would be the most distinguished and flourishing of all nations, would certainly be fulfilled; that though their sufferings would be great, and they would be dispersed, as Moses had foretold, over all the face of the earth, they would in due time, be restored to their own country, and enjoy the unmolested possession of it to the end of time; while all the nations which at that time threatened them, and all others that should hereafter rise to
 great

great power and oppress them, would be exterminated.

This fate is particularly announced concerning all the countries that were at that time hostile to the Israelites, though it does not appear in what period of the long continuance of Isaiah's prophesying those predictions were delivered, and it is not probable that they were given in the order in which they are recorded. The judgments of God against Assyria are contained in Ch. x. and Ch. xiv. 22 ; against Babylon Ch. xiii; against Moab (at that time a powerful and proud nation) Ch. xv ; against the Syrians Ch. xvii ; against the Egyptians Ch. xix ; and against the Tyrians Ch. xxiii. All these predictions of Isaiah concerning the fate of these particular countries were followed by other similar ones in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and some of them in the minor prophets, about two centuries after him.

The most remarkable of these prophecies is that against Babylon, which made no great figure in the time of Isaiah and had not then been hostile to the Israelites. It

is farther remarkable, that the overthrow of Babylon is announced as to be accomplished by the *Medes*, Ch. xiii. 17. xxi. 2. xxxi. 8. xlvi. 47. a nation then quite inconsiderable; and Cyrus, the conquerer of Babylon, is even mentioned by name, Ch. xliv. 28. xlv. 1. about two hundred years before he was born.

II. The xviiith. and xviiiith. chapters of *Iſaiah* contain one of thoſe prophecies. It is entitled *The burden of Damascus*, the capital of the kingdom of Syria, which was then a powerful ſtate, and, in conjunction with the kingdom of *Iſrael*, threatened the kingdom of *Judah*. But though, of theſe two, *Damascus* is threatened with utter deſtruction, and the *fortreſs is foretold to ceaſe from Ephraim*, yet it is ſaid that *a remnant ſhall be left of Iſrael*. As no new title occurs till the xixth. chapter, we may conclude that the predictions in the xviii. cannot relate to *Egypt*, as *Biſhop Lowth* and moſt other interpreters ſuppoſe, eſpecially as the very next chapter has the title of *The burden of Egypt*.

III. As the word יִי in Ch. xvii. v. 12.

evidently signifies *woe*, and announces calamity, the same must no doubt, be its meaning in Ch. xviii. v. 1. which is only a continuation of the same prophecy, though it may in other places be a mere interjection, signifying a call to some person or nation.

IV. There is great uncertainty in rendering the phrase כנפים זלזל; but that it is in any respect descriptive of *Egypt* cannot be admitted, for the reason just given. And as the verses immediately preceding in the same prophecy, though improperly placed in a different chapter, represent all nations as exposed to divine judgments, this may be intended to denote the most powerful of them in general, without alluding to any of them in particular. The phrase *shadowing with wings* (which is the most literal rendering and adopted in our common translation) may refer to its power of protecting other nations, and therefore imply great power in itself, such as might lead it to expect to escape the threatened judgments.

V. *Cush* being a country situated farther
to

to the south than any other with which the Israelites were acquainted, the *land beyond the rivers of Cush* may signify any distant nation; the prophecy intimating, that neither great power, nor remoteness of situation, would avail any nation on which God had determined to inflict his judgments.

VI. As the final return of the Israelites from all the countries of their dispersion, in which return they will be favoured and assisted by other nations, is represented by this prophet, Ch. lxvi. 20. under the image of *an offering* brought from all nations to Jehovah; v. 7. of this prophecy, in which the same language is made use of, most probably relates to the same great event. Consequently, the prophet's description of this nation must apply to the Israelites, whatever difficulty there may be with respect to the phrases by which that nation is designated.

The phrase קו קו v. 2. in the description of the same people, is probably a corruption, since they give no clear meaning whatever. We may therefore, adopt some of

the antient versions ; and though these differ, they all agree in giving the idea of a people *oppressed and harrassed*, as the Israelites are in their dispersion. Since, however, the same words occur in Ch. xxviii. 10. where they are rendered by our translators *line upon line*, and made equivalent to *precept upon precept*, one of the marginal readings, viz. a *nation of line line*, may, as the most literal, be approved. In either case, it denotes the Israelites, who have been favoured with divine revelations, though they were not effectual to prevent their apostacy.

The phrase *whose land the rivers have spoiled*, may well enough apply to the holy land, if by *rivers*, we understand with Bp. Horsley, any other cause of desolation, such as hostile armies, which are often compared to the overflowing of rivers:

VII. The phrase *swift messengers* v. 2. by no means necessarily alludes to the inhabitants of the *land shadowing with wings*, or any other particular nation ; but to swift messengers in general, who are directed to announce the purposes of God with respect

pect to his people, and all other nations ; his purposes of favour to the former, and of heavy judgments on the latter. And since mention is made v. 6. of being *left to the fowls of the mountains, and the beasts of the earth*, and this is language in which the destruction of the enemies of the Israelites at their restoration is made use of in other prophecies, it is probable that the same event is alluded to in this more obscure passage.

VIII. There is much difficulty in the translation of v. 4, and 5, and I am by no means satisfied with any that I have seen of them ; but the object of them seems to be to express the attention that God gives to his chosen people at all times, either with respect to the favour which he will finally shew to them, or his chastisement of them for their disobedience.

I shall now give what appears to me the best translation of this prophecy, availing myself of the antient versions with respect to the more difficult passages above mentioned, and of Mr. Dodson's and Bp. Horsley's the latest of the modern ones.

There is no occasion, however, to give any translation of Ch. xvii. though it contains a part of the same prophecy with that in Ch. xviii. and though an attention to it is as I have shewn absolutely necessary to the right understanding of it; because the sense of this chapter is sufficiently clear, so that all the translations of it nearly agree.

“ Woe to the land with extended wings,
 “ beyond the rivers of Cush, which sends
 “ ambassadors by sea, in vessels of bul-
 “ rushes on the waters. Go swift mes-
 “ sengers to a nation oppressed and afflict-
 “ ed, to a people wonderful from the be-
 “ ginning, and to this day, a nation dis-
 “ persed and oppressed, and whose country
 “ the floods have destroyed. Yea all ye
 “ who inhabit the world, and dwell upon
 “ the earth, when the standard shall be
 “ lifted up upon the mountains behold,
 “ and when the trumpet shall be sounded
 “ hear. For thus has Jehovah said to me,
 “ I will sit still, and regard my fixed habi-
 “ tation, as the clear heat after rain, and
 “ as the dewy cloud in the heat of harvest.
 “ Surely

“ Surely before the vintage, while the bud
 “ is perfect, and the blossom is becoming
 “ a swelling grape, he will destroy the
 “ leaders with a sword, and the strong ones
 “ he will destroy and cut off. And they
 “ shall be left together for the birds of
 “ the air, and the beasts of the earth,
 “ and the birds of the air shall be gather-
 “ ed to them, and all the beasts of the
 “ earth shall come to them. At that time
 “ a gift shall be brought to Jehovah, God
 “ of hosts, a nation dispersed and oppress-
 “ ed, from a people wonderful from the
 “ beginning, and to this day, whose coun-
 “ try the rivers have spoiled, to the place
 “ of the name of Jehovah, God of hosts,
 “ to the mountains of Sion.”

The general sense of this prophecy,
 without regard to the meaning of particu-
 lar phrases, I take to be as follows. After
 pronouncing a woe on the nations in gene-
 ral, meaning no doubt, those who should
 have oppressed the Israelites, the prophet
 proceeds to say in the name of God, “ Woe
 “ to the most powerful, and the most
 “ distant of those nations, to which there
 “ is

“ is no access but by sea. And let swift
 “ messengers go to my own people, who
 “ have been oppressed by other nations, to
 “ announce my favour to them. Let all
 “ the inhabitants of the world attend to
 “ my signals on the approach of the time
 “ when I shall shew it to them. For I
 “ shall certainly deliver them from all
 “ their afflictions, and utterly destroy their
 “ enemies, while they shall be brought as
 “ an offering to me from all other nations,
 “ and enjoy an undisturbed settlement in
 “ their own country.”

In this interpretation it will be observed, that I do not, with some late expositors, find *France*, either as the instrument in the hands of God of the destruction of monarchy, or in the character of Antichrist. This power I have no doubt has long been in existence, and I hope is now not far from its termination ; but by what particular means it will be destroyed, or when its destruction will be accomplished, I pretend not to say. Whenever it takes place, it will be followed by the second coming of

of

of Christ. But the time of this greatest of all events was not known even to himself, but to his father only.

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