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A
DEMONSTRATION
OF
TRUE RELIGION
FROM THE
SCRIPTURES.

Wherein the CREDIBILITY of the
SCRIPTURE-HISTORY
IS PROV'D

From the Natures of Things: As also the TRUTH
of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION is Establish'd
from the Relation it bears to it.

Being the *Second Part* of the SERMONS
Preach'd in the Years 1724, and 1725;
For the LECTURE appointed by the Honourable
ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;

By *THO. BURNETT*, D. D. Prebendary of *Sarum*,
and Rector of *Westkington* in *Wiltshire*.

V O L. II.


L O N D O N:

Printed for *ARTHUR BETTESWORTH*, at the
Red Lyon in *Pater-Noster-Row*, 1726.



T H E

P R E F A C E.

 *N the foregoing Treatise I have led the Reader on, thro' a long Chain of Reasoning, to the Christian Religion, from the natural Notions of God, and His Providence: From whence, I think, it sufficiently appears, that, if we believe the one (as I have shewn, we have abundant Reason to do) we shall have no room left to doubt the other.*

I shall now carry on the same Chain in another Branch, which will conduct us to the same Point: And as I before

consider'd the Nature of Providence, and the natural Design and Method of it, I will now take a View of the History of it, as we have it deliver'd in the Scriptures, and how it suits with the foregoing Scheme.

The Credibility of this History, I shall endeavour to establish from the Matter contain'd in it, by shewing, That the Circumstances Mankind are here said to have fallen into at different Times, are such, as requir'd such different Methods of Providence, as this History reports to have happen'd.

This Method will give the Reader a general Key to the whole Book, as it will shew him the Reason of every Part of it.

*He will see a Design laid from the Beginning, and the Suitableness of all the several Steps of Providence to it, which we read of in the Patriarchal,
and*

The P R E F A C E. v

and Mosaic Dispensations: He will see the Reason, and Wisdom of the Jewish Commonwealth and Law, and the Necessity afterwards of their Dissolution; as likewise the Necessity of various Prophecies, and the Nature of them, and the Reason afterwards of their Cessation: And lastly, Such a Connexion of the whole with Christianity, as will shew, that this was the Great Point in view thro'out, in which the several Parts were to unite, and centre.

*Something of this Nature has been long wish'd for, and, if rightly managed, would, in the Judgment of a very learned Prelate *, make one of the best Commentaries on the Old Testament Scriptures in the World: But it has never yet been attempted by any, that I know of.*

* Dr. Williams, Bishop of Chichester, in his 4th Sermon preach'd at Mr. Boyle's Lecture for the Year 1695, p. 18.

What I have done towards this, I am sensible is very imperfect; yet this is very excusable in the first Essay of this Nature: But how short soever I may fall of my Design, I hope there will this Advantage, at least, arise from it, That what I have done will set some abler Pen upon the Work, that we may one Day see it set in a perfect Light, to the Honour of God, and the Edifying of His People.

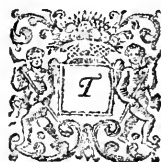




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THE
DEMONSTRATION
OF
TRUE RELIGION
FROM THE
SCRIPTURES.

CHAP. I.

The Credibility of the Scripture History.



FOR the more easy apprehension of the Connexion between this, and the foregoing treatise, I am obliged to repeat something of what I have before said.

As I there gave the reader a general view of the design and method of the

B

Divine

Divine Providence in the Government of the World, demonstrated from the natures and reasons of things ; from hence I inferred, That if there be any History of the Government of the World agreeing with these notions, so demonstrated, it must be so far esteem'd a Credible History.

Now such a History I have shewn we have in that Book, which we call the Scriptures ; A Book written on purpose to give us a Knowledge of the various Circumstances of Mankind from time to time from the Creation, and of the various methods of God's dealing with them according to those Circumstances.

And as in this Book the whole design of Providence is set forth to be what we had before demonstrated it must be, that of making the world Happy, by that only way of making them Holy.

And since the Method for this purpose is represented to have been by various

rious Revelations of proper laws and motives of Holiness, suitable to the different Circumstances of those they are said to be given to, and that not all at once, (as we have shewn they ought not to be) but *at sundry times, and in divers manners*, according as different occasions call'd for them, this is so far a rational and consistent History, and on this account it carries in it a general Credibility, not only of the History itself, but also of those Revelations contained in it, as being of such a Nature, and given for such an End, and in such a manner, as, according to our foregoing arguments, 'tis reasonable to expect they should be.

Thus far I went in the foregoing treatise in the proof of the Scripture History in general :

I come now to consider it more particularly, and as it is a matter of the highest Importance, and propose to examine it step by step.

And as it is, as I said, a History of Providence, and is plainly intended to let us into the Knowledge of the various dispensations of God towards Mankind ; So, since the whole design of Providence is the Happiness of His creatures, according to their several Circumstances and capacities, I will consider what account this History gives us of Mankind ; what Circumstances they are here said to have fallen into from time to time ; and what methods of Providence we can reasonably think such Circumstances might stand in need of, and whether it informs us of any such provision made for them, as was suitable to those necessities : And if we find it answer in these particulars, we have all that is requisite in the nature of the thing, to demonstrate it a Consistent and Credible History.

In order to this inquiry 'tis necessary, that I remind you of what I have already proved, That had the world continued in a State of Innocence, there
could

could have been no other method of Providence necessary for its Happiness, but Preservation; because as every thing had a Nature suited to its End, by acting according to their respective natures, all things would naturally attain their ends.

And therefore as it was Sin only that open'd the door and let in upon us all those various manifestations of the Divine Wisdom, Goodness and Power, that are necessary to the Government of the World, so as this History is apparently a History of Providence, it must naturally give us a History of Sin, of the Rise and Progress of it, and the several Methods that have been taken for the Happiness of the World, according to the different Circumstances that Sin has brought them into, and their Necessities have call'd for.

And therefore as it is natural and necessary, that it should, as it apparently does, begin at the first Sin, if it gives us such an account of this Sin, of

6 *The* DEMONSTRATION

the nature and occasion, of the effects and consequences of it, and of such methods taken for the Happiness of the World, as the Nature of their case required, agreeable to the Nature and Reason of things, this must be a rational and credible account.

Now in order to judge of this distinctly, we will inquire what Reason can find out, and what light it can discover in these particulars, in order to compare it with this History.

The first thing then we are to enquire into, is the Origin of Sin.

The Origin of Sin.

How Sin came into the World, has been a puzzling Question among the Philosophers of old, and the best way for Reason to resolve the difficulty, is, to inquire into the Time when it began.

That it was of early date, is very certain, by the Effects that are seen of it in all mankind ;

For

For before Sin entered into the World, Human Nature was quite a different thing from what we find it now.

Our first Parents, we have already shewn, were made in a State of Perfection, Happiness and Immortality.

But we are evidently in a State of Imperfection, in respect both of our Rational and Bodily Faculties ; we have a great weakness in our Understandings, and a strange disorder in our Wills and affections, and we have a woful Corruption in our lower Powers.

There is now no longer that just Proportion of Blood and Humours, nor that lasting Stability of Constitution in our Bodies, nor that Subjection of our Appetites and Passions to Reason, which we have shewn our first Parents were created with.

But on the contrary, there is too visibly a *Law in our Members, waging War against the Law in our Mind, the Flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh ;* and

8 *The* DEMONSTRATION

we find ourselves, not only liable to sorrows and sicknesses, pains and diseases, but at last under an unavoidable necessity of Death.

So that there is evidently a change wrought upon our Natures, and as we are but too plainly sunk below that Perfection, our first Parents were created in, so this we have already prov'd to have arisen from Sin.

And since 'tis likewise evident from History and Observation, that in all places of the World this depravation is the same, that all have the same moral disorder in their Faculties, and the same natural diseases and decays; As we may thence naturally conclude, that this depravation is something Inherent in, and propagated with our Natures, and therefore must have been derived from that Common Stock from whence all Mankind derived their Natures; so, on the other hand, if it was the Effect of Sin, as we have before shewn it was, it must have been some Sin of our First Parents :

Parents : And as they must have been depraved in their own Nature before any depravation could be imparted to their Children, this Sin, which was the cause of that depravation, must have been committed before they had Children.

Thus far the Case is clear, as to the First Sinner ;

But yet considering the State of Perfection our First Parents have been proved to be Created in, considering how well informed, I have shewn they were of the Nature of God, and their own Happiness, and the Means of attaining it, and the indispensable Connexion, and Dependance of their Happiness upon those Means, so as that they were sure never to be Happy without the Observation of them, the Question is, How they could be capable of falling into Sin ?

For though Man was in his own nature fallible, and in that respect capable of Transgression, yet there was
nothing

nothing in his nature to incline Him to it :

As he was made in a State of Perfection, His Will was, as we have shewn, made subject to His Understanding, and therefore that could not be the occasion of it, because He had no Will to do any thing, but as Reason should direct : The Body likewise, in its Perfect State, was equally subject to the Understanding, without any Irregularity in its Blood and Humours, without any Disorder in its Appetites, and Passions ; so that this also could not carry him to any thing, but what his Understanding should approve.

And therefore, since Man did fall from his Original Perfection, if it was owing to Himself, it would seem to have proceeded from some Error in his Understanding :

But this we have likewise prov'd, was made Perfect in its kind, and naturally capable of finding out Truth, so far as it lay within the compass of Reason :

And

And therefore if the Understanding was mistaken, it must have been in something, that Reason could not perfectly comprehend:

But 'tis hard to conceive, how this could be. For that, which by being mistaken, could produce such sad effects in our Nature, was doubtless necessary to be known: And we have already shewn, that what was necessary to be known, and yet not knowable by Reason, was necessary to be made known by Revelation; and therefore we must conclude, that if the Sin of our First Parents was owing to any mistake of the Understanding, as that mistake must have been in something, that was above the reach of Reason, so it must have been in something, that had, either been commanded, or forbid by Revelation.

And if so, then since there were Three things, as we have before shewn, requir'd a Revelation, even in a state of purity, the first relating to their
Food,

Food, the other to Marriage, and Language, unless it shall appear, that there was any other Revelation, besides these, we must conclude, that the first Sin was committed thro' some mistake, relating to one, or other of these.

How this could be, is still hard to conceive. For the same necessity, that requir'd a Revelation to inform them, what they wanted to know, in order to their Happiness, did, in the reason of the thing, require, that it should be such a Revelation, as they could not be mistaken in. And therefore whatever mistake they fell into relating to any Revelation they had receiv'd, it could not arise from any defect in the Revelation itself, or any Ignorance of what was pretended to be Reveal'd to them.

So that if they fell into Sin, thro' any default in their Understanding, in any thing relating to Revelation, it could be only for want of a due Exercise of it, that is, for want of a due Consideration :

But

But how they could be wanting in a due Consideration of what was necessary to be known, and what, by consequence, they must, in that State of Purity, have had a desire to know, is still hard to conceive :

And therefore we must conclude it to be more probable, that as it could not arise from any want of Information, and as nothing in their own nature could tempt, or incline them to it, so they must have been drawn into it by something from without :

And as 'tis evident it could not be from God, who, as a Being absolutely Perfect, cannot be the Author of Sin, we must conclude, that if there were any such Beings, as Evil Spirits, it must naturally have arisen from them.

Thus far, I think, Reason may go with certainty : But this is not all :

If we consider further what has been already prov'd, That the End, for which Mankind were made, and to which all their Operations were directed, was
Happi-

Happiness, and that this Happiness consists in *being Like God*, from hence it will follow, that as the First Sin must have arisen from some Mistake, so that mistake must have been in something, that they were made to think, would *make them Like God*.

And since we have before shewn, that this Likeness to God, which our First Parents must have made the End of all their Operations, must consist in acting according to Right Reason, which we call Holiness, and that so long as they continued to act according to Right Reason, they would not only be Happy, but Immortally so; From hence it will follow, that as our First Parents had no Inclination in their Will, nor any bias in their Appetites to act contrary to Reason, and therefore could be in no hazard on that Side, of falling into Sin, and by that means of falling from that Happy state they were made in; So they had nothing to take care of, but that their Reason should
be

be always Right, that is, that they should always make a Right Judgment of things, so as truly to discern and distinguish between Good, and Evil, and never to mistake the one for the other: And if they could be but sure of such a knowledge of Good, and Evil, they could not fail, both of Happiness, and Immortality, and in this respect of being perfectly *Like God*.

And if this was the Case, as it demonstratively was, then, as the only thing our First Parents could desire, in order to Immortal Happiness, was to be sure of such a Knowledge of Good, and Evil; so this seems in Reason to be the only thing they were capable of being tempted in, and therefore the hopes of this Knowledge, of Good and Evil, seems to be the only thing possible for them to be drawn into Sin by.

And if to all this we add, what we have likewise before prov'd, that in a State of Purity, whatever was done, was done out of a Principle of duty

to God, we may from hence farther conclude, that as the First Sin of our First Parents was owing to some mistake, and that mistake in something, they thought would contribute to their Happiness in making them like God, in giving them a Knowledge of Good and Evil, so it must have been done out of a false Imagination, that it was what they must do, out of Duty to God.

Thus far we stand upon certain ground from the natures, and reasons of things.

But yet how evident soever this appears to be, since we have already shewn, that the First Sin must have been committed against some former Revelation, it is hard to conceive, in our First Parents Circumstances, how it could be possible for them to think, that any thing could contribute to their Happiness, which they knew to be contrary to a reveal'd Command ; or how they could think it their Duty to do,

do, what they knew by Revelation they must not do ; unless they had some notion of a second Revelation, commanding them to act contrary to a former, as necessary to their Happiness so to do.

For to do any thing out of duty to God, supposes in the very notion of it, that it is the Will of God, that it shall be done ; and by consequence to act against a known Revelation out of duty, must suppose some further Revelation declaring that action to be the Will of God.

And therefore, if our First Parents sinn'd against a known Revelation, out of a mistaken notion of duty, it will follow,

That that mistake must have arisen from some false imagination of a second Revelation to take off the obligation of the former, injoining them to do that as necessary to their Happiness, which by the former they were commanded not to do :

But yet how certain soever this seems to be, it is hard to conceive, how it could be, that is, how they could be drawn into such a false imagination :

And therefore, since this is a matter of Fact, and by consequence is best understood by History, whatever History we have of this event, which agrees with these Reasonings, and yet accounts for these difficulties, we must not only conclude that History to be Credible, but we must esteem it so much the more Credible, by how much these difficulties are, by Reason, the more unaccountable.

Now such a History we have in this Book of *Moses*, which gives us an account of this very case, which no other History, that we know of, pretends to do, and 'tis so exactly agreeable to what we have already demonstrated, that I question not but you are beforehand with me in the application.

In this History we are no sooner inform'd of the Creation of Mankind,
the

the whole of which was then, only one Man and Woman, who are said to have been placed in a Garden, where they had Objects suitable to every Appetite ; but we are told of a Revelation God made to them concerning their Food : In which as he gives them a Commission to eat of all the fruits of the Garden, excepting one, so he forbids them that One, under the Penalty of Death, as being, in its own nature, dangerous to be eaten.

'Tis worthy our notice, as I have before observ'd, that this History begins here, because I have already shewn that there was a necessity in the nature of things of such a Revelation as this, in our First Parents Circumstances, that they might be informed concerning their Food, if there was any thing, which it was not safe for them to eat.

And 'tis a particular mark of the Credibility of this History, that here was such a Provision made in this case. Now,

Against this Revelation they are represented to have sinned, by being drawn into a mistake by the false Insinuations of a Serpent.

What this Serpent was, is not here told : It is probable this Expression was well understood in those days, when *Moses* wrote whilst the Tradition was fresh, and of late date, and he needed only to hint at what every body knew. But however that be, we are thus far certain, that by the Serpent could not barely be meant the animal so called, because several things are evidently spoken of it, as are not compatible to the nature of that creature, and can only belong to a Rational Agent.

And since this History tells us, there was no other Rational creature of the Human kind, but one Man, and Woman ; and therefore none of that species could be intended by it, we may thence infer, that there must have been some other order of Rational Creatures,

tures, which this Historian must have aim'd at, and therefore by the Serpent he must have meant some wicked Spirit, who, either appear'd under the disguise of a Serpent, or else actuated the real body of that creature, or else is represented by this expression, as a Figurative and Symbolical Character.

And accordingly we are told in other places of Scripture, with which ancient Tradition agrees, that this Serpent was That Evil Spirit, whom we commonly call the Devil, who is represented there, as the common Enemy of Mankind.

And here it is to be observed, that this Evil Spirit, according to Tradition, was originally created an Angel of Light in a State of Happiness in those Mansions of Glory, where God is said, in a more peculiar and extraordinary manner, to display His Majestick Presence: But how great soever his Happiness was, he is nevertheless said to have fallen into Rebellion against God, and thereupon to have been cast with those

wicked companions, which he had drawn into Confederacy with Himself, into some lower Regions of Dishonour and Unhappiness.

When this Rebellion began, and when this punishment was executed, whether before, or after our First Parents fall, we are not told : We have reasons to incline us to imagine, that his attempt upon our First Parents, was his first transgression.

But if others think it more probable, that his first transgression was before, and that he had before been banish'd from the presence of God, 'twill not then be unnatural to conceive, that the motive which might induce him to destroy mankind, might be his Envy of their Happiness, whilst himself was doom'd to misery ; And perhaps too, being desirous to revenge himself, if by any means he could, on God, he might endeavour to defeat the Intention of God, in the Creation of Mankind for a Happy and Immortal Life,
by

by drawing them into Sin, and Misery, and Death ; Flattering Himself, 'tis likely, that if he succeeded in it, he should not only ruin Mankind, but, as it were, out wit, and over-reach his Creator too, by obliging Him to destroy His own Workmanship, and in them, the whole Species of Mankind at once.

This is the Temper of that Evil Spirit, according as he is represented in other parts of Scripture : And this, I say, may reasonably be supposed to have been the Motive that induced him to this Wicked Enterprize ; for the compassing of which, he is here said to have come as a Serpent : Which if it must be literally understood of a real Serpent, 'tis hard for us, at this distance, to account for the reasons, that could move Him to make choice of that, before any other Form.

But if what the world has generally believed, be true, which the Christian Religion confirms, *viz.* That there is

a Higher Order of Good Beings, which we call Angels, and if it be probable, that these Angels might converse with our First Parents in their State of Purity in that Refulgent Form, they are in other parts of Scripture said to have ; it is not unlikely, but this Serpent might have been, as several learned men have thought, one of that Bright Fiery Kind, called Seraphs, and it might have been chosen, as having some resemblance, it may be, to those Angelick Appearances, our First Parents had been us'd to.

But be this as it will, Whatever the Expression means, whether that he came in the real Body, or only under the disguise of a Serpent, or whether it is intended only as a figurative character of subtilty ; in any sense it represents to us a design form'd by this Evil Spirit to deceive : And with this view, he is said to have address'd himself to the Woman, endeavouring to persuade her, contrary to the express

Reve-

Revelation of God, that there was no danger in eating the forbidden fruit.

And, for a reason, He tells her, it could not be, because *The Lord knew, that in the Day they should eat thereof, their Eyes should be opened, and they should be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil.*

By which was meant, no doubt, as I have explained before, that, as they wanted nothing to make them sure of everlasting Happiness, but always certainly to discern between Good and Evil, so that was what this Fruit would give them : So that if they did but eat of it, they should not fail of such a clear apprehension of things, as that they should never be mistaken, and by consequence could then want nothing to make them Like God, and free them from all hazard of Death or Misery.

This was evidently the nature and design of the Argument, and as this was the very Motive I have already hinted at, so it was the only one, as I have shown

shewn before, that they were capable of being tempted by.

And as he urges this motive to them, on the consideration of the Lord's Knowing it to be true, so he came, no doubt, under a specious pretence of being sent from God, to inform them of it, and to take off the former Inhibition, that they might not be any longer deprived of that which he said, *the Lord knew* would be so available to their Happiness.

For though here is nothing in this History of any such pretence as this, yet here is nothing said to the contrary, and as we are therefore left to our own conjecture, what we think most reasonable in the case; so we may very well conclude in favour of that, which we have already prov'd certain from the nature of things.

But beside considering our First Parents Circumstances; *Ye shall not die*, was such an evident Contradiction to the Positive Revelation of God, that
unless

unless it had been ushered in by some previous pretence or other, to gain him Credit and Admission, one cannot in reason imagine, our First Parents should be capable of so much as lending an Ear to so palpable a Falshood.

But much less still can we imagine, that the bare assertion of the Serpent should be of so much Authority with them, as to persuade them to act contrary to the known Command of God, unless he came with a pretence of Authority from God :

For as they were perfectly Holy, and had all their Powers and Faculties in subjection to Reason, and therefore could not incline to do any thing, but as their Reason was satisfied, 'twas fit to be done ; so neither, by consequence, could they incline to eat any thing, 'till their Reason should be satisfied, 'twas fit to be eaten : And since they had the Command of God, not to eat of the Fruit under the Penalty of Death ; as there could be no sufficient Reason
against

against this Command, to satisfy them that they might eat, or that they should not die, but the same Authority that gave the Command ; So we must conclude, That as our First Parents sinn'd against that Command, by the Instigation of the Serpent, he must have persuaded them with this pretence, That He came by the Authority of God, and as a Messenger from Him, and they must have complied in obedience to it.

And though, 'tis true, the History does not directly say this, but only takes notice of some such of the more material Circumstances, as were necessary for the knowledge of the general matter of Fact ; Yet 'tis worth our Observation, that in the very Entrance upon the Story, it is implied, by the abruptness of the words in the first verse of the third Chapter, that there had been some precedent parly between the Serpent and the Woman :

The

The words in the original run thus [not as we translate them ; *Yea, hath God said?*] But *Yea, Because, Hath God said ? Ye shall not eat of every Tree of the Garden :*

Which is as much, as if he had said, *Yea, for this cause, viz. because God hath said, ye shall not eat of every Tree of the Garden.*

Now these words are evidently spoken, as an Answer to something that had been said before, which occasioned the Woman to ask a Reason for what he had pretended to her, as if she had inquir'd, whether the thing was really as he pretended, and what was the reason of it :

To which He answers, *Yea*, that it was so, and that this was the reason of it, because God had not given them liberty to eat of every Tree of the Garden.

Now what can we imagine more natural in this Case, and more suitable to this very Expression, than that he
had

had pretended, he was sent from God; The reason of which, when she inquires after, he tells her, it was about the forbidden Fruit: For, says he, *Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every Tree of the Garden?*

To which the Woman replied, as if she had interrupted Him, *Of the Fruit of the Trees of the Garden we may eat, but of the Fruit of the Tree in the midst of the Garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

By which words she seems to have thought, that they must not only not Eat, but not Touch the Fruit.

To this the Serpent answered, *Ye shall not surely die, For the Lord knows, that in the day that ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing Good and Evil.*

So that upon the whole, the reasoning is thus, as if he should have said,
 “ You ask me the Reason of my being
 “ sent

“ sent from God, and I tell you, it is
“ with relation to the Forbidden Fruit ;
“ And whereas Death is threaten’d to
“ the eating of it, and you seem by
“ this Expression [*lest ye die*] to in-
“ timate, as though you apprehended
“ it forbidden, as being of a destructive
“ nature in itself, as well as that it
“ would expose you to the Wrath
“ of God ; I am come to tell you,
“ ye shall not die, and that you are
“ no longer forbid to eat of it.

“ For the Lord knows, that it is so
“ far from being of a destructive na-
“ ture, that it is the very contrary, and
“ instead of destroying you, will exalt
“ you, and make you like Himself, by
“ giving you a Right Knowledge of
“ Good and Evil.

“ And as you are sensible, he made
“ you to be Happy in a Likeness to
“ Himself, and knows there is nothing
“ wanting in your Circumstances to as-
“ sure you of being immortally so, but
“ to be assur’d of a Right Knowledge
“ of

“ of Good and Evil, so as never to be
 “ mistaken in your Choice, you cannot
 “ imagine that he will continue to de-
 “ ny you this Fruit, which will in
 “ its nature give you this Knowledge ;
 “ Or that he who desires you should
 “ be Immortal, will put you to death,
 “ for doing that, which will naturally
 “ make you Immortal.

“ Now, such is the nature of this
 “ Fruit ; and as the Lord knows it to
 “ be so, so he has sent me to inform
 “ you of it, and though before, He
 “ thought fit to forbid the eating it,
 “ under the Penalty of Death, you are
 “ now commanded to eat of it, as a ne-
 “ cessary means, in the nature of things,
 “ to a Happy and Immortal Life. ”

This is the substance of the Argu-
 ment, and this, I think, is abundant-
 ly clear, from what has been already
 proved.

If there should be any prejudice still
 remaining against this notion of the
 Serpent's tempting our First Parents to
 sin,

sin, under the pretence of his being a Messenger from God, as being so altogether different from the commonly received opinion; if it displease any one who already believes the New Testament, he will see it there fully confirmed by *St. Paul*.

For in the 2d Ep. *Cor.* xi. 3. where he cautions the *Corinthians* against a False Teacher, that came to them, as an Inspir'd person, and as a True Apostle sent by God, when he was really a Minister of *Satan*, he makes a comparison between *Eve* and those people, and represents them in the same Condition shew as in, when she was beguiled by the Serpent.

And again, on the other hand, he afterwards makes a like comparison between *Satan*, and his Ministers, and represents these, as acting the Same part with the *Corinthians*, as *Satan* had done with *Eve*.

And as he expresses his fear lest the *Corinthians* should be beguiled by

the Ministers of *Satan*, as *Eve* was by the Serpent, so he afterwards tells us how that was: For, says he, as *Satan transforms himself into an Angel of Light*, so his Ministers are transformed into Ministers of Righteousness: And by this it is implied, that if the people should be beguiled by such ministers, under such a false appearance of Ministers of Righteousness, they would then be beguiled, as *Eve* was by *Satan*, under the false appearance of a Messenger from God.

And as 'tis plain, that it is in reference to this very case of *Eve*, that *Satan* is said to have *transformed himself into an Angel of Light*; so we have no hint in Scripture, that he did so any where else; and 'tis very probable, that in the Apostles time, there was some general tradition of this Event to which these words refer, and upon which this Argument is built.

Thus you see what Authority I have for this Opinion, that as our First Pa-
rents

rents were seduced by an Evil Spirit, so he did it under the appearance of an Angel of Light, and as a Messenger sent from God : And as he thus applied himself to the Woman, and by these arts of delusion had prevailed upon her Judgment, it is said, that *when she saw*, that is, was convinced, contrary to what she thought before, *that the Tree was Good for Food, and since it was desirable to look unto, and a Tree to be desired to make one Wise,* and by consequence everlastingly Happy, *She ate.*

This was the consideration that wrought upon her ; and she, alas ! eager and impatient for the security of this Great End, and not yet acquainted with imposture and delusion, inconsiderably swallows the Bait : And as the Fruit was agreeable to the eye, so finding it, it may be, pleasant to the taste, and herself not only Alive, but perhaps her Spirits exalted and enliven'd by it ; away she goes, with the same

arguments, 'tis probable, to her husband, which being strengthened by Her experience, prevailed on Him to eat, as she had done, and so they Both fell into the Fatal Evil.

These things being thus, you may here see what a wonderful agreement there is between this History, and our foregoing Reasonings in every the minutest Circumstance.

You see here how Sin came into the world ; That the First Transgression was committed (as our Reason had demonstrated it must be) by the First Parents of mankind, and that too against a known express Revelation, and that too through a mistake, they were drawn into, by the false insinuation of an Evil Spirit, persuading them to it, as necessary to their Happiness, as it would make them *like Gods, knowing Good and Evil*, and therefore incapable of Sin, and pretending to be sent as a Messenger from God, to acquaint

quaint them of a New Revelation to command it.

All this we had before discovered from the natures and reasons of things, and as this History receives a great degree of Credibility from its punctual agreement in all these Circumstances, so it has likewise no inconsiderable addition, as I have observed before, not only from the nature of the Revelation made to our First Parents, against which they offended, as being such, as was absolutely necessary, and such as their Condition indispensable required, but also from the nature of that particular Temptation that is here said to be offered to them, as being such, as I have likewise observed, as was so exactly suitable to their Circumstances, that they do not seem to have been capable of being drawn into Sin in any other manner, or by any other Temptation, than this.



C H A P. II.

The Effects and Consequences of the First Sin, and the Methods of Providence necessary in the Case.



Come now, in the next place, to inquire, what the Effects and Consequences of the First Sin were, that by knowing the Circumstances mankind were brought into by it, we may find out the necessary methods of Providence, that their Happiness might require, considering those Circumstances, and whether this History agrees accordingly.

The Origin of the Depravation of Human Nature.

As to this, we have already shewn, that Mortality, and the Depravation of
Human

Human Nature must have been the Effect of some Sin of our First Parents, which must have been committed before they had Children ; but whether it was the Effect of one, or more transgressions, and when those transgressions were committed, and whether this was inflicted as a punishment, or produced by the natural Causality of Sin, is proper matter of inquiry in this place ; and as the right settling the point will be of great importance to the forming right notions of Religion, so it will be very well accounted for by this History of *Moses*.

'Tis evident, this History agrees with Reason, in ascribing the Certainty of Death to Sin : And as this is here represented as the First Effect of it, so is it said to be the Effect of the First Sin, and that of our First Parents ; It having been threatened, that, upon their eating the forbidden Fruit, *dying they should die*, by which, according to the *He-*

brew Phraseology, is meant, that they should be sure to die.

But though this gives us an account how our First Parents came to die, yet it does not inform us, how their Posterity became Mortal, much less how their Nature came to be depraved, unless it were the natural Effect of the Fruit forbidden, which being of a noxious Quality, might work this Effect in a natural way, and was therefore, as we have already shewn, forbidden to be eaten, as being in its own nature dangerous and destructive.

*The Depravation of Human Nature,
not included in the bare denunciation
of Death.*

For if this Death threaten'd to our First Parents, was only an Arbitrary punishment, which depended only on the Will of God, and not upon the nature of the Fruit itself, the eating of it could do nothing more than make them

them

them liable to the Execution of the Sentence.

And as the Sentence was Death, and the reason of it was the punishment of Sin, it could in reason reach no farther than the Sinner ; And as the sin to which this punishment was annex'd, was committed by our First Parents, it could in reason be only executed on them.

And therefore, though it gives us a plain and natural account, how they became liable to Death, yet it leaves us in the dark, as to the depravation of Human nature, and does by no means inform us, How they, and their Posterity came by those *Lustings of the Flesh against the Spirit*, and that natural tendency to decay and dissolution, which we visibly see is inherent in, and propagated with our very natures.

This Corruption of Nature, as I have shewn, we derive from our First Parents,

rents, and I have likewise shewn, it was the Effect of Sin :

But if the Death here threaten'd to the eating of the forbidden Fruit, was a bare Arbitrary Punishment, it is hard to conceive, how this Corruption of nature could be the Effect of this Sin :

For the punishment here threaten'd is Death, and 'tis self-evident, that a mere outward Sentence of Condemnation to Death, does by no means imply any inward alteration of the nature of the person condemn'd, that the very texture of his bodily constitution shall be changed, and that his Body shall have an inward tendency to that Death he is outwardly condemn'd to :

Much less can it imply, that the *Flesh shall lust against the Spirit, and the Members wage war against the Mind*; And yet this is what we derive from our First Parents, as I have said, and what they contracted by Sin; And as this could not be included in the denunciation of Death, so neither,

The

The Depravation of Human Nature not from Sin, barely considered as Sin.

2dly, Could it arise from their Sin of eating the forbidden fruit, merely consider'd, as Sin.

For if their Sin was, as we have shewn, only owing on their part to a mistake of their Understanding, to which their Inferior Powers, and Faculties were obedient, here was nothing in the Nature of Man, or his operations, amiss, thus far.

As the ruling principle of the Rational Nature approv'd and directed, so the Will inclin'd to chuse and act. And this was as it should be : This is the order of Nature, and so long as this order is persued, it can never produce any breach in the Human Constitution, or any disorder or confusion in its Faculties :

From acting according to Nature can never arise any unnatural tendency to
dissol-

dissolution, and when the Body is govern'd by the Understanding, this can never beget a *Lusting of the Flesh against the Spirit*, tho' it should happen to be ever so much mistaken in its Judgment.

And therefore this Corruption, or Depravation of Human nature, which we derive from our first Parents, could not proceed from this Sin of theirs, consider'd merely, as Sin, that is, as an act contrary to the Command, and Will of God.

And for the same reason it will follow,

The Depravation of Human nature not from a frequency of Sin.

3dly, That it could not arise from a frequency of Sin :

For if our First Parents were, as we have shewn, capable of sinning only thro' mistake ; and if the obedience of the inferior Faculties to a mistaken
judg-

judgment cannot naturally change the Human constitution, and invert the order of their Faculties, we cannot conceive, that any such change, and disorder could arise from any such mistake, tho' ever so frequent.

But if it might, yet we have no reason to suppose any such frequent mistakes in our First Parents case :

For all that they could be mistaken in, was, either such things, as their own Reason was not able to find out, or such as Revelation was to inform them of.

But as for those things, that lay without, or beyond the reach of Reason, so far as they were necessary to be known, so far they were necessary to be made known by Revelation, and how they could be capable of mistake, in things that they knew, in that they are suppos'd to be made known to them, is not easy to apprehend : And 'tis what we should never have under-

understood, had not this History resolv'd the difficulty.

And though we see by this History, how they were drawn into mistake once, yet we cannot but think, that they would be much more cautious for the time to come, and that it would be much harder for them to be drawn into a Second Error after the fatal misfortune of the First.

Before the First sin they knew not what temptation was, nor could have any apprehension of it, or that there was any deluding Spirit, who could have any design against them: But now they were acquainted with Both, and therefore, as they now knew their danger, and therefore could better provide for their future Safety, so we can have no reason to doubt, but they did so.

And therefore since that depravation of their nature, which they derived to their Children, was the Effect of sin,
and

and that too, some sin they committed before they had Children :

And since they were not capable of sinning, but by mistake, and not easily capable, one would think, of mistaking at all, much less of mistaking, and by consequence of sinning, often ; we may thence reasonably conclude, That as this depravation of Human nature was the Effect of Sin, so it was by consequence the First Sin :

And if so, it will follow,

First, That it was either inflicted on our First Parents, as a Punishment of that Sin by God ; or else,

Secondly, That it was the natural effect of Something in the matter of that Sin, and by consequence was produced by the Fruit itself, the eating of which, according to this History, was the First sin.

Which of these is the most reasonable, is now the Question.

The

*The Depravation of Human nature
not inflicted as a Punishment.*

If we take the former, and suppose it a Punishment, considering, that a first Fault, especially if owing to Weakness, and Mistake, is usually look'd on as matter of Mercy and Compassion :

And considering how patient and long-suffering God appears to be, under the daring and Multiplied Provocations of Mankind, one should be apt to think, that he would hardly inflict a severer Punishment, than he had threatened for a single Fact of this nature.

For all that was threatened, was Death, but if the Moral Depravation of their Nature was inflicted too ; that is, if he himself raised up the Inferior Faculties against Reason, and made the *Flesh to lust against the Spirit*, this was more (and a much more severe Punishment) than Death.

To punish sin of any kind with Death alone, we have shewn to be consistent with the Original Reason of * things, and it might be proper for the support of God's Authority, and therefore it might, even by our Reason, be thought convenient, as a Warning to the succeeding World.

* *P. 107. 108, 109 of the former Treatise.*

But to suppose, that a Holy, and a Good God, who, as we have shewn, does no otherwise incline to preserve sinners, but as he desires their Happiness, and as a means of that, their Repentance and Reformation; and who will not do this, without some means to discourage the Innocent from imitating the † Sinner:

† *Ib. p. 141.*

I say, to suppose that such a Being would punish such a sin as this was, with such a Corruption of Nature as was in itself an Unholy state, and by consequence the Infliction of it would seem to be an Unholy Act:

To suppose that he, who desires the Reformation of sinners and the prevention of sin in those, who are yet Innocent, should, by his own Act, condemn them to such a state, as would naturally, and almost necessarily draw them into more, and more heinous sins :

Nay, such a state as must be unavoidably convey'd to their whole Innocent Posterity, and involve the whole Mass in Guilt and Misery, is not so soft a Resolution of the point, as Reason alone would incline to :

And though it is not for Man to set bounds to God, and to determine what is fit for him to do, yet where we have no better Authority, than Reason, 'tis natural to lean to those accounts of things, which are most agreeable to Reason :

And therefore one would rather chuse to account for this Corruption,

The

*The Depravation or Corruption of
Human Nature the Effect of a
Natural Cause.*

Secondly, By supposing it to have arisen from a Natural Cause.

For it is not hard to conceive, how a Natural Cause might excite irregular Appetites in the Body, nor how it might beget Diseases and Death, nor how such a Constitution may be convey'd through a long succession of many Generations.

These are things that fall under every day's Observation.

And therefore one would be very apt to believe, that since this depravation of Human Nature did arise, as we have shewn, from the First sin of our First Parents, there might have been something in the matter of the sin, that is, in the Fruit itself, which might have been the cause of it in a Natural way.

Now that it was so, as we have very good Reason to believe, from what we have already observed, *viz.* That the Fruit had been forbidden, as *dangerous* to be eaten; so if it does also further appear from those Effects, which were produced by the eating of it in the Bodies of our First Parents, even according to this History itself, it will be a further addition to its Credibility.

Now the first Effect that we are here informed of, is, That upon the Eating of the Fruit, *their Eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and sewed Fig-leaves together to make themselves Aprons, or Coverings.*

Now, by *their Eyes being opened, and their knowing that they were naked,* cannot be understood, that these two persons, who, as we have shewn, were made Perfect in their kind, could be in a state of Blindness, 'till this
time,

time, or that they were Ignorant of their being without Cloaths, till then :

This would be too absurd an Interpretation ;

But, by *their Eyes being opened*, must be understood, as that Expression is commonly used amongst ourselves, the discovering something, which they had never seen, or known before :

And by their *knowing they were Naked*, must be meant, that they found themselves under a Necessity of being Cloathed, which they did not discover 'till now.

Before they had eaten of this Fruit, we are told, that both *the Man and the Woman were Naked, and were not ashamed*.

But now, after the Transgression, *they were Naked and ashamed* ; that is, they were ashamed at their Nakedness ; They saw such uncomely Motions, and Disorders in their Bodies, as they had never seen before, and were ashamed at ; and therefore thought it

necessary to hide, by making themselves Coverings to conceal them with.

This is what may be meant by their Nakedness, and this was purely the Effect of this forbidden Fruit, as we are given to understand in the 11th verse of this Chapter.

There *Adam* is represented, as making this Excuse for Hiding himself from God, *That he was afraid, because he was Naked.*

Upon which God puts this Question to him, *Who told thee that thou wast Naked? Hast thou eaten of the Fruit whereof I told thee, thou shouldst not eat?*

In which Words it is sufficiently intimated, That the eating of this Fruit would discover this to Him, as it did, by producing those Indecencies in his Body, which he now saw with shame, and endeavoured to Hide from his own sight, as well as he did himself from God's.

This,

This, I think, is plain beyond any Reasonable exception : And if so, we can be no longer at a loss for the Cause of that mighty Change, that has been wrought upon our Nature.

How the Depravation of Human Nature might be produced by a Natural Cause.

For these Effects, which this Fruit produced in the Bodies of our First Parents, and which they were so ashamed at, do shew a manifest depravation of the Human Nature, both as to that Moral and Natural Perfection, which they were created in.

As to the Moral Perfection of Human Nature ; This we have shewn consisted in the subjection of the Inferior Faculties to Reason ; And 'till the eating of this Fruit, all the Appetites and Operations of the Body, were under the Absolute Command of the Mind.

But as soon as they had eaten, 'tis plain the Body became immediately ungovernable, its Appetites inordinate, and its Motions unruly, because we see they were such as their Reason condemned, and were ashamed at, but yet such as they could not subdue, and therefore were forced to hide.

And then as to the Natural Perfection of the Body ; this consisted, as we have likewise shewn, in a great measure, in the Frame and Composure of it, which, in its Primitive Constitution was made in an Even and Regular Temper, having all its parts in a due Proportion, its Blood and Humours in a proper Motion, its Animal Spirits in an Equal Distribution, according to their respective Ends and Uses.

But by those Effects this Fruit produced in the Body, 'tis evident, this Equability of Temper was broken ; and new, and those disorderly, Motions were excited ; the Blood was visibly Inflam'd, and the Animal spirits, not
only

only Disturb'd, but, 'tis probable, Augmented too, by the new Juices of this Fruit ; which being Incorporated with the Blood and Humours, may easily be conceived to Create, not only an Irregular and Unnatural, but also a Corruptive Fermentation in the Whole.

For the Health, the Vigour, and Stability of the Body consists in a due Combination of its parts :

And therefore it being composed of several Parts, in various Motions, of diverse Natures, and discordant Qualities, whilst these continue in a due Mixture, a just Proportion, an equal Temperature, and regular Operation, as there is a Natural Harmony, so there is a perfect Health and Vigour maintain'd.

But when this Natural Harmony is broke, and there comes to be a Civil war in the Members, when this equal Mixture and Proportion is destroy'd, and one quality makes head against another, these intestine Commotions
must

must unavoidably corrupt and waste its Constitution.

For every the least disorder of this kind, is what we call a Disease, and by consequence a Degree of Death ; and the Body is necessarily impair'd by it in its Activity, Strength, Life, Vigour or Operation ; and though it may bring Death upon the Body, by gentle and slow decays ; yet we may Reasonably conceive that one time or other it will certainly do it, and that sooner or later, according to the Nature and Degree of the Disorder.

For the longer the Disorder lasts, the greater it will naturally grow, and as every the least degree of it, is a weakening to the Body, and a tendency to Corruption, as it is an alteration of its Natural Texture and Proportion, in which all Corruption of Bodies consists ; so by consequence, according to the measure of its continuance, such must the decays of Nature be, 'till they terminate in a Final Dissolution.

Now

Now that this was the Nature of this Forbidden Fruit, that, as it had excited such strange Disorders in the Body, so it would likewise beget Corruption and Death, is further probable from this very History.

For we are herein told, not only of this Tree of Knowledge, which our First Parents were forbidden to eat of; but likewise of a Tree of Life, which, after they had transgressed, they were excluded from.

And as they were not allowed to eat of the other, lest they should Die; so on the contrary, they are deprived of this, lest they should eat of it and Live, ver. 22.

Now from hence, as we may argue on the one hand, That this Tree of Life was of a Sanative, and Balsamick Virtue, which would naturally preserve Life :

So, on the other Hand, we may as reasonably conclude, That this other Tree of Knowledge was of a Noxi-
ous

ous Quality, which would naturally bring Corruption and Death.

For since they were deny'd the Use of this Tree of Life, lest they should eat of it, and Live ;

As it is thence evident, that the eating of that Tree would have prevented their Dying ;

So it is equally evident, that this Death was purely a Natural Effect, in that it might be cured by a Natural Cause ; And we may as well suppose it might be occasioned by the Physical Operation of the Tree of Knowledge, as that it might have been thus cured by the Tree of Life.

Now from all this put together, it does sufficiently appear, how the Human Nature came to be depraved, according to this History of *Moses*, wherein it is set forth as the Natural Effect of sin, and that too the First sin of our First Parents, and that sin committed upon Mistake, and that too in a Matter of Revelation, and that too in respect
of

of something, which they thought their Duty to do, as necessary to their Happiness in making them Like God. In all which we see a wonderful Credibility, as there is an evident and exact agreement between this History, and our foregoing Reasonings :

Why God did not prevent the Depravation of Human Nature, answered.

And though it may seem strange to us, who know not the things of God, nor can dive into the secret Reasons of his Operations, that he should permit such a Fatal Event, as this, to come to pass ;

Yet if we remember what has been before proved, that God Governs all things according to their Natures, Rational things in a Rational way, and Natural things in a Natural way, there is nothing in this Event, but what may be very fairly accounted for.

For as Mankind are Rational Creatures, indued with the Faculties of Understanding,

derstanding, and Will, if they be governed according to their Natures, it must be in such a way as is suitable to these Faculties.

And by consequence, they must not only be provided with all the necessary means of knowledge of every thing necessary to be known, and with sufficient Motives to chuse, and do whatever is necessary to be chosen and done, but they must also be left to their own Freedom.

And therefore, in this Case of the Forbidden Fruit, when God had forbidden the eating of it, as being in its own nature dangerous to be eaten, and had timely forewarned them of that danger ;

And to oblige them the more effectually to avoid it, considering that he forbad it in the way of a Command, and forewarned them of the Danger under the notion of a Penalty, and that too expressed in such a manner,

as though he had engaged his own Veracity to see the Execution of it ;

After they had been thus informed what was necessary for them to do, and had such a Powerful Motive to observe it, what could there be wanting in their Case to a Rational Nature, but to leave them to chuse according to their Reason ?

And if after this they do eat of this Fruit, what can Reason expect, but that as God likewise governs Natural things in a Natural way, the Fruit should be left as a Natural Cause to produce such an Effect as was suitable to its Nature, as this History tells us that it did ? And therefore, what can we desire more consistent with the Natures and Reasons of things, and by Consequence more worthy to be received by Reasonable Men, than this Account of *Moses's* concerning this Event, so far as we have here considered and examined it ?

Thus

Thus we have a View of the Effects of the First Sin, and of the Origin of the Depravation of Human Nature, and how Mankind fell from that Purity and Perfection, they were originally Created in.

And from hence, as I have shewn, we may be able to form a right Notion of that Providence, or Government, which is necessary to the Happiness of the World, so far as relates to Mankind.

For since the Human Nature was created in a Perfect State, as being necessary to a Perfect Happiness, it will follow,

That so far as we are wanting of that Original Perfection, so far we are wanting of the means that are necessary to our Happiness, as has been shewn.

And as Government is nothing else, but the ordering of things to their Ends, which is their Happiness, according to their natures, and capacities,

cities, if we can discover from these Effects of the First transgression, and the Circumstances our First Parents brought themselves into by it, what methods of Providence were, in the nature of things, necessary to theirs and their Posterities Happiness, considering those Circumstances; as we shall have so far a rational notion of the Divine Providence, or Government, so if this History of *Moses* agrees accordingly, and gives us such an account of such methods taken, as our Reason sees necessary in the nature of things, it is so far to be esteem'd a Consistent, and Credible History.





C H A P. III.

The necessary Methods of Providence upon the First Sin consider'd.



THAT therefore which we are next to inquire into, is, What methods of Providence the natures of things direct us to, as necessary to the Happiness of our First Parents, and their Posterity, considering the sad Effects of the First transgression, and the condition they were brought into by it. And for this purpose it will be necessary to look back, and consider more particularly their case. And

The first thing we may observe in it, is, that, whereas, before their transgression, they were in a State of Perfection, and Immortality, as has been shewn, they were now sure to Dye:

And as Death was contrary to their Nature, and that Happiness, they were made for, so if we conceive the Goodness

ness

ness of God dispos'd to consult their Happiness in this case, we must suppose some method would be provided for their Preservation, so far as they were capable of it.

Now we have already shewn *, that a Sinner in this case might be capable of Preservation, so far as any Suitable means could be found for the prevention of a future Disobedience, and the maintenance of the Honour, and Authority of God, lest He should be thought regardless of His Laws.

* P. 139, &c.
of the former
Treatise.

What methods are most proper for this end, God alone is Judge: But it seems not unsuitable to Reason, *First*, That God should let the Sinner feel some ill effects of Sin; and *2dly*, That He should shew some token of his Displeasure at it, by inflicting some suitable punishment for it, to affright the offender from a further disobedience, and discourage others from following his example.

And therefore, since our First Parents were sure to Dye, on the day that they ate of the forbidden fruit, that is, they were subject to certain Death from that day, and might have been put to Death immediately; we have reason to think, if they were not put to Death, that there was some provision or other of this kind made.

And as this is a matter of Fact, and can be known only by History, if this History of *Moses* gives us any suitable account of this, so far 'tis a credible History. But,

2dly, Tho' our First Parents might be Preserved from Death by the Goodness of God in this manner, yet here another question will arise, How long that Preservation might be suppos'd to last? For that it could not be a Total Preservation from Death, we have very good grounds to think, and that too, as I shall shew; from the nature of things.

For, tho' they were made of such a natural firmness of Constitution, that,
they

they were, whilst they continued in that Perfect State, which they were created in, capable of living for ever, as I have formerly * shewn, yet if upon eating the forbidden fruit, their nature was chang'd;

* P. 105. of
the former
Treatise.

If the fruit, being of a noxious, and destructive quality, had broke in upon their Natural Constitution, and had produced such a Corruptive Fermentation in their Bodies, as would bring them to dissolution by a natural Causality, as has likewise been shewn, Then, since God governs all things according to their Natures, Natural things in a Natural way, by leaving Natural Causes to produce their Natural Effects, we may hence conclude, that God would not so far preserve our First Parents from Death, as to exempt them from this natural necessity of Dying.

Besides, according to this account of *Moses*, God seems to have put them under a moral necessity of it. For by telling them positively, that *Dying*,

they should Dye, He had in a manner given His word, it should be so.

And tho' it may be disputed in such cases, whether Lawgivers are oblig'd by such expressions to a literal Execution of such Penalties, yet, considering, that the total Exemption from this penalty might incline our First Parents, or their Posterity, to think God regardless of His Word, and considering what ill consequences might ensue from thence, there seems to be a necessity it should be executed.

But then, as they could never be sure, they should be put to Death, and by consequence could never be sure, God would perform His word, so long as they should find themselves preserv'd, unless they had some further Revelation concerning it; From hence we may infer, in case they were preserv'd, the necessity of a Revelation concerning their Death, that, tho' they were Preserv'd, they should be sure to Dye.

But then, As the Reason of their being Preserved at all, is, their Happiness,

ness; and as it is abundantly evident that no man can be Happy under the Expectation of Certain Death, without some Assurance of a deliverance from it; so from hence it will follow, that as there was a necessity in our First Parents case, of some Revelation to assure them of a Certainty of Death, so there was a like necessity of another Revelation to assure them of a deliverance from it, and of their being restored to Life again.

And thus we have a view of several Revelations, that seem to have been necessary in the nature of things, upon the first act of Sin, considering this first Effect of it, The Certainty of Death.

And if to this we add, and consider further, how this sin of our First Parents, that occasioned all this, came about, *viz.* by the instigation, and subtlety of the Devil; If it was, as 'tis probable it might be, attempted by him out of Envy at the Happiness of Man, and in opposition to the Wisdom and

Power of God, here is a great deal more required in this case : Here is not only the Honour of God, in respect of Man, to be provided for, lest He should think God regardless of His Laws and His Word ; But here is also something to be done, in relation to the Devil, lest He should seem to be too hard for the Wisdom of God, as if He had baffled and defeated His design.

And as from hence we may rationally conclude, that if we have any true History of Providence in this case, we must have some account of this kind, so 'tis a very material character of the Credibility of this History of *Moses*, that it agrees exactly with all this.

For in this History of *Moses*, we are no sooner told of our First Parents Sin, and the Death they were thereby exposed to, but we are likewise told of their Preservation : But lest this Preservation should encourage them to sin,

First, for the Prevention of their future disobedience, we read, that they
were

were left to bear the Ill Effects of their past transgression, and for that purpose, as they were now become Mortal, they were shut out from the Tree of Life, lest they should eat of it and
* Live. And,

Secondly,

* 'Tis worth our observation in this place, that as the End of all God's dispensations to Mankind is their Happiness, which does not only require the Perfection and Holiness of their Rational Nature, but also their well-being in respect of their Bodily Circumstances; I say, 'tis worth our observation, that even these acts of severity to our First Parents, were evidently intended for this End.

For the reason of shutting our First Parents out of Paradise, was not only that they might feel the ill effects of their Folly, but that they might not live for ever in that misery they had brought upon themselves.

For since they were now become liable to pains and sicknesses, which would naturally ensue from the change of their constitution, it would have been a sad condition to have lived for ever under those sorrows that would sooner or later naturally happen to them: So that if this Tree was of such a nature, as to keep them from dying, it was a real blessing to be excluded from it.

And so likewise, though the immediate reason of this Curse upon the Ground, which caused it to bring
forth

Secondly, That God might convince them of the great regard he had to the observation of His Laws, and of the little hopes they should have, that a sinner should go unpunished for his sins, we have next an account of the most likely means possible, to give them a lively apprehension of God's displeasure : For,

First, God is here not only represented as banishing them from Paradise immediately after their transgression, cursing the very ground for their sakes, causing it to bring forth Thorns and Briars ; but He also denounces a Personal judgment on themselves, condemning the Man to Labour,

forth Thorns and Briars, was, that it might be a token of the divine displeasure against their Sin, yet it was a real act of kindness to them, and their posterity, as it afforded matter of necessary labour, and employment to them, which their circumstances now call'd for, not only for the prevention of Idleness, the bane of Virtue, but the health and well-being of their bodies, now subject to various sicknesses and diseases.

and

and the Woman to sorrow and subjection.

And, Secondly, lest they should think, that because Death was not executed speedily upon them, there might be some hopes to be exempted from it, He farther assures them of the certainty of their Death, That as sure as they were made of Dust, so surely they should return to Dust.

Thirdly, To make this more effectual to the precaution of their future disobedience, it is very probable, there was, as shall be shewn hereafter, an Institution of Sacrifices at this very time, and the skins of the beasts to be offered to God, they were appointed to wear for cloathing; the immediate end of which Institution was to preserve a just Idea of their sin, and danger in their minds, because by this means whenever they should put on, or off, or even but look upon their Cloaths, they must be put in mind of the sad State they had brought themselves into, and
by

by the dying Struggles of the Animals they flew, they must not only be taught what was meant by dying, which otherwise they could have no notion of; but also by this means the dread and horreur of it must be continually awakened, and kept alive in their thoughts, and they must naturally be afraid of sinning again, lest the repetition of that which brought them under the Certainty of Death at first, should provoke God to a speedy execution of it.

And, Fourthly, Because the Devil was the great contriver, and the fatal instrument of this mischief to Mankind, here is likewise a denunciation of Vengeance against Him, which, as He is represented under the Character of a Serpent, is spoken to him in terms adapted to that Character.

Because Thou hast done this thing, Thou art Cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

And

And I will put Enmity between Thee and the Woman, between Thy seed, and Her seed: It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Gen. iii. 14, 15.

Which words, though spoken as to a Serpent, I conceive to relate only to the Devil; And whereas it is said, that he shall go upon his belly, it is probably spoken in relation to the nature of Serpents, which usually raise themselves up to throw themselves upon their prey, or such things as they would annoy; and in this sense the words seem to be intended to express a Condemnation of the Devil to a depress'd and ignoble state; As the subduing of Enemies, that rise up against us, is represented by their crouching on the ground, and *licking the dust*? *

And as for the other expression, that of bruising the Serpent's Head, as this is the way effectually to destroy that creature, it must, when applied to the

* *Is.* lxxv. 25. *Mic.* vii. 17. *Is.* xlix. 23. *Pf.* lxxii. 9. xviii. 45, &c.

devil,

devil, denote his destruction : And as the Head is the fountain of Policy and Contrivance, so when the devil's head is said to be bruised, it must naturally denote the destruction of his Works, and the defeating the End of his devices. And as the Heel of a man is an inferior, and, in comparison of the Head, an inconsiderable part, and to be wounded in it, does not ordinarily affect our Life and Happiness, but is capable usually of an easy cure ; so when 'tis here said, That the Devil shall wound the Heel of the Seed of the Woman, it must mean, that He shall be able only to do him some inconsiderable mischief, capable of remedy, whilst the wound he himself shall receive from that seed, shall be incurable, and end in his destruction.

This seems to be the natural meaning of these Expressions, and they were probably spoken in opposition to the several aims the Devil might have had in engaging in this wicked enterprize ;

as they might likewise be intended for the comfort of our First Parents, in that melancholy State they were now fallen into : So that,

First, Whereas it had been threaten'd to our First Parents, that in the day they should eat of the forbidden Fruit, they should be sure to die, it is not improbable, that the Devil might imagine, that upon the very first Act of disobedience, they should be destroy'd : And therefore, as He thought to have made an End of this whole Species at once ; so 'tis here implicitly promised, in opposition to this vain imagination, that the Woman should live to have Seed, and so his hopes should be defeated in this respect. And,

Secondly, Whereas he seduced the Woman into sin and misery, under a specious pretence of Friendship, intending, at the same time, nothing but her ruin ; in opposition to this, A war is here declared against the Devil and his Seed (that is, all Evil Spirits, and Evil Men,

Men, in Scripture-language frequently stiled the Children of the Devil) which should end in the ruin of them, and their Devices : And,

Thirdly, Whereas the particular Policy of the Devil in this First temptation, was by drawing them into sin, and under the wrath of God, to bring them under a certainty of death, and thereby deprive them of that Happiness they were made for ; so in opposition to this, since 'tis here said, That the Devil's Policy shall be defeated, by the Seed of the Woman, here is necessarily implied a positive promise, That in, and through this seed, some means should be provided, whereby Mankind should be reconciled to God, and taken into His Favour, and being freed from that State of Sin, and all the sad consequences of it, which the Devil had brought them into, *viz.* Imperfection, Death, and Misery, they should be restored to a State of Holiness, Perfection, and everlasting Happiness :
And

And by consequence, though they were at present sure to die, yet through the Power of this Promised seed they be Raised again.

All this is naturally implied in these words, that He should bruise the Serpent's Head; for by nothing less than this, could the Devil's Head, that is, his Policy and Devices against Mankind, be defeated, and brought to nought.

And if so, as we see this Promise is what I before shew'd was necessary in our First Parents circumstances, to comfort them under the sense of their Mortality, by assuring them that they should be delivered from it; So we likewise see, that by this Promised Seed must be meant, a Saviour, or Redeemer, who should be born into the world, and, as such, should procure for Mankind, *Forgiveness of Sin, The Resurrection of the Body, and Life Everlasting.*

G

And

And 'tis worth our observation, that if we find this promise, at any time afterwards renewed, we must suppose the assurance of all these Privileges virtually implied in it, and renew'd with it : And if we shall hereafter observe a particular desire in Mankind to have this Promis'd Seed descend from them, it must arise very probably from some apprehension they had, that they should thereby be more eminently interested in the Promise, and be in a more especial manner intitled to the great Blessings of it.

If then these things be allow'd to be credible, and this the meaning of the Promise, what better provision could there be in Reason for this great End of Providence, The prevention of future disobedience, and the encouragement of Virtue and Holiness, than this ?

What could be more effectual to convince them, that God was not regardless of his Laws, than to see their past transgression so severely punish'd ? And what

what stronger motive could they have to a strict observance of their duty, than to be assur'd, that, if they lived thus, they should still be capable of Life and Happiness ?

The sense of the sad condition they had brought themselves into, must necessarily have filled their souls with the utmost sorrow and dejection, and we may naturally conceive, that there was nothing, which they would not readily have submitted to, to make themselves capable of a Remedy : And when they found this Remedy provided for them by the Goodness of the God they had offended, 'tis not hard to conceive what raptures of Joy and Gratitude it must excite in their hearts, and what effect it must have had upon their lives :

But if, over and above all this, it shall appear, as I shall hereafter endeavour to prove, That this general Promise was not only particularly explain'd to our First Parents, but God, upon

the giving them this Promise, enter'd into Covenant with them for the Performance of it on His part, upon the Condition of Faith, and Obedience on theirs, and not only seal'd this Covenant by Sacrifice, but appointed the use, and observation of such Sacrifices, as a Sacramental Sign, and Seal of the Benefits they were to expect by this Promis'd Redeemer, when He should come; as we Christians celebrate our Sacrament, for the same purposes, since His coming; If, I say, this shall appear, and that too from this very History, here was such a provision made against Sin, as that there seems to be no room for future guilt, so far as Reason could be wrought upon.

For as it must be the greatest comfort in the world to the dejected sinners labouring under the sense of what they had lost, and the fear of that terrible Death they lookt for, to be assur'd of being deliver'd from it into Everlasting Happiness, so no stronger motive,

motive, or encouragement could be given to persuade them effectually to a Holy Life, than to have it made the condition of everlasting Life, and the remembrance of this continually kept up by the frequent returns of Sacrifice.

Now that there was some Explanation made of this Great Promise of a Saviour, and of the method of Redemption by Him, we have very strong reason to think, even from this very History, and that from several very remarkable Indications. As,

A Covenant made with our First Parents of Faith and Obedience.

First, In the very next Chapter after this Promise, (*Gen. iv.*) we read of Sacrifices; Of *Abel's* offering a Lamb, which, according to *Moses's* Stile in that case, must be understood, of his sacrificing a Lamb, and offering the Blood of it to God.

Now this could have no foundation in Reason. For upon what probable grounds could bare Reason have suggested, that a Good God would be pleas'd with that, which, unless he had appointed it for some wise ends of His Providence, appears to be full of horror and cruelty? Or, that He would be honour'd by the destruction of his Creatures? Or, that He could be pleas'd with shedding Blood, (and that too of the most innocent and useful of His Creatures) when he had implanted in Humane Nature so great an abhorrence to it, that we cannot do it without reluctance and pity, till custom has worn off our natural tenderness.

But beside all this, we have already shewn *, that the killing of Beasts was not the dictate of Reason, but must have had its Original from Revelation, unless necessity can be suppos'd to have oblig'd men to it for Food, for want of other suitable supplies; But this cannot be imagin'd,

* P. 186. of
the former
Treatise.

imagin'd in our First Parents days, so soon at least, as we read of it. For we are told immediately after the Fall, that our First Parents were cloathed in the Skins of Beasts, and that God appointed them to be used in that manner (which must be the meaning of His making them Coats of Skins: And since every thing was made Perfect in its kind, we cannot suppose any thing should die naturally, so soon at least after the Creation; so we must conclude, that those Beasts were put to death by the order and appointment of God: And since we so early read of Sacrifices, 'tis natural to conceive, that the first killing of Beasts might have had its Original from that Institution, and that that Institution was ordained just after the Fall, from whence our First Parents took those things for cloathing.

I say, 'tis natural to conceive this from what we have taken notice of; but it will be much more so, if we

consider the several wise ends of Providence it might serve.

*The Institution of Sacrifices explained,
and the several reasons of it.*

As, First, Our First Parents had been threatened with Death, but what notion could they have of Dying? And therefore 'tis probable this Institution was intended to excite and preserve in their minds a lively sense of what was meant by Death, and what they must expect for their transgression.

But, Secondly, As they had the Menace of Death for their Disobedience, so they had the Promise of a Redeemer to deliver them from it, and 'tis very reasonable to suppose this early Institution might have some relation to this Promise: For if it shall appear hereafter, that this Redemption from Death was to be effected by the Death of the Promis'd Seed, and that This Death would be accepted by God, as an
Atonement,

Atonement, thro' which they should be restored to the favour of God, and rendered capable of Everlasting Happiness, it is more than probable, that this Institution of Sacrifices might be appointed in remembrance of this Sacrifice of this Promis'd Seed.

For since 'tis evident through the whole course of the Scriptures, that God did not intend this Promis'd Redeemer should appear in the world, 'till many ages after the Promise made, 'tis very reasonable to imagine, that He would appoint some means to keep up the remembrance of Him ; And if the method of this Redemption was to be by his Death, there is nothing more natural than to suppose, That this Institution of Sacrifices was ordained by God for this end, namely, as a Sacramental sign and representation which the world was to observe in the Faith, and Expectation of the Death, and Sacrifice of the Promis'd Saviour to come, as Christians celebrate the
Christian

Christian Sacrament, in remembrance of that Death and Sacrifice already past.

This is a very easy account of this Institution, and we have very little reason to doubt the truth of it; but especially when it is confirmed by the New Testament, (if it be allow'd to be of any credit) that this was the Great End of those other Sacrifices appointed afterwards by *Moses*. But this is not all;

We may further observe, that since this Promis'd Saviour was not to come into the world, 'till after many ages, as appears in the sequel of this History, there was a necessity of some assurance to be given, and carefully to be kept in remembrance, that the virtue of His future Death and Sacrifice, however distant from their time, should be as effectually convey'd to all ages before His coming, as to those, who should live to see Him come; for otherwise they must naturally be apt to suspect, whether they should have any Benefit by Him.

Now

Now to assure them of this, might be another end of this Institution of Sacrifices ; and as the method of God's declaring His acceptance of Sacrifices, was by Fire from Heaven to consume them, so whenever they should find their Sacrifices thus accepted, it was to be look'd upon by them, as an Assurance from Heaven of the favour of God towards them, and of their Reconciliation, and Acceptance with Him through the Death and Sacrifice of the Saviour to come.

And if so, this Institution was intended not only as a Sacramental Sign, and Commemoration, but also as a Sacramental Seal, and outward Pledge, to assure the world of all the Benefits of the Sacrifice of the Promised Redeemer 'till His coming ; as the Christian Sacrament is a means of doing this to all the several ages since his coming. What can be more rational than this ? And if this be so, what can be more irrational, on the other hand, than to imagine that God should

should appoint an Institution for such Great Ends and Purposes as these, and yet should give Mankind no account of the meaning of it, when the fulfilling these Ends, did intirely depend upon their being informed of them ?

All this therefore we have reason to conclude might be Reveal'd to our First Parents.

Secondly, There was another Use of Sacrifices related in this History of *Genesis*, which will give us reason to believe, there was some further Revelation to our First Parents, than the bare Promise of a Saviour; and that is, they were used to seal and confirm Covenants : And if so, since we see in several parts of the Scripture-History, that it was the frequent method of God's treating with Mankind, to enter into Covenant with them by Sacrifice, it is very probable, that God might enter into Covenant with our First Parents upon giving this Promise, and this Institution be used as a Seal of that
Cove

Covenant, as our Sacrament is a Seal of our Christian Covenant.

We do not indeed particularly read of any such Covenant with them; but yet we are not without something that looks that way: For in that place, where we read of a Covenant first, the words are such as seem to imply something of this nature: It is in the case of *Noah*, where God is represented, as saying to him, *Behold I will establish my Covenant with thee*: In which expression the words *My Covenant*, do naturally betoken some Covenant then known to be formerly made with some Other, which should be renewed and confirmed with Him;

And if so, when can we in Reason imagine That Covenant to have been struck, or with whom so well, as with our First Parents, upon the giving this Promise of a Saviour?

For what can be more reasonable than that when God promises a Favour to sinners, in relation to their Happiness,

ness, He should do it upon such conditions, as are necessary to be performed, in order to their Happiness; and what time can be more seasonable to prescribe the conditions, than when He makes the Promise?

From hence we may conclude, That when God made this Promise of a Redeemer to Mankind, He did it upon some conditions to be performed by them; and that for the performance of these conditions, He entered into Covenant with them, and sealed that Covenant by Sacrifice.

This conclusion seems to me very natural, and if it could be reasonably doubted, whether there was any such formal Covenant, or not, yet there is further evidence from this very History, that there were some certain conditions required by God, in order to acceptance with him.

For in this very place where we read of Sacrifices first, we find the two Brothers offerings were not equally approved;
Abel's

Abel's was accepted, and *Cain's* rejected.

Cain being moved with Indignation at this, God is represented as reasoning the matter with him, *If thou dost well, shalt not thou be accepted?* says he; *but if not, Sin lieth at thy door.*

Which words are a plain appeal to Himself, whether he did not know what would recommend him to God's acceptance; and whether he had not been wanting in it.

What this was, is here in general express'd by *Well-doing*, and as that must at least betoken the doing one's Duty, so we must conclude, that this was one known condition of acceptance. But this does not seem to have been all;

For we find no want of duty in *Cain's* case; As he was a Tiller of ground, he made an Offering suitable to his Employment of the fruits of the field; a very proper acknowledgment of God's Goodness to him, and Au-
thority

thority over him, as likewise of his own Duty and Dependance; And yet he was not accepted, and that too, as is implied, because he did not *do well*.

And therefore there must have been something further required, to make his Duty acceptable, which he is here supposed to have known, and yet was wanting in; and what that was, is the Question :

Moses says nothing of it here, but the New Testament, if it be allow'd of any Authority, directs to it as plainly as possible.

For it expressly says, By Faith *Abel* offered a more excellent, or (as the margin) a more acceptable Sacrifice than *Cain*, *Heb. xi.*

That *Cain's* Sacrifice therefore was not accepted, was for want of Faith; and since he is accused of sin for want of it, as sin is a transgression of a law, it is thence evident, that Faith had been
injoined,

injoined, as a Condition of acceptance with God :

And that it was so, and that too by way of Covenant, they, who allow the Authority of the New Testament may be further informed from the same chapter to the *Hebrews* (v. 7.) where *Noah* is said to become Heir of the Righteousness, which is by Faith ; that is, according to St. *Paul's* phrase, of the Covenant of Righteousness by Faith, or that Covenant formerly made with our First Parents, the Condition of which was Righteousness, or the Obedience of Faith.

These are the Reasons upon which, I conceive, there was something more reveal'd to our First Parents after their transgression, than that dark Promise, *That the Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpent's head* : And that as God gave them this Promise, so He likewise explained it to them ; and as He intended this Promise should be fulfilled by the Sacrifice of this seed of the Woman, but not 'till many ages after,

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so

so He instituted Sacrifices as a Sacramental sign, and commemoration, and a pledge to assure them of the Benefits of it; which Benefits were, as we have shewn, a deliverance from that Death the Devil had drawn them into, by a Resurrection of the Body to a State of Everlasting Happiness: And because they could not be Happy without being Holy, that they might be capable of receiving Benefit by this Sacrifice, He enters into Covenant with them upon the condition of Righteousness by Faith, that is, That they would do their duty in the belief, and expectation of this Promised Redeemer, and hope for acceptance only thro' him.

That all this was Reveal'd to our first Parents, I think is hardly capable of doubt, after what we have here urg'd in proof of it; and therefore tho' this Promise that was made to them, seems dark and intricate to us at this distance, who have it so imperfectly deliver'd to us, yet it was not so, we
 see,

see, to them, who had it so fully, and so clearly Reveal'd to them.

Why the Promise of a Saviour was so darkly express'd.

The Reason, why *Moses* did not mention this Revelation, by which this Promise was so fully explained, might probably be, because it was a thing universally known in his time, either by writing or tradition : And since he visibly intended this first part of his History, only as an Introduction to the affairs of his own time, (because 'till he comes to them, he gives us only some general hints of some of the more remarkable transactions) whatever explication had been given of this Promise before, if it was universally then received, and understood, 'twas enough for him in a general History, for the carrying on the thread of his design, to make mention only of the general Promise, the meaning of which, as they had kept to his time, so he had no

reason to suspect they would forget ; And that not only as being a concern of that vast importance to Mankind, that every one was equally obliged in Interest as well as Duty, not only to know, but to remember it ; but especially when they had an Institution of Sacrifices on purpose to keep up the remembrance of it.

If then there was such an Explication of this Promise, as seems to appear from these observations, this must give a great addition of Credibility to this History :

For we cannot imagine any method of Providence more suitable to our First Parents Circumstances, and more proper to prevent their after disobedience, and maintain the Honour and Authority of God, as a Lawgiver, than this Revelation of a Saviour so explained to them ; And therefore as this History so far agrees with our Reason, we have so far Reason to believe it true : And if so, from hence many important consequences

sequences will follow, which will open a new Scene before us, and give us a further view into various Revelations afterward, that Mankind would some time or other stand in need of, and which we may reasonably expect to find some account of in any regular History of Providence.

The necessity of various Revelations.

As First, If it be true, as we have shewn, That upon the First act of sin, God made a Promise to our First Parents of a Saviour, or Redeemer, who should destroy the Work, and defeat the Policy of the Devil, by which he hoped to have brought them into ruin; As this was a Promise of so great importance to them, that upon this all their hopes of Happiness depended, as containing in it the assurance of Forgiveness of Sins, the Resurrection of the Body, and Life everlasting; So it was, by consequence, of the highest impor-

rance to them, that this Promise should be kept in memory :

And as we cannot conceive the Providence of God, which orders all things for the Happiness of the world, would be wanting in any necessary means of its Preservation, so 'tis very reasonable to expect, in any Authentick History of Ancient times, several methods made use of for this purpose, according as there should be occasion for them.

Secondly, Since so much depended upon this Promise, and yet here is nothing said, who the Person should be, nor of the time when he should come ; As 'tis natural to conceive on the one hand, that every family would hope, He might descend from them ; so on the other hand, if it shall appear that He was not to come, 'till several ages after the Promise made, there seems to be a necessity in the nature of the thing, that there should be, some time or other, some Information given of the determinate Time, when he should
come,

come, as likewise some Marks and Characters of Him, whereby he should be known, when he should come; that is, there is a necessity of various Prophecies from time to time, in which provision should be made for these things. And,

Thirdly, Since there is one character here given of Him in the Promise itself, that He should be the Seed of the Woman, if it shall hereafter appear, that by this expression was to be understood, that He should be the Seed of the Woman only, without the concurrence of a Man, 'tis natural to conceive, that some time or other, some means should be provided for the Examination of this matter, and the certain proof of His being so. And,

Fourthly, Since this Promise was of so great importance, 'tis natural to conceive, that all Mankind, at all times after, would be eager for its completion, and 'tis very probable, they would flatter themselves with hopes of His

coming sooner, than it might be intended He should come : And by this means, as they must meet with continual disappointments, which would naturally make them uneasy, and impatient of Expectation, and so tempt them to lay aside their hopes, there seems a necessity, in the nature of the thing, of a frequent repetition, and confirmation of this Promise, to revive, strengthen, and support their hopes ; and the longer it was before His coming, so much the oftener ought this Repetition to be made : And by consequence we may conclude, that if there has been any Revelation of this kind, there have been many, according as it shall appear this Promise was, sooner or later, to be fulfilled.

And if so, then a History of Providence must not only be a History, as I observed before, of the Rise and Progress of sin, and of proper methods taken for the prevention of it, but also of various Revelations and Prophecies
rela-

relating to the Promised Seed, if He was not to be born, 'till a distant time.


And by consequence, as we can have no regular, consistent, credible History of Providence, without some account of such Prophecies and Revelations; So it will be a particular Mark of the Credibility of the Scripture History, that it agrees in all these respects :

So that, as it relates the Promise of a Redeemer made, who, as it appears by the History, was not to come, 'till many ages after the making that Promise, so it not only gives us an account of various Prophecies, and Revelations, but a natural succession of them, and those too such Prophecies and Revelations, as the nature of the Promise of a Redeemer required, and the necessities of Mankind, at different times, might in reason be supposed to call for. That the Scripture answers in all this, shall be hereafter shewn in its proper place.



C H A P. IV.

*The method of the Divine Providence
after the first sin.*

ET us now proceed where we left off, and as we have before considered the Origin of Sin, and How Mankind became liable to Death, and How far our First Parents were capable of Preservation, after they had sinn'd, and the necessity of various Revelations upon that account, and the exact provision that was made accordingly ;

So let us now, in the next place, inquire, What effect these Revelations had upon mankind according to this History.

As the First and Great end of God's Providence in His dealings with Sinners, as such, is the Prevention of Sin,
Sin

Sin being the only thing that can destroy their Happiness, the Question is, Whether these Revelations vouchsafed to our First Parents, had that effect upon them, as to prevent all after-sin, or not; And if not, then we must enquire, What account this History gives us of them; what their circumstances, and occasions were from time to time; and what Methods of Providence they or their Children might stand in need of; and whether it tells us of any suitable provision made.

As for our First Parents, How they might be wrought upon by what was done in their case, we do not know: But 'tis natural to conceive, considering their Circumstances, that it might have had a proper Influence upon them: And accordingly this History makes no mention of any after-transgression on their part.

But as for their Children, we soon find it otherwise: We presently read of Sin in our First Parents Family, and that

that too of a very heinous nature, *viz.* of one Brother's murdering another, because the offering of the one was better accepted, than that of the other.

Why this should occasion such an unnatural resentment, we are not told: It has been thought, that it had its foundation in, and arose from the Promise of a Redeemer, the Elder suspecting, that the preference of the Younger's offering might be an argument of his greater favour with God, and that this might create a Jealousy of his greater Interest in the Promise on that account.

But whatever the reason of the Fact might be, it was of so heinous a Nature in itself, and of such dangerous consequence to the world at that time, that there seems a necessity of some Method to be taken, suitable to the Nature of the Case. It is very reasonable to imagine, that such a Fact should not go without some proper Punish-

Punishment ; but Reason does not tell us, what that Punishment should be.

Death had been already threatened to sin, but Death does not seem so natural a Vengeance, whilst the world was yet so very small ; and yet some exemplary Vengeance might justly be expected, for the prevention of future transgressions of that kind, which were more especially to be prevented then, whilst the world was to be peopled by so small a Number.

And therefore as we may expect some account of this nature, in a credible and consistent History of Providence relating to this particular Fact, so this History of *Moses* agrees accordingly, and tells us of a suitable Provision, and Revelation made : *Cain* is not put to death immediately, but preserved to feel the fruits of his Iniquity in the natural stings of his guilty Conscience. The Ground is curs'd for his sake, and he, and his family are Bannish'd from the Society of those, whom
 God

God intended to favour with his Presence.

This was a severe and afflictive Punishment, and an Exemplary token of God's displeasure: And this, 'tis probable, our First Parents understood as a total exclusion of him, and his Posterity from any pretence to the Great Promise of a Saviour, so far at least, that he should not hope to have him descend from any of them.

This notion so far prevail'd in the family of *Seth*, that they apply'd themselves more particularly to the Service of God, and were so confident that this Promise was to be fulfilled in them, that they set a mark of distinction on themselves upon that account; and as we Christians, who are in Possession of what they hoped for, have the Privilege to be called *The sons of God*, so they, this History says, distinguished themselves by the same title of *the sons, and children of God*, in opposition to the Posterity

sterity of *Cain*, whom they reproachfully stil'd *the sons and daughters of men*, Gen. vi.

And upon this notion, this Family of *Seth* seems to have kept themselves a separate people.

Whether this separation was injoin'd them at that time, it is not said; but as *Cain*, and his Posterity were banish'd into another Country, it does not seem consistent with that Punishment, to leave the rest of the world at liberty, to converse with them, and because their promiscuous marriages, and commerce with them, was afterwards said to be one reason of the Flood, it seems thereby to be implied, that this was one part of their disobedience, and by consequence, that God had commanded a separation.

The necessity of an Universal Destruction shewn.

In obedience to this command, and in Faith of the Expected Promise, this Family,

mily, I say, kept themselves a long time a Separate and Holy people; but afterwards, in process of time, they grew weary of this separation, and regardless of the Promise, and having no concern for their duty to God, or the expected Happiness of a better life, they fell away into an Universal licentiousness and depravation; insomuch that these *sons of God*, as they called themselves, *when they saw the daughters of men*, that is, of *Cain*, that they were *Fair*, promiscuously mixed, and married with them, till they were universally blended with that Accursed Seed; so that if that Seed was to be excluded from the Promise, there was now a necessity, in the reason of the thing, of excluding the whole world with them.

And as this Extraordinary change of things, begat a Necessity of some new method of Providence suitable to this occasion, which we may expect to hear of in a Credible History, so we are here told of a New Revelation made

to declare God's Intention to destroy them all.

*Various means of Reformation tried
before the Deluge.*

But before the world came to this forlorn condition, we cannot conceive, but something had been done for the prevention of this wickedness from time to time. *Moses* indeed says nothing of it, because this part of his History seems only to be intended to give us some general imperfect Hints of things, well known in those days, as an Introduction to the account of his own Mission.

But the New Testament (if it be allowed to be of any Authority) tells us of Various methods taken, of diverse *Prophets*, of *which* *Noah* was the *Eighth*, sent to preach Righteousness to them; *Enoch* is said to have prophesied of a Day of Vengeance,
I when

when God would execute wrath upon the wicked; and for an Encouragement to those, that would be dutiful to God, he himself was taken away alive, and carried to a better world, not only as an Evidence of a future state, but that God would be a *Rewarder of those that diligently seek him.*

And with these, and perhaps many other external means of Reformation, 'tis intimated to us, that God was not wanting in any Inward Assistances of His Holy Spirit, ; For 'tis said, *His Spirit* had been all along *striving with men.*

But when all these means were ineffectual, and the general corruption had run to such a height, that the world was fill'd with violence, without any possibility of Reformation, their iniquities being full, and ripe for vengeance, then 'tis said, God sent the Flood upon the whole world of the Ungodly, sparing only *Noah*, and his Family,

Family, and such a number of Creatures of every kind, as His Wisdom thought fit to be preserved.

This is the account we have from *Moses*, and as this is a very rational account, so 'tis obvious to every understanding, that according to this State of things, there were several new Revelations necessary, with which this History agrees exactly :

*Several new Revelations necessary at
the Deluge.*

As, first, 'Tis evident, if the world was to be destroy'd by a Flood, and God had determin'd, that *Noah* should be Preserved, 'twas necessary, in the nature of the thing, that he should be timely informed of it, and instructed in the means of his Preservation ; And accordingly we are told of a Revelation given him, with Instructions to provide himself an Ark or Ship, and the manner how it should be made.

And, Secondly, As the time of going into, and coming out of this Ark, depended intirely on the Will of God, so it could not be known, without His Revelation, and accordingly *Noah* is here said to have received directions.

And, Thirdly, When he, and his Family were come out of the Ark, as the face of Nature must be strangely alter'd, lest, from this amazing change, or from the fear of such another vengeance for the future, they might, as 'tis natural to suppose they might, be discourag'd from a necessary industry, suspecting it might be all in vain, this History tells us of a further Revelation to give them assurance of the contrary; that God would not smite the world in this manner any more, and that *whilst the Earth remains, Seed-time and Harvest, Summer and Winter, &c. should not cease.*

Fourthly,

Fourthly, As the world was now reduced to but Eight Persons, since it might be natural enough for them to be afraid, lest, considering the quick Increase of other creatures, they might be over-run, and destroy'd by them; we are here told of a declaration to prevent this Fear, by assuring them, that the dread of them should be upon every living creature, and that they themselves should increase, and multiply exceedingly.

Fifthly, Because the Fruits of the Earth were now become useless, upon which they before subsisted, or perhaps were not capable of affording a proper nourishment, by the change the Flood had wrought upon the Earth, as there was a Necessity of some other sustenance, so here we read of a direction in this case, and of a liberty granted them to eat Flesh.

But then, Sixthly, As they were allowed to feed on Flesh, since they could not thence know, but they must

eat it Raw, which might not be a proper nourishment, or might naturally tend to make them Savage, by rendering their spirits rank, and fiery, and apt to be inflamed into Choler and Fierceness, especially having been us'd to a milder, and less nourishing Diet ; And because the very killing of the Beasts for food, might likewise tend to the hardening of their hearts, and by degrees train them up to Cruelty, and so make them less averse to Murther, (which would have been of dangerous consequence to the world reduced to so small a Number) ; as 'tis natural to conceive there might be, so 'tis here said, there actually was, a Provision made for them in both these respects.

Here's a Positive Prohibition of eating Blood, and Murther is not only forbidden under the penalty of Death, but lest they should hope to escape the Execution, every one is commanded,
and

and required to avenge it, even upon Beast as well as Man.

And, Lastly, Because Mankind might, as 'tis natural to conceive they would, (after the late destruction of the world by Water) be under terrible apprehensions for the future, and apt to be affrighted at the prospect of rainy Weather, lest it should end in the like devastation, 'tis reasonable to expect from the Goodness of God, that he would satisfy their minds in this particular.

And accordingly we are told of an Assurance given, that God would not destroy them in this manner any more, and that he made the appearance of the Rainbow in the Clouds, a standing Memorial of his Promise : And 'tis worth our Observation to consider the Wisdom, and Goodness of God in this particular, that he should make this the standing Token of their safety, which, in the nature of things, would ordinarily be presented to them at that

time, when they would probably have the greatest apprehension of danger.

Thus we see how exactly this History agrees ; how consistent it is with itself, and with the Nature, and Reason of things ; So that if we can suppose, as we cannot reasonably deny, but that the Circumstances of Mankind may have been, what this History relates they were, we cannot but allow that there is a particular suitableness in these several Revelations, and methods of Providence to those circumstances, that were the Occasions of them.





C H A P. V.

*The necessary Methods of Providence
to the New World.*



HUS far then we have cleared our way, and as we are now come to the beginning of the New world, we are here to enquire how it fared with them, and what might be necessary in their case, either for the incouragement of Obedience, or the prevention of Sin, or the preservation of a due Faith in the Promised seed, and the several great Advantages comprehended under it.

As for the two former of these Ends, the Incouragement of Obedience, and the Prevention of Sin, we cannot in reason think any thing could be more effectual, or that any thing further could be necessary, after such a
remark.

remarkable difference made between the Righteous and the Wicked in the Preservation of the Righteous *Noah*, and his Family, whilst the whole world of the Ungodly were destroyed, and therefore we read of no other means at that time, for those ends than this :

But as to the Promise of a Saviour, the hinge upon which all their hopes depended, and the whole comfort of their lives was built, we may expect to read of something more : We have already observed, that the Tradition of this Promise was so far weakened in the Old world, that it was upon this account probably, they did no longer keep themselves a Separate, and Holy people, but followed their own Irregular Inclinations, and therefore went in unto the *Daughters of Men*, the Banished seed of *Cain* ; and therefore it is not improbable, but that upon the Beginning of the New world, there might be some Revelation of that kind
made,

made, to strengthen, and support their Faith in this Promise.

The belief of this Promise was so far sunk even in the Family of *Noah*, that the sin imputed by this History to *Ham* (of his seeing his Father's Nakedness in his tent, when he had been surprized into an over-charge of wine, and his going to tell his brothers of it) is generally understood by the *Jewish* Rabbies, of something done in derision of this Promise.

It is evident there is nothing in the thing itself, considered simply, but may be understood in a very good sense, but since we see it so severely punish'd, it must have something worse in it, than we are able to apprehend at this distance, under this imperfect relation of it: But if it was done, as 'tis usually interpreted, by way of Scoff at this Promise, it was then a Crime of a high Nature, as arising from a spirit of Infidelity, in a matter of the last Importance to Mankind; and upon this account,

count, lest any one should be encouraged to follow his example, 'tis worth our Observation, that he and his Posterity are here set forth, as severely Punish'd by God for it :

I say, Punish'd by God : Because what is here said to be spoken by *Noah*, is to be understood as Reveal'd to him by God ; Because he not only knew when he awaked, what had been done when he was asleep, but the Curse he denounced upon it, was afterward literally fulfilled in the Event.

And whilst we consider *Noah* as a Prophet, which this History represents him to be, from hence we may understand what he said of *Shem*, as a Revelation of God spoken in a Prophetick way, for the support of the Faith in the Promis'd Seed, as we have already observed, might reasonably be expected at that time.

The words are, *Blessed be the Lord God of Shem*. In which words, when *Noah* speaks of the *Lord*, as *God of Shem*,

Shem, it must be understood, according to the Scripture Phraseology, in the same sense, that the same expression is us'd in, when *the Lord* is called *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and by consequence it must intimate to us, that *Shem* and his Posterity might look upon themselves, as favoured by God in the same manner, that *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* afterward were; that is, that they were to be the depositaries of this Promise: And if so, here is a manifest token of a Revelation from God to keep up the Faith in the Promis'd seed: And how briefly soever it is here delivered in a History only of General Hints, yet as it is reasonable to think it must have been very well understood by *Noah*, so it is very probable, it was more fully explained by him.

To have their hopes thus confirmed again to them, was a very great motive to Obedience; but whether it had this effect, or not, we are not told:

We

We have reason to think it had not, but that Mankind, notwithstanding this, and all that God had done, soon degenerated into Wickedness : To prevent the progress, and increase of which, was, probably, the reason of that Great Event, that we presently read of in this History, *viz.* the confusion of Languages ; and in consequence of that, the dispersion of Nations.

*The reason of the Confusion of
Languages.*

For 'tis very evident that it was in its very nature particularly adapted to this End ; as we shall see, if we consider the Occasion of it.

The immediate occasion of this Strange Providence was, as it is related in this History, the building of the Tower of *Babel*, which seems to be a design attempted by *Nimrod*, the Grandson of *Ham*, and the rest of that Branch of *Noah's* Family, probably in
opposition

opposition to the Judgment he denounced against them, that they should be subject to their Brethren.

For 'tis rational to conceive, that this Prediction would naturally prompt them to provide against it, not only by consulting their own security, but by bringing their Brethren, if they could, into absolute subjection to themselves: And for this reason, 'tis probable, they might begin this Tower, not only for their own defence, in defiance of Heaven, in respect of the Curse denounced against them, but also as the Centre of Union to their Family, and the seat of that Universal Empire, which they perhaps might hope to make themselves Masters of.

And if so, then as here was a necessity in the nature of things, if this Prediction of *Noah* was reveal'd by God, that he should interpose for their defeat, for the Vindication of his own Honour and Veracity; so there could be no way more effectual to convince them,

them, that their defeat was effected by the Hand of God, than this strange confusion of their Languages, which as it could not be brought about, but by absolutely forming their minds anew, erasing all their former Ideas, and imprinting others, in an Instant, in their room, and must therefore be wrought by a divine Power; so, one would think it should awaken them into a serious sense of their folly and madness, in opposing his Will in any kind, and how much it was their Interest to live in all duty and obedience to him.

But when we further consider, that these Builders, who were of the Posterity of *Ham*, were not only a very wicked race of people, that wanted to be awakened into a sense of their duty, but might likewise be of dangerous consequence to the rest of Mankind, by their Ill Principles and Examples, whilst they continued intermix'd with them, there seems a necessity of some means to prevent this,
lest

lest the world should be reduced to the same state of Universal depravation, that it was in before the Flood; so we read of a provision made for this, not only by the confusion of their language, but the dispersion of the people. And 'tis worth our Observation, How apt an Instance this is, of the Wisdom, as well as the Power of God, whilst we see it amazingly fitted in every respect, for the compassing this great End, above what it was possible for Human reason to have imagined. For,

The dispersion of Nations, and the reasons of it.

First, By this, here is a separation made of the wicked Family of *Ham* from the rest of the world, that they should not be corrupted by them; And lest a local separation should not serve the turn, because they might come together again, as the Families

of *Cain* and *Seth* had done ; Here is,

Secondly, a Confusion of Languages amongst them, which would naturally hinder all intercourse and communication, not only with the Posterity of *Shem* and *Japhet*, but even among themselves, excepting with such, as should speak the same Language : And,

Thirdly, As they who spake the Same Language, would naturally associate together, so there must by consequence be, as many distinct Societies, as there were different languages ; And the more divisions there were, whatever part was infected, the less could their corruption spread, whilst there could be no easy Communication between them : And,

Fourthly, As these several societies, must necessarily form themselves into so many distinct Governments under their several Heads, so these several Governments must naturally contribute

very

very much to the restraint of Wickedness : Because by this means all Mankind must necessarily be kept under a stricter Regulation ; and greater care must be taken in every society of the manners of their subjects, than could possibly have been done, had the whole world continued under one Great Empire.

And besides, the very Jealousies and Emulations that must arise between Nation and Nation, the necessity of defending themselves one against another, and the ambition of equalling or out-doing one another, must be a great means to restrain men from publick Vices, and a Spur to many Great and Noble vertues.

Lastly, This division of Nations was a very wise means of Providence for the more natural, and more equal Punishment of sin ; For when any Nation, or People should become Wicked, here was no need of any Immediate Correction from above ; but by this means one people might be

made to punish another, without the destruction of either : And when any People should become Incurable, God, by this means, could destroy them, without hurting the rest, and one Nation might be made a Warning to the * rest.

So that upon the whole, we see, nothing could be better fitted in the nature of things to answer the great End of Providence in the Prevention of sin, and the promotion, and incouragement of Vertue, than this Confusion of Languages, and Dispersion of Nations was : And therefore there can be no room to doubt the Credibility of this History thus far.

What happened after the Dispersion of Nations.

What happened immediately upon this dispersion, this History is altogether

* See *Dr. Sherlock on Providence.*

silent in : Only in general we may observe, that notwithstanding this, in *Ham's* Posterity, Wickedness soon grew to a vast Bulk, and though we do not read in what manner it increas'd, nor what particular Providences were exercised towards them, yet it soon advanced to such a fatal Maturity, as to call for a speedy and exemplary Vengeance, which was executed on *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, and the neighbouring Cities, in Fire, and Brimstone.

I have already observed, that it was not the method of Providence in the old world, to proceed to extremity at first, but as he tried various methods for their Reformation, before he would bring the Flood upon them, 'tis very probable, he might have done so in this case, though this History says nothing of it :

For it seems to be the main design of *Moses*, to carry on the Succession of the Family of *Shem*, as the Branch, from which the Messiah was to come,

and therefore he takes little notice of any thing but what relates to them.

But how wicked soever the Posterity of *Ham* might be, who from the very first, lay under the Curse of God, *Gen. ix. ver. 25.* yet one would naturally expect to find it otherwise in the Family of *Shem*, who were so remarkably favour'd by him, as that He was called, by way of Excellence, *The God of Shem.* This, together with the many other motives to Obedience, they had in common with the rest of the world, one would think should have wrought powerfully on them, and one would expect to find them a very Holy, and Exemplary People.

And yet soon after *Noah's* Death, something more than four hundred Years from the Flood, we find even this Righteous Branch so far degenerated, even into Idolatry, that there was

Josh. xxiv. 2. no natural way of maintaining True Religion in the world,

world, without some new method of Providence for this purpose.

And since the True Knowledge of the True God, is absolutely necessary to the Happiness of Mankind, because their Happiness consists in being like God, and by consequence the attainment of it depends upon their forming right notions of Him, we have no reason to doubt, but the Providence of God, which orders all things for the Happiness of the world, would particularly display itself in this extraordinary case, for the recovery and preservation of True Religion, in the Knowledge, and Worship of the true God, according as the case required; And we may reasonably expect to find it so in any Credible History of Providence.

The Calling of Abraham, and the reason of it.

And therefore, when the world was come to such a pass, that they were universally Idolaters, and True Reli-

gion in danger of being lost, God is here represented in this History of *Moses*, as calling forth *Abraham* from his country and kindred, to be the Seed of a New, and Better generation: By whom He might raise up to Himself a *peculiar people, zealous of good works*, which people He intended to train up in the true Knowledge and Worship of Himself, the only True God, and in the true Faith of that great Instrument and Motive of True Religion and Vertue, the Promise of a Saviour.

And as he was a Person well dispos'd towards God, this History seems to represent him as set up by God, not only as a Pattern, but as a Guide to succeeding generations: For the reason of the favour of God to him, is said to be, because *He knew that Abraham would command his children and his household, after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment*, Gen. xviii. 19. And so
both

both by his example and authority help forward the great end he was chosen for.

This seems to be the design of Providence in this dispensation towards *Abraham*, according to this History, and as something of this kind might reasonably be expected, this must be so far a credible History.

But yet for the right understanding of this dispensation, we must not think, that it had only an Eye to *Abraham*, and his seed, without any regard to the rest of Mankind, as if God had no concern, either to prevent, or reform the Ignorance, or Idolatry of other nations, so long as True Religion could be preserved among His chosen people.

No ; we may reasonably suppose, that there had been many methods used for this purpose before the calling of *Abraham*, as there likewise probably were many others afterwards, that we are told nothing of.

But

But as the calling of *Abraham* was the greatest and most effectual of all, and is the foundation of the succeeding History, we have a more particular account of this :

And we must not understand, I say, that this is intended only that God might have a favourite people, to whom He would manifest His love in a more peculiar manner only for their own sakes ; but we must consider it, as design'd for the benefit of the whole world, that True Religion being preserved amongst this people, they might be as Leaven to the rest of Mankind, and disperse their knowledge through the whole Creation.

This seems to be the design of Providence in this great affair, relating to *Abraham*, and his Posterity. And if so,

Let us, in the next place, see what may reasonably be expected in a History of this Person, and those that should descend from him, considering the
the

the End they were chosen for, supposing we had had no account of it, and if we find this History agree accordingly, it is so far a consistent and credible History.



C H A P. VI.

What Providences were necessary upon the Calling of Abraham.



LET us, in the first place, consider *Abraham* chosen out from an Idolatrous people to raise up a better generation, to whom he was to be a Guide, and Pattern ; 'tis natural to expect in this case, in a Credible History of this man, to find several great instances of a remarkable, and exemplary Piety, and Vertue.

Secondly,

Secondly, As he was called out from his country, and kindred, to travel up and down in strange lands, and among strange people, since this was an enterprize that must necessarily be attended with great difficulties, and dangers, doubts, and fears, violent struggles, and strong temptations; there seems to be a necessity in the nature of the thing of great motives, and encouragements to be offer'd to him, according as his Circumstances should require, and this may likewise be expected in a History of him.

Thirdly, As he was to be the founder of a New nation, and such a one, as was to be separate from others that they might be kept free from the contagion of their Idolatry, and preserved in the True Religion, 'tis natural to expect in a History of this people, to find an account, how they came to be a Nation; because 'tis not easy to conceive, how it could be so.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, As a Nation cannot subsist without Laws, and Government, and as a Nation separate from all other people, not only in themselves, but their Religion, must be governed in a different manner, and by different laws from other people, so we may expect to be informed of these things, and to meet with some account of their Religion, and Government, and the Laws they were govern'd by.

Fifthly, As the design, and reason of raising up this people as a separate Nation, was, the Preservation of the True Religion for the better Instruction, and Reformation of an Idolatrous world, since it is not only necessary in the nature of things, that they should be thoroughly instructed themselves, before they could be Guides to others, but also that their Religion should be kept pure, and undefiled, that it might be so convey'd to others, so we may reasonably expect to read of some proper methods for this purpose.

And,

And, Lastly, As their keeping themselves a separate people, must naturally keep their Religion to themselves, and so defeat the end of their separation, unless there were some means to prevent this, by bringing the Knowledge of their Religion to other nations, 'tis reasonable to expect to be informed of some methods taken of this kind.

These are all such observations, as are founded in nature, and arise from the very reason, and end of this dispensation ; and if these things may in reason be expected in a general History of this people, so far as any History agrees in this respect, so far 'tis a rational and credible History.





C H A P. VII.

*The Credibility of the Mosaic History
of Abraham.*



LET us now, then, examine the History of *Moses*, and see how it answers with all this.

And this it does so very exactly, that there is not any one of those fore-mentioned instances, which we have not a particular account of, the whole book being nothing else but a general relation of God's various dealings with *Abraham*, and his seed, 'till they became a Nation; that is, of such Revelations made, and such Providences exercised towards them from time to time, as their different occasions did require. As for instance,

The

*The first thing required in a History
of Abraham, found in Genesis.*

First, Since *Abraham* was called out from the rest of Mankind, to be a Guide, and Pattern to succeeding ages, as we cannot but suppose him to have been endued with *an Excellent Spirit* to recommend him to so High an Honour, so he is here set forth in this History, as a *Burning and Shining Light*: No sooner is he commanded to part with his Idolatrous kindred, but he submits at the first call, *forsoaking Father and Mother, Brethren and Sisters*, teaching his Posterity, by his own Practice, to *count all things but dross and dung, in comparison of the Excellency of the Knowledge of the True God, and True Religion*. His Constant care to set up Altars for the worship of God, where-ever he went, was an exemplary Proof of his Great sense of God, and his continual dependence

dance on Him, and was very proper to teach his People to set the Lord always before them, and in all their ways to acknowledge Him.

But what an amazing Instance of his Faith, and Obedience was that of offering his son, his only son, and the son of Promise, against the softest Bowels of Nature, and the strongest objections of Reason, on a bare belief of the Possibility of his Resurrection, hoping even against Hope? And how livelily did he shew by this Example, the Possibility and Necessity of the strictest Obedience, even in the tenderest acts of Self-denial, and of Trust, and Resignation in the hardest Trials?

Now when we consider this Character of *Abraham*, so agreeable to the Nature, and Will of God, and so suitable to the Work he was chosen for, since Reason tells us, that the *Righteous God must love Righteousness, and His countenance behold the Upright*, 'tis no wonder, that we read

of eminent favours, of great, and uncommon Condescensions towards Him.



CHAP. VIII.

The second thing required in a History of Abraham.



Secondly, As we may expect in a History of *Abraham* to read of Great Motives, and Encouragements to him, according as his Circumstances required, so we here find frequent Promises made him, and such particular Informations given him, as might be requisite either to comfort, and support, or to animate, and spur him on in his Undertaking, according as he had occasion from time to time: As for Instance ;

The

The several Motives and Encouragements God gave to Abraham.

No sooner had he left his Country, and arrived at the land of *Canaan*, but we are told of a Promise of that Land to his Posterity : But afterwards, when many years had pass'd, and he saw no probability of this, because he had no Heirs, unless those of his Household were to be accounted so ; as 'tis natural to conceive he might be, so this History tells us, that he was, under some dejection, and uneasiness of mind : He might have, 'tis probable, some doubtful reasonings, how to understand this General Promise ; how he could become a Nation, and his seed inherit the Land of *Canaan*, when he neither at present had any seed, nor was, to all appearance like to have, (*Gen. xv.*) Now when this was the Encouragement to leave his kindred, and he saw no likelihood of fulfilling this,

as there was a necessity in the nature of the thing for some proper assistance in this case, so we read of a suitable Revelation made, to settle, and compose his thoughts, and establish him in the way that he was in : In which he was not only assured in general, that God would be his shield, and exceeding great Reward, but also that he should be the Father of a Numerous, Posterity, descending from his own Bowels, which should as certainly inherit the Promis'd land, as it was the Lord that Promis'd it, and therefore could, and would make it good.

And that he might have no doubt remaining on his mind, God not only gave him a Sign to confirm all this, by appointing him to provide a Sacrifice, which God shew'd His approbation of, by the passing of a Lamp of Fire between the divided parts of it, but he gives him a view of His whole design, and shews him by what Steps he should become a Nation, and how, and when
he

he should come into that Land: *That his seed should be servants in a land, that was not theirs, and they should be afflicted there 'till the fourth generation, because the Iniquities of the Amorites would not be full 'till then; and then he would Judge that land, and bring them out thence with great substance.*

So that here we see a suitable provision made, sufficient to dispel the Fears of *Abraham*, and settle his Faith upon a certain bottom.

But yet it is here to be observed, that though *Abraham* is assured he shall have Children, that shall descend from his own Body, yet here is nothing said of the time when: And as 'twas natural for him to think in this case, that he should have these Children by his Wife, when he afterwards found, this was naturally impossible, she being past Children in the Course of Nature, this probably begat a New doubt, as to the meaning of

his Promise, whether he was to have them by her, or by another ; And as this inclin'd *Sarah* to give him her Servant, thinking the Promise could not relate to her, (*Gen. xvi. 2.*) here was now a necessity of a New Revelation to set them both right in this matter. And,

Accordingly we read of such a Revelation made, wherein, after the repetition of God's former Promises of the Land of *Canaan*, and a Numerous Issue, *Abraham* is assured of a Son by *Sarah*, which Son should be that Blessed seed, in whom all these Promises should centre, and in whom all the Families of the Earth should be Bless'd : By which Words, must apparently be meant, that this Son should be the depositary of that Promise to our First Parents, relating to the Redeemer, who was to bruise the Serpent's head, and defeat all the Devices of the Devil : For as this was the Greatest Blessing that God could bestow on sinful men, and was
such

such a Blessing, as He intended for all Mankind, that would make themselves capable of it, so when 'tis here said, that in this Seed of *Abraham*, by *Sarah*, all Nations of the Earth should be Bless'd, this must naturally be supposed to relate to that Great Blessing, expected from the Promis'd Redeemer, and must be therefore understood, as a further renovation and confirmation of that Promise.

And for the remembrance, and assurance of all this, He renews His Covenant with *Abraham*, and his Seed, not only promising them the Land of *Canaan*, and that He would be their God; but also obliging them all to be Circumcised, and that not only as a mark, by which they should be distinguished to be his, *Gen. xvii. 8. &c.* but also, probably, as a standing sign, and memorial to them, that God would perform his Covenant with them ;

Thus we see what care was taken of *Abraham*, to give him proper aid upon every occasion, as our Reason might expect in a History of him.

We must not here conceive, that God was all this time regardless of others, and left them to their own Inventions. No ; As the world was every day growing worse, and worse, 'tis very reasonable to think, that various methods had been taken to make them better, though we are told nothing of it. This History tells us of an Instance of his Vengeance upon a dissolute, and hardened people in the destruction of several Cities by Fire and Brimstone. This was no doubt intended by God to awaken the careless, and unthinking world into a just sense of His neglected Justice, and to shew them what they might expect from Him, whilst they lived in disobedience to Him.

But on the other hand, as God is thus revealing Himself in Judgment on
sinners,

sinners, He remembers mercy to His servants, and as a further Incouragement, and reward to *Abraham*, for his Exemplary Faith and Piety, He condescends to come to him in an Extraordinary way, to reveal to him His Decree against those Cities, and to shew him the Reason, and the Justice of it : And lest he should be terrified by this severity, he lets him know, that He was nevertheless the *Lord Merciful, and Gracious*, and would not only, not *destroy the Righteous with the Wicked*, but had there been any such amongst them, the Cities should have been saved for their sakes.

These are the chief of those many Revelations that God was pleased to vouchsafe to *Abraham*, by which we see how he was assisted from time to time, according as his Circumstances required ; And as this is what we might reasonably expect to find in a History of so great a man, chosen out by
 God

God for so great an End, this makes the relation very credible.

I might pursue my observations a little further, and as there is the same reason in some degree for the same assistance afterward, to the children of *Abraham*, for carrying on the same design, so I might easily shew how this History answers in this case also : But this would be tedious to the Reader. It is enough that I have shewn the design of the Historian, and how regularly this design is carried on thus far : As for what remains, there can be no difficulty ; every one will be able to Judge of it at first sight ; and as we are told of several remarkable Providences, and particular Revelations to *Isaac* and *Jacob*, so 'tis easy for any one to account for them, and in some respect to discover the reason of them : However, 'tis plain to every Eye, that there is not any of these Revelations, but is some way or other suited to one, or other of those great ends already mentioned,

mentioned, and is calculated to answer some particular occasion, they might have had at that time for such a dispensation, as they might either want Incouragement, Information, Comfort, or Support in respect either of the True Faith in that Promis'd Seed, or the Knowledge or Practice of True Religion, and Vertue. So that there needs nothing more to be said upon this head.



C H A P. IX.



UT before I proceed, it may not be amiss, because these several Revelations to *Abraham*, I have mentioned, are the Hinge of the succeeding History, to make some particular remarks upon them, as being such, as will give some confirmation to them, and add a further Credibility to the Relation.

Remarks

*Remarks upon these several Revelations
to Abraham.*

First, then, As we have observed in general, that God was not wanting to *Abraham* in suitable encouragements according to his several occasions, so we may more particularly take notice, that the first thing offered him of this kind, was, the Promise of the Land of *Canaan* : He was then come away from his country, and kindred, and this was offered to him, as a proper motive to keep himself separate from them.

But since this Promise was not to be fulfilled, 'till he should become a great Nation, which was not likely to be in his time, and when the Promise was further explained to him, and he was particularly told it should not be fulfilled, 'till after the space of four hundred Years, one may naturally conclude from hence, there was something
more

more meant, and which he understood to be meant by the Promise of this Land, than barely the Land itself :

For what great motive is it to any man, to leave his native country, and kindred, and live in an unsettled wandering life in great difficulties and dangers, in prospect only, that some of his Posterity should inherit such a Land four hundred years hence ? And therefore 'tis very probable, I say, that something more was understood by this Land. What this was, we are not told, but it was probably explained to *Abraham* : And as he had been bred up in the Faith of the Saviour Promis'd, and liv'd in the Hope of all the advantages implied in that Promise, *viz.* the Pardon of Sin, the Resurrection of the Body, and Life Everlasting, as has before been shewn ; so this Land might be given, as a Token, and a Pledge to assure him of these advantages he hoped for, not only to himself, but his Posterity, that
 would

would make themselves capable of them, by treading in the Steps of their Father *Abraham*. 'Tis very probable, I say, it might have been so understood, and explained to *Abraham*, though our History says nothing of it; and, if so, 'twas a powerful, and ingaging consideration to attempt any enterprize whatsoever.

Secondly, We have observed before, as a further Incouragement to *Abraham*, that he has the Promise, not only of a Numerous Issue, but that *in his seed all the Nations of the Earth should be Blessed*, and 'tis worth our notice here, how credible this story is in this respect.

For as the Promise of a Saviour was of the Highest Importance to Mankind, as necessarily containing under it an assurance of Pardon, Resurrection, and Eternal Life, so 'tis natural to conceive it would be look'd upon, as a particular Privilege to any Family to have this Saviour descend from them: And upon

upon this account, as it was natural for all Mankind eagerly to desire Children, in hopes, that this expected Saviour might happen to be of their Posterity, so nothing could be offered to them at any time, as a motive and encouragement in any case so likely to work upon them, as to be assured of these things, that their hearts were so intirely set upon.

And, therefore, when *Abraham* was first called from his Father's family to dwell in a strange land, which was a case so contrary to Human Nature, and so expos'd to difficulty, and danger, that it stood in need of the strongest motives, and supports, it is very agreeable to see how aptly he is assisted with such a consideration, as was in its own nature the most suitable, and most prevalent, that could be offered him.

Thirdly, We have observed before a Revelation made to *Abraham*, concerning his Posterity to shew him how they

they should become a Nation, That *they should be first strangers in a land, that was not theirs, where they should serve, and be afflicted, and after the space of four hundred years, God would Judge the Land, and bring them out with great substance.* And the reason he gives for not doing it sooner, was, because *the Iniquities of the Amorites would then, and not 'till then, be full.*

This is the substance of the Prediction related in the Story, and 'tis very credible God might give such a Revelation to *Abraham*, since there was a necessity, in the nature of things, of some such Prediction one time or other.

For since God foresaw this People would, and in His wisdom intended they should, be afflicted, it was very necessary it should be known beforehand, and how long they should continue so.

For as they must naturally have been bred up in great expectations of God's favour to them, when they should afterwards find themselves in bondage, and feel the miseries of a sad Persecution, because they serv'd another God, and kept themselves a distinct people, they might then be naturally tempted to suspect the truth of those Promises, they had been so often told of, and instead of being God's favourite people, they might be apt to think themselves forsaken of him, and by this means might be inclined to throw off their Religion, and Separation, and become one people with their Persecutors.

But when they had been informed of these afflictions before-hand, and how long they should continue under them, and had not only been educated in the expectation of them, but every time they Circumcised a Child, they had this Prediction brought to their remembrance, toge-

ther with the assurance of their deliverance, this was a most effectual means, not only to comfort them under their sorrows, but keep them in a Constant dependance upon God : Because this very affliction having been foretold by Him, was itself a proof of God's Promises to them ; and though this was a very grievous burthen, yet it brought its own remedy along with it, in that it gave them assurance, that the whole Prediction should be fulfilled, and should one day end in their Happiness, in the enjoyment of the Land of *Canaan*, and whatever else was meant by it.

And 'tis very natural to conceive this People were afterwards taught by *Abraham* to understand something more by it than the Land itself : For otherwise, what motive could it be to them to bear the sad afflictions they suffered, upon the prospect of this country, if there was nothing more in it, but this, That after several hundred years, when
they

they should be dead, and gone, and perhaps had been worn out by slavery, some of their Posterity, they knew not who, should go in great wealth into another Land, which they themselves should never be the better for : And therefore 'tis very probable, they were taught, that the Intention of this Promis'd Land, was chiefly to assure them of a state of Happiness; and if so, whenever they should be afterwards possess'd of that Land, it was the most ingaging motive possible to a future resignation to God, and an entire dependance on Him ; as it was likewise a strong confirmation of their Hopes of the Happiness intended by that Land, as they were sure of the Land itself.

That this was the notion they had of this Promise relating to that Land, and that this notion was probably handed down through all generations to the coming of Christ, they who believe the New Testament, will have very little reason to doubt : For 'tis to

this that *Jesus Christ* seems plainly to refer in that Argument he urges against the *Sadducees*, (who believed only the Books of *Moses*) in proof of a Resurrection, and a future state, that God was *the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. In which words he refers the *Sadducees* to that Covenant God made with *Abraham*, and his Seed, in which he engages to be their God (*Gen. xvii. 7, 8.*) By which expression the least that can be meant, must be not only that he would protect, and defend them, but would perform all His Promises to them.

Now in that Covenant that God had, at several times, made with *Abraham*, there were two things promised; First, there was a Confirmation of the coming of a Redeemer, in which Promise alone, as I before have proved, is necessarily implied the assurance of a Resurrection.

Secondly,

Secondly, There is the Promise of the Land of *Canaan*, which, if it had no other sense than a Temporal *Canaan*, could be of no benefit to those that should be dead, before the compleat enjoyment of it, as *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob* were. And therefore as that promis'd land must naturally relate to some future Happiness intended by it, so since that Happiness could not be enjoy'd, but by living men, it supposes those alive to whom the Promise must belong : And therefore, when God engages to *Abraham*, and his seed, that He will be their God, and perform all His Covenants with them, it naturally implies, that there should be a time when *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and their seed, tho' dead, should one day be rais'd to life again, to possess the Happiness promis'd to them ;

But this by the Bye.

Thus we see what use might be made, and how reasonable it was this people should before-hand be informed of what afflictions they were afterward to suffer.

We may here further observe, that since they had the Promise of the Land of *Canaan*, it was likewise very suitable, that they should be sometime told how long they must expect the fulfilling of it.

For they might naturally indulge their hopes too far, and expect it sooner than was intended; and as by this means they would meet with many disappointments, so they might be tempted to lay aside their hopes; and since they were to suffer severe afflictions, this might likewise add to the temptation :

But, besides, they might doubt the Possibility of the thing, whilst they saw the Land inhabited by others; They might reason with themselves, how it could be done without dispos-
sessing

sessing the present Inhabitants, and how they could be able to effect this, and how this could be done without Injustice ; and whilst so many difficulties lay plainly in their way, 'twas not likely, that they would build with any assurance upon so doubtful a Promise, as this was, or keep themselves separate upon this account.

So that there seems a necessity, in the nature of the thing, of a proper Revelation in this case, to inform them of these things before-hand, and we must look upon this, as a very Credible Relation, that tells us of such a reasonable Prediction made, as accounts for all these doubts, and difficulties ; In which the time of their coming out of *Ægypt* is defin'd, with the manner how the Land of *Canaan* should be theirs, *viz.* by God's dispossessing the Inhabitants, and the reason why he had decreed to do so, because they were obstinate and incorrigible sinners ; and why he would not do it, 'till the fourth Generation,

because then, and not 'till then, their Iniquities would be full.

And when they were thus told of the Vengeance of God, upon the Iniquities of a wicked People, so that whenever they reflected on the Promis'd land, they must be put in mind of the consequence of sin; how wisely was this contrived to instruct them in their duty, and shew them by an Instance, they could not forget, that the only way to be intitled to God's favour, was to live in a due Obedience to Him?

Fourthly, Another thing to be observed in this Story, is, That God is here set forth, as entering into Covenant with *Abraham*, for the performance of his Promises to him, and Circumcision is made the sign and seal of that Covenant.

By this method of God's treating with *Abraham*, we must not understand that God's Promises were not as firm, and inviolable without this, as
with

with it ; but, as a Formal Covenant is look'd upon by Men, as a more firm security, than a bare transient Promise ; so God was pleas'd to treat with *Abraham* in a Human way, being willing more abundantly to shew the Heirs of His Promise, the Immutability of His Counsel, that by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lye, they might have strong consolation, and lay hold of the hope that was set before them, as a sure, and stedfast Anchor of their Soul, as the Apostle expresses it.

This is a natural reason for God's dealing with mankind in this humble, and familiar way of Covenant, and since He was thus pleas'd to treat with *Abraham*, one cannot but admire the Wisdom of God in the Choice of Circumcision as the seal of it.

This was a very strange, and seemingly ridiculous Ceremony, and as it would hardly have ever been thought of by Man, so 'twas a thing, one may imagine,

imagine, would never have been submitted to, but upon a thorough persuasion of its being appointed by God: And we may observe a great wisdom in this appointment, this Ceremony having a particular suitableness, in its very nature, to the End, God had to serve by that People.

For, since God had chosen them out of the world to be a separate People to Himself, and was pleased to enter into Covenant with them, as an assurance of His Promises of favour to them, what greater wisdom could there be than this, to appoint such a sign, and seal of His Covenant, as must necessarily keep them separate? And what could be contrived more effectual for this purpose, than this Ceremony of Circumcision, which was such a Mark in the Flesh, as no other people would voluntarily conform to them in, and no people can be supposed to have taken up, but by God's own appointment?

And

And if it shall hereafter further appear, That as this Promis'd Land in this Covenant did represent to them a Future State of Happiness, so this sign of Circumcision, did likewise represent that Purity, and Holiness, which is required of every person that would make themselves capable of that Happiness, and as no uncircumcis'd person should enter into *Canaan*, so no one should enter into everlasting Happiness, but they who crucify the Flesh with the affections, and lusts, and cleanse themselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit. If, I say, this shall appear to be the meaning of it, then we see a still greater wisdom in the appointment of this otherwise odd Ceremony, as being not only an effectual means of distinguishing that People, who should be intitled to the temporal *Canaan*, but also, in a very lively manner, to set forth the duty of those, who would make themselves capable of the Spiritual *Canaan*.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Another thing we have before taken notice of, was the Revelation to *Abraham* concerning *Sodom*, and the Cities, that were to be destroy'd by Fire, and Brimstone.

What the occasion of this might be, or what the particular reason, and design of it, the Story does not inform us. There might be important reasons for it, though we cannot discover them at this distance; 'tis enough for us in shewing the Credibility of the Story, if it agrees with the design of the whole, and if we can find out any good ends of Providence, it might serve at that time.

Now as we have shewn the necessity of great Incouragements to *Abraham*, and how God supplied him all along according to his occasions, so, though we do not see the absolute necessity of this, yet we see 'twas of great use to the same end, and as it was a vast Incouragement to *Abraham* to proceed in the way that he was then
in,

in, when he saw himself so highly favour'd of God, by such a strange, and unusual Condescension, so this favour might be shewn him, as a kind of reward for his past obedience, and a token of God's approbation of it.

But yet if we consider the circumstances of the Case, there might be something more in it, than this: We find by the Story, when *Abraham* was informed of the Intention of God to destroy those Cities, he was not fully satisfied of the Justice of it: He thought there must be some Righteous people there, and he could not understand the Justice of that Punishment, that should slay the Righteous with the Wicked.

But in the way that this matter is set before us, he is not only instructed in the Justice of the Punishment, but the Severity of that Justice is at the same time softened by a Beautiful Idea of His Mercy, and that too represented in such a manner, as to give him a
 most

most ingaging motive to Obedience, when he saw the Righteous so favoured by God, that sometimes even the Wicked should be preserved for their sakes.

And if we further consider the Circumstances of this Story, where God is represented, as reasoning with Himself, *Why He should hide His Intentions from His Servant Abraham*, when He knew the Integrity of his heart, *That He would command his Children, and his Household after him, to keep the way of the Lord*; this is not only a lively way of Instruction to *Abraham*, and a great Incouragement to his Obedience, That God is so dispos'd to manifest Himself to an Honest, and Sincere Heart, and, That they who will know the Will of God, must be first resolved to do His Will, but here is also a plain Intimation given us, That as *Abraham* was to Instruct his Children, and his Household, he had this favour shewn him on that
account,

account, that not only he himself might have a right notion of the Justice, and Mercy of God, but that they also might be rightly informed of them by Him; a right apprehension of these attributes being of very important concern to those, *who would keep the way of the Lord.*

Thus we see how this History answers thus far; How *Abraham* was provided with proper encouragements, and assisted with such suitable motives, as Reason might expect to find in a credible account of him.

And if this be therefore a probable History thus far, here we have new matter for new Revelation, which we may likewise hereafter expect to find in the sequel of his Story.

For here we are told, that *in Abraham's Seed all the Families of the Earth should be Blessed*, by which words the least that could be intended, was, that the Promis'd Saviour should descend from him, and that his Seed
 should

should be the means of conveying all those Blessings to the world, which I have shewn to be originally implied in that Promise :

And as *Abraham* is said, in this History, to have had two sons, *Ismael*, and *Isaac*, to the latter of which this Great Privilege is appropriated, so that, from him the seed of *Abraham* was to be reckon'd, so there was a necessity, in the nature of things, of some means to be prescribed some time or other, for the keeping up of a distinction in their families, that since this Saviour was not to be look'd for presently, there might be no room to doubt, when He should come, that He was of the Seed of *Abraham*, of *Isaac's* Branch, and that every one might be capable of satisfying himself of this : There seems to be a necessity, I say, of something of this kind ; but whether there was afterwards any Revelation made for this purpose, shall be considered in another place ; and if

we hereafter find it so, as it will be a great instance of the Consistence of this Story, so will it be no less an argument of the Credibility of it.

And thus I have done with the second thing required in a credible History of *Abraham*.



C H A P. X.

The third thing required in a History of Abraham.



Hirdly, The next thing that we have shewn may reasonably be expected in a History of *Abraham*, is, To be told How he became a Nation; and this we have set before us in a very rational and affecting manner in this History.

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'Tis not, as I observed, very easy to conceive how the seed of one man could become a nation, distinct from all others, whilst the world was already inhabited ; How they could be kept together, and grow up into a separate Body, without intermixing with, or depending on any other people, unless they could have been settled in some waste Island, or Country, where no other people should come, but themselves ; but as such a settlement would have been inconsistent with the end of their separation, and 'twas necessary for the benefit of the world that they should be seen, and known, and, in some distant manner, converse with other people ; so 'tis very agreeable to observe in this History how easily and rationally this is brought about, by their going into *Egypt*, and that too in a manner so natural as is here represented.

One cannot but admire the Wisdom of Providence, and in that the Credibility of this History, that since they were to become a Distinct Nation, and must have necessarily some place to live together, that *Egypt* should be the Place provided for them; a Place, above all others, particularly fitted for the keeping them a separate People, the *Hebrews* being such an Abomination to the *Egyptians*, that they would not so much as eat with them, and therefore were not likely to mix with them.

And therefore, when we read of the *Israelites* being brought into this Country, and *Joseph* their Brother, by a strange Providence, sent thither before them, as it were, as a Harbinger, to procure an Interest for their settlement, and that the place provided for them was the Land of *Goshen*, a place where they were to live by themselves, what can one think of this whole transaction, but as a thing not only highly rational

in itself, but a particular contrivance of the Wisdom of God, that since he intended they should be a separate People, he brought them hither, and planted them here, as in a Nursery, where they might multiply, and grow, and gather Strength, 'till they should be fit to be removed, and transplanted into the promis'd land ?


This was the visible design of Providence, in bringing them hither : How it fared with them here, we are particularly told ; and as my design is to shew the Credibility of the Story, I will examine the several parts of it, and shew the Wisdom of God in every Instance.





C H A P. XI.

The Credibility of the History of the Children of Israel, and of their Afflictions.

 HE first thing to be observed in this Story, is, That the Children of *Israel* were miserably afflicted; That they should be so, had been foretold to *Abraham*, and as this Story gives a very natural reason why they were so; so 'twas a great Instance of God's Wisdom, that they should be so: For whatever other wise ends God had to serve by that affliction, we may observe a particular suitableness in it to His End, in keeping them a separate people, and the design of removing them to another land.

For as the reason of keeping them a separate people, was the Preservation of the True Religion, so this affliction might naturally contribute towards this.

For as the *Egyptians* were a Nation over-run with Idolatry, had the *Israelites* been kindly treated there, this might have gain'd upon their affections, and by contracting friendships, and familiarities with the *Egyptians*, they might have been drawn away into their superstitions: But when they found themselves hated by the *Egyptians*, and suffer'd such sad hardships from them, this naturally begat an Aversion towards them, and made them less liable to be corrupted by them. Even as it was, we find by the Story, that the *Israelites* could not keep themselves free from Infection, but they got a tincture of the *Egyptian* Idolatry; but without this they must have probably been over-run with it, and would have entirely fallen away.

Besides,

Besides, this affliction was very suitable to the Promise of their coming to the Land of *Canaan*, as it might be a natural and necessary means to prepare their minds for their removal thither.

For when *Egypt* was become their Native Country, they doubtless had a natural fondness for it, and as they, and their Families were settled there, they could have no Inclination to remove from thence. 'Twas the last thing they would probably have desired, or thought of, and, without a Miracle, it would have been impossible to bring them to it, so long as they could hope to live in any tolerable ease and comfort there.

But when they were so miserably harass'd by the *Egyptians*, and put under such a barbarous, and unnatural persecution, as that of destroying their own Children, together with other miserable oppressions, this alone would be sufficient to make them weary of

the place, and glad of an opportunity of removing thence.

So that nothing could be more fitted to the design of Providence, in relation to this people, than this circumstance of their Affliction : But this was only to prepare them for their removal.

The next thing to be observ'd, is, How they came out, and this, the Story says, was by the Execution of Great, and Strange Judgments on the *Egyptians*.

This event had likewise been foretold to *Abraham*, and 'tis no ways unlikely, that a Cruel and Idolatrous people might be ripe for such Judgments on their own account ; but it gives a great Credibility to the Story, when we can discern a particular wisdom, in suiting those Judgments to the Circumstances of God's chosen people, and the End they were chosen for.

For when we consider, that this chosen people, by living long under
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the Government of *Egypt*, had got the Infection of their Idolatry, 'twas absolutely necessary it should be cured: For they were set apart, as I said before, on purpose to preserve the True Religion, and by consequence 'twas necessary, that they should be inform'd of the Only True God, and how to worship Him, as God; and what could be more effectual to convince their Reason, that the God of *Israel* was this God, than such works as none but He could do, even by the confession of the Magicians themselves?

And accordingly we read in *Exodus*, *ch. vi. v. 6.* that God requires *Moses* to inform the *Israelites*, *That He was the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, and as a proof of this, he was to tell them, that He would bring them out of bondage, with a stretch'd-out arm, and with great Judgments, and by this they should know, that *He was the Lord their God.*

Again

Again we may consider, this People were bred up in mighty notions of their Privileges, as the seed of *Abraham* the friend of God, and by consequence the favourites of Heaven, and when they found themselves persecuted upon this account, they might naturally expect that God would appear in their behalf, and make some distinction in their favour, and what could more effectually demonstrate this, than to see such Judgments on the Land of *Egypt*; whilst themselves were intirely free?

And when we further consider, as it appears by this Story, that *Moses* was the Person appointed by God to bring this people out of *Egypt*, a Person altogether unqualified for such a work without the assistance of an Almighty Power, here is a particular aptness in these Judgments for this end, not only in convincing the *Israelites* themselves, that He was sent by God upon this Errand, and was able to effect what he propos'd, that they might
be

be willing to come away with him; but also to work upon the obstinate *Egyptians*, and oblige them to let the People go. And accordingly, these were the Ends those Judgments upon the *Egyptians*, and that Miraculous Power, which *Moses* was indued withal, were intended for, as we read *Exod.* iv.—*Chap.* vi. *ver.* 6, 7, 8.

And if we add to this, on the other hand, that these *Egyptians* might be not only ripe for Vengeance, as I said before, upon the account of their Cruelties, and other wickednesses, but wanted also to be inform'd of the True God, What could be more suitable, and proper for this end, than these Judgments, which might serve at once both for Punishment and Conviction, and that too not only of the True God, but also of their guilt in having offended Him, and, by consequence, of their duty, and interest to worship Him, and live in all Obedience to Him? And accordingly we likewise read,
that

that this was one Intention of the Divine Judgments on that people, *viz.* that *Pharaoh*, and by consequence His Subjects, should understand, that He *the God of the Hebrews* was *The Lord*, Exod. vii. 17. and *that there was none like Him in all the Earth*, ch. viii. 22. —ix. 14. and *that the Earth is The Lord's*, ch. vii. 3, 4, 5. that is, that He is the only True God, the Creator and Governor of the World.

And as they were apparently intended for the Punishment of that Nation, it is very probable, that every Judgment upon *Egypt* might have had some relation to some particular Sin of that People, either against God, or against the *Israelites*, so as to carry in its nature some resemblance to that Sin it was intended as a punishment for: The Author of the *Book of Wisdom* has in several instances endeavour'd to shew this, *Ch* xi. 15. *Ch*. xv. 18, 19. *Ch*. xvi. 1. *Ch*. xvii. 2, 3. *Ch*. xviii. 5. But tho' the observations may not be
so

so just in all respects, yet as to the last great Plague in the Death of every First-born of the *Egyptians*, this carries so lively a resemblance, and has so natural a relation to their Sin, in destroying every Male Child of the *Israelites*, that one can hardly think at first Sight, but it must have been purposely so order'd by a Wise Providence, not only, as a Punishment for their Sins in general, but particularly to teach them, by their own Experience, what an unnatural Cruelty they had used to the *Israelites*, and how justly they suffer'd for it.

And when we consider all this together, what greater token can we have of the Credibility of this Story, than to observe such a wonderful Wisdom in it, and to see it so contriv'd, as to answer so many great, and good Ends at once, which were not only worthy of the Divine Cognizance in themselves, but seem'd in their very nature to require some provision to be made for

for them; And to see it done in such a manner, as if each of these ends had been the particular and only care of Providence in this dispensation?

The next thing observable in this Story is, The Success of these Judgments in procuring the dismissal of this People, and their coming away with *Jewels of Gold, and Silver, and Raiment.*

This is a Circumstance, that had likewise been foretold to *Abraham*, that *they should come away with great Substance*; And this is a very credible relation, not only for the reason, that is here given of it, *viz.* That the *Egyptians* were afraid of being destroy'd upon their account, and so were glad to get rid of them at any rate, in that terrible fright they were then under, but also as it is said to be so order'd by God, (*Exod. xi. 2.*) For, considering what this people had suffer'd by the *Egyptians*, here is a natural Suitableness, and Equity in this Appointment,
and

and it may be considered, not only as a kind of Recompence for their sufferings in general, but as a particular satisfaction, for what they had by Right due to them for their labours. For 'tis very probable that as they had been oppress'd with labour, so they might have been likewise in their wages, and being us'd as slaves, 'tis very reasonable to think they might have been paid like slaves, just as their Arbitrary Masters pleas'd: Nay, we are particularly told, that they were forced to make the same tale of Brick, though they gathered the Straw, as they us'd to do before, when 'twas provided for them; And if their Wages before, as 'tis natural to suppose, were not greater, than their work deserv'd, this addition to their labour in gathering the Straw, was working so much time for nothing.

And therefore, when they had power to Right themselves, they *demand*ed of the *Egyptians Jewels of gold, and silver,*

silver, and raiment. For the word which we ill translate *Borrowed*; signifies *Demanded*; and this, I say, they did probably, as a Right, though the *Egyptians* would call it only a Loan.

And 'tis very observable, that God is not only said to have given them orders to make this demand, but also to have given them favour in the Sight of the *Egyptians* to let them have such things as they required (*Exod. xii. 36.*) that it might appear to be his work, thereby to let them know, that He was as Just to them in recompencing their sufferings and losses, as He was to the *Egyptians*, in avenging their Oppressions, on whom this might be likewise inflicted, as a further Punishment.

So that in this view, this Instance which at first seems an Act of Injustice in the *Israelites*, was, in reality, the very contrary: And as it was done by the appointment of God Himself, they were only His Instruments to take
from

from that People, what they held only by the bounty of His Providence, and had now forfeited by their transgressions.

The next thing observable in the Story of this people, is their going thro' the Wilderness, and their continuing there for forty Years. The reason here given for taking that Way, is very wise, and rational : *viz.* That if they had gone through the land of the *Philistines*, which was near, and lay in their way to *Canaan*, this would naturally have begat War, and as War would have affrighted, and discourag'd them in their enterprize, so they would have repented and gone back to *Egypt*, *Exod.* xiii. 17.

But there was another wise reason in the nature of the thing ; For, as I have often observed, this People were chosen for the preservation of the True Religion in opposition to Idolatry, and yet they were so addicted to Idolatry

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themselves, that where-ever they had any opportunity, they joined themselves to the Heathen worship, and notwithstanding all the testimonies God had given of Himself, that He was the only True God, by the signs and wonders they had seen him do, yet they still fell off upon every occasion: So that had they gone immediately into the Land of *Canaan*, which was then a Land of Idolaters, they would no doubt have worshipp'd their gods, and learnt their manners, and so defeated the design of Providence.

And therefore in Wisdom God led them through the Wilderness, that they might converse with no other people, lest they might be further corrupted by them: And as this was a place where they could not subsist, and be provided with necessaries in a Natural way, but must eat, and drink by Miracle, so it was by consequence a proper place to train them up into a sense of his Authority, and convince them, that He
was

was the only True God, by the daily fresh Instances of His Power, and Goodness, which they could not possibly but take notice of : And for this reason he kept them in the Wilderness so long, 'till the old Generation was all gone off, and a new one sprung up in their room, that had not been leaven'd with Idolatry, that had seen no other people, nor country, and knew no other God, but Him, whose wonders they had been eye-witnesses of, and whose miracles they had lived by, and whom they had learnt to fear, and reverence.

And when God had thus raised Himself a people, prepared, and fitted for His purpose, that might be proper Inhabitants for the Land of Promise, He then gave them actual possession of it, and led them directly into *Canaan*.

Thus we see how this People became a Nation, and how every Circumstance that happened to them had

a particular relation to their being so; we see what a natural agreement there is in every thing, either to the Circumstances of that People themselves, or to the design of God in making them a People, and, we cannot, after this, with any reason, suspect the Credibility of this relation thus far.



C H A P. XII.

The fourth thing required in a History of Abraham, and his Family relating to their Laws and Government.



THE next thing to be inquired after in the History of this People, is, some account of their Laws, and Government, and this we find in our History in a very extraordinary manner.

Soon

Soon after this People came into the Wilderness, and were not only separated from all other Nations, but absolutely independent of them, the first care of Providence is imployed in settling them under some rules of Order, and forming them into a Regular Commonwealth, and for this purpose, He gives them a system of Laws to govern themselves by in their Moral, Religious, and Civil Capacity : And as they were made a Nation by God, and could not be preserved so, but by His Almighty Power, so, we are told, they receiv'd their Laws from God, and were immediately Governed, and Protected by Him. And though God gave them all sufficient Evidence, that those Laws they received were given by Him, by the wonders He shew'd at the giving of them, and afterwards when they were under His immediate Protection, by the frequent Miracles he wrought in their behalf, yet it is worth our while in this place a little

to reflect, how He manifested His wisdom in the Laws themselves, in adapting them to the circumstances, and disposition of that People, and the End they were chosen for.

The Wisdom of God shewn in the Jewish Law.

As, First, 'Tis evident, by the account we have of them, that they were, as 'tis very natural to conceive they might be, a very dull, and stupid people, having been bred up in hard labour, under the oppressions of Tyranny, and Arbitrary Power, which is apt to break, and debase mens spirits; and considering this, how graciously does their Great, and Wise Lawgiver condescend to their weak capacities, fitting the Number of His Moral precepts to their memories, by reducing them to Ten short commands, and representing the most important truths to them, under such Emblems,
and

and Figures, as they had been accustomed to, that he might not only the the more easily Instruct them in those things represented by those Figures, but also the more deeply imprint them on their minds :

What I mean by these Emblems and Figures, shall be shewn by and by, (p. 204.)

Secondly, If we consider them as they were, a people prone to, and already corrupted with Idolatry, here was a wise Provision in this case also, and that not only in the vast multitude of Observances impos'd upon them to keep them continually busy, and employ'd, that they might not be at leisure to imitate their Heathen Neighbours, but also in the appointment of such particular Ceremonies as were directly contrary to their Idolatrous Rites.

The Ceremonies, for Instance of the Passover, the manner of building the Altar, and of going up to it ; the Prohibitions of seething a Kid in its mother's

ther's milk, of offering Honey in Sacrifices, of forcing their Children to pass through the Fire to *Moloch*, of eating Blood, and rounding the corners of their heads, and cutting their Flesh, were all so many commands injoin'd by God, only in opposition to such customs in the Heathen Idolatry (as has been proved by *Maimonides*, and *Dr. Spencer*): And as for those others, which we cannot see the reason of, 'tis probable they might likewise have been appointed with the same view, though it cannot so evidently be made appear at this distance, since the Rites of those ancient Idolaters have been long since abolish'd, and are but imperfectly recorded in some few ancient Authors, as the learned *Dr. Allix* well observes in his *Reflections on the Old, and New Testament*.

Thirdly, If we consider them as a people separated from other Nations, here likewise we may observe a Wise Provision made to keep them so, not only

only by continuing the Ordinance of Circumcision, but also by forbidding them to conform to the Rites and Customs of other people, and injoining such a distinction of Meats, and Sacrifices, as must necessarily keep them from all other people. For they were to Abstain from what others Ate, and to Eat and Sacrifice what the others Worshipp'd; and as this gave the Heathen an abhorrence of them, so when they could neither eat nor worship together, it naturally prevented all Intimacy of converse with them.

This was the reason given for that command of Clean and Unclean Creatures in *Leviticus* Levit. xx. 24, 25. even by God Himself: And 'tis very probable for the same reason, that the Law condescends to such little things, as the fashion of their Dress, their Beards, their Phylacteries, and the Rails before their Houses, and the like, that He might in every respect distinguish, and make them known from other people,

people, and so prevent all mixture and confusion with them.

Lastly, If we consider, that the end of their separation was, that they might be a holy, and peculiar people to the Lord, *Lev. xx. 26. Exod. xix. 6.*

'Tis obvious to every Eye, that this was the Great End of the whole Law, and 'tis worth our Observation how every part of it is wisely fitted for this End.

I need not observe this in the Moral Law, which relates to our duty to God, and Man ; Every one sees the Natural Obligation of this ; How it tends in its own nature to make us like God, and Happy in the Injoyment of Him : The same design is likewise visible, and there is a particular fitness for that design, even in the Judicial, and Ceremonial part of it.

As for the Judicial precepts, which relate only to the Government of the Civil State, 'tis evident, they are all along calculated for the Incouragement
of

of Vertue, and the Prevention of Vice, and Irregularity. And tho' the many Ceremonies relating to their Religion, seem only to be so many Arbitrary Forms, and mere outside Rites, yet they were likewise injoin'd with a Moral Intention : And though they might be proper for the low estate of that people, merely as outside Forms of Pomp, to affect their minds with a greater Awe, and Reverence in their Worship, yet they have been Anciently understood to have many other views, and among others 'tis very probable they might have been appointed to instruct these ignorant, and stupid People in Moral duties, by such visible signs, and representations, as they had been accustomed to, and was a common way of Instruction in the Country they had liv'd in.

Thus, for Instance, their Sacrifices of Expiation might be intended to put them in mind of the sad consequence, and desert of sin, and the Obligation
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they had to die to sin, if they would be reconcil'd to God ; their Eucharistical Sacrifices were naturally proper to keep up a sense of their dependance upon God, and of their owing all they had, to His Favour and Bounty, and by consequence of the strong Ingagements they were under to all returns of Duty, and Gratitude. Their Circumcision was not only a sign of their Covenant with God, but also of the necessity of parting with their Lusts, if they would be intitled to the Benefits of it : Their Legal Washings, and Purifications shew'd them, how pure a God they served, and how clean every person ought to be from all filthiness of Flesh, and Spirit, that would either come into His presence, or hope for His favour. And the Prohibition of certain meats might likewise be intended to teach them to avoid those sins, and dispositions, that had a resemblance to those creatures they were ordered to abstain from. When Swines Flesh, for
Instance,

Instance, was made Unclean, to them, it might be for Instruction in Righteousness, as well as other Ends, that they might by this be taught to avoid the brutal Nature of that Creature, that as he wallows in the Mire, when full, so they should not wallow in sin, which is usually represented under the notion of Filth, nor abuse their Plenty to Sensuality, and Licentiousness.

When they are forbid to eat Birds of Prey, 'tis to teach them, that they must not live by Rapine; And by Fish without Scales, that delight in Mud, they were taught to avoid all Earthly-mindedness, and all base, and mean designs, and practices.

These Interpretations may be look'd upon, only as the result of a luxuriant Imagination: And though I must confess a Fanciful Invention may go far in this way, yet that this was the natural construction of these Laws, we have very great reason to think: I have already taken notice, that this was the
way

way of speaking in those days, and in those Countries, and we use it still in our own language, and are very well understood, when we do so. When we would speak of a Man's Ingratitude, or Sensuality, or Rage or Lust, or Subtlety, we speak of him, under the Notion of a Hog, a Lyon, a Goat, and a Fox, and if we should bid a man abstain from these, and have a care of making them part of himself, he would be understood without an Interpreter.

The Moral of such Similitudes, is obvious enough, and that this was one Intention of these Legal Ceremonies, has been the current sense of Ancient times; And thus much is very certain, even from the Scriptures themselves, that they were all to be esteemed as vain and fruitless, and the Observance of them, as unacceptable to God, unless they were accompanied with the Fruits of Righteousness, which looks, as if this were the Intention of them.

See

See *Isa.* lxvi. 3.—i. 13.—lviii. 45, &c.
Prov. xv. 8.—xxviii. 9. *Zach.* vii. 5.
Psal. li. 16, 17.—xl. 8, 9. *Jer.* vii. 3,
 4, 5, &c. — xxi. 22, 23, &c.
Hosea vi. 6. *Micah* vi. 6, 7, 8.

And as this was the Great Design of the whole Law, so it was not wanting, in proper motives, to enforce the Observation of it :

They were a people bred up in the Hopes of a Saviour to come, and in the Promise of that Saviour, I have already shewn, was implied, the Promise of Everlasting Happiness; He could not be a Saviour without it. The same thing, I have likewise shewn, was understood by the Promise of the Land of *Canaan*, viz. a future State of Rest, and Comfort, of which that Land was a Token, and a Pledge. This, I say, I have observ'd, they probably understood in this Sense, and the New Testament confirms it to us, if that shall hereafter appear of any Credit: So that when they were in actual possession of
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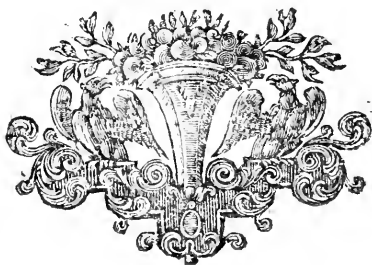
this Land, they had thereby an assurance in hand, of the future Enjoyment of what they hop'd for, provided they were but faithful in their Covenant.

This was some part of the Encouragement they had, but this was not sufficient in their case; their Circumstances requir'd more.

As they were to continue separate from others for the preservation of the True Religion, they stood in need of temporal Promises, that they might have no temptation for temporal gain, to fall away into the Gentil Superstitions. For, since the Heathens imputed all their worldly Successes to the Worship of their Idols, and false Gods, there was a necessity, in proportion, that the God of *Israel* should shew himself as Gracious to his Votaries, as the False Gods were suppos'd to be to theirs; and therefore 'tis so far from being a derogation to this Law, that it abounds so much with the Promises of Temporal Blessings, that it is a particular Instance

stance of the Wisdom of it; such Promises being not only most likely to work upon that stupid low-minded people, but suited also to their particular circumstances, and occasions, as they were to be kept separate from other nations.

Thus we see the Wisdom of the *Jewish* Laws, and thereby the Credibility of this History of *Moses*, so far as it relates to them.





C H A P. XIII.

What may be naturally expected in a History of Abraham, and his Family, relating to the Preservation, and Propagation of the True Religion.



THE next thing to be inquir'd into, and which we may reasonably expect to find in a History of this People, is, That, since one Great End God had to serve by them, was, the Preservation of the True Religion in opposition to Idolatry, they were thoroughly instructed in the True Religion themselves, and that this was also kept pure, and undefiled amongst them.

Secondly, That some means were made use of from time to time, to bring

bring their Religion to the Knowledge of other nations.

As to the first of these, that we may represent this matter in its proper light, we must inquire what is to be meant by True Religion :

Now, by this we must understand two things : First, A Right Knowledge of the True God, and How we are to behave our selves to Him, considering the Relation He bears to us. Secondly; A True Faith, and Confidence in the Promis'd Saviour. The first was the Sum of Natural, the second of Reveal'd Religion : And as it was Revealed, as a Remedy for Sin, so 'twas the only Comfort that Sinners had, and a very great Comfort it was, as containing in it, as I have before observ'd, the Assurance of Pardon and Reconciliation with God, as also a Deliverance from Death into a State of Everlasting Life and Happiness : Now, as a sinful World could have but little encouragement to Obedience, without some as-

urance of this kind, and we know no such assurance they had, but what was implied in this Promise; so a Due Faith, and Confidence in the performance of this Promise, was a Fundamental Article of the Religion of Sinners. So that when I speak of the necessity of their being instructed in the True Religion, I mean, That they should be thoroughly taught to know the True God, Who He is, and What He is, and how to worship, and serve him acceptably. Secondly, To Believe in the Saviour to come, thro' whom God had promis'd Eternal Happiness to all that would obey Him faithfully.

This is True Religion, and as this is what we may expect to find in a History of this people set apart by God for this purpose; so 'tis very obvious to observe how this is effectually provided for.

Whilst this people dwelt amongst the *Egyptians*, 'tis evident their notions of God had been corrupted, and they were infected with the Idolatry of the Country;

Country; and therefore we have already taken notice, that one great End of those many Judgments upon *Egypt*, was to shew them, that the gods of the *Egyptians* were no gods, but that He that did those works was the True God.

And afterwards when they came into the Wilderness, when God gave them their Laws, in that amazing manner we are told of, He in the first place lets them know, That there was but One God; and that He, who spake to them was that One God; And for a proof of this, He appeals to His Works: And as the reason of His speaking in that Formidable manner, was, as we are told, that *they might know, that he was the Lord and none else*, Deut. iv. 35. vi. 7; so, as a further Proof of it, I say, He refers them to His Works in bringing them out of the Land of Egypt, and out of the House of Bondage. *I am the Lord, thy God, says he, that brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the*

House of Bondage: In which words He appeals to his bringing them out of the Land of *Egypt*, which he did by such mighty Signs, and Wonders, as shew'd that He was *The Lord*, that Great Governour of the world, and which He did for that very purpose, as we read in *Exod.* iv. 5.—vii. 17.—viii. 10, 22.—ix. 14, 16, 17.—x. 2. And he refers them to His *bringing them out of the house of Bondage*, to shew them that He was *the Lord, their God, the God of Abraham*, who as he had promis'd to *Abraham*, that, tho' *his Seed should be Strangers in a land, that was not theirs, where they should serve, and be afflicted*, that is, be in Bondage, till 400 Years, yet in the fourth Generation He would bring them out with great Substance, so accordingly he had now done. See *Exod.* vi. 7, 8. And by this performance of His promise in their deliverance from this bondage, He shew'd undeniably, that he was that God, who spake to *Abraham*, His God, and
 Theirs,

Theirs, that is, the God they had all along profess'd to believe in, and had been protect'd by.

This is the plain meaning of the words, tho' otherwise understood by most Commentators: And in this Sense of them, all the world are as much concern'd to Believe in, and Serve *the God that brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and out of the House of Bondage*, as they themselves were; Because the consideration of this deliverance is not offer'd, as a motive to Obedience only, in which that people only were concern'd, but as a proof of His being the God of *Israel*, and the only True God:

And when we Christians are requir'd to Believe in, and Serve the same God under the same Character, and on the same Consideration of being the Deliverer of the Children of *Israel*, 'tis to be meant, that we must receive only The God of *Israel* for our God, who gave that undeniable proof of His

being the True God. [But this by the bye.]

Thus we see what provision was made for the Knowledge of the one True God among this People.

And as they are requir'd to have no other Gods but Him, so they are likewise taught how to serve him acceptably, paying their Adorations to Him alone, and not any Creature in Heaven, or in Earth, as if He were residing in them; nor forming to themselves any likeness of Him, as if He were to be resembled by any of them.

That they should live in such a Holy Awe of Him, as to swear by His Name alone, and not to use it without the utmost Reverence, that is, not trifling with it in their communication, much less presuming to appeal to Him by Oath, unless it be in a matter of great Importance, and that too *in Truth, and Righteousness, and Judgment.*

And

And to preserve this Holy Awe of Him in their minds, as He had given them sufficient Instances of His being the Great Governour of the world, by his *bringing them out of the Land of Egypt*; so He particularly provided, that they should not forget, that He was the Creator of it too, and therefore oblig'd them to continue the separation of one day in seven to His Honour, applying themselves therein to such Holy Offices, as He Himself appointed for that purpose.

This was the standing Rule of their Religion towards God; and as they had, as has been already shewn, a full account of their duty to one another, so they wanted no motives to inforce the Observation of it.

So that they could not stand in need of any further Information, in respect either of their duty to God, or Man.

This was all done upon their first coming into the Wilderness; and afterward that they might not only be kept
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in a continual sense of all this, but also, that their Children, which should be born, might not want a due Evidence of the same Almighty Power, which these their Fathers had seen in *Egypt*, to convince them of the one True God, and of their obligation to serve, and obey Him, God was pleased to keep this whole people for 40 Years together in the Wilderness, in a constant dependance upon his Miraculous Power for their necessary support of life, and let them see many remarkable, and distinguishing Judgments upon those, who would not submit to His Authority.

And farther still, when He afterwards led them into the Land of *Canaan*, He did it in such a manner, as to let them see, That He was *The Lord*, and that this was His Work, and that those, whom the Heathen worshipp'd for Gods, *were no Gods, but the work of mens hands*, that not one of them could stand before Him, or was able to do as He had done.

And

And to keep up the remembrance of all this, as He had before injoin'd the Observation of the Sabbath, so He now likewise appoints three several Festivals to be observ'd every year thro' all their generations: The Passover, in memory of their deliverance from the destroying Angel in *Egypt*; The Feast of Pentecost, or Weeks, in memory of their receiving the Law, with all its astonishing Circumstances; The Feast of Tabernacles, in remembrance of their dwelling in Tents, and all the several wonders of their passage thro' the Wilderness, till they came into the Land of *Canaan*.

And that they might not want living Witnesses of these things, which they were thus appointed to commemorate, we may here observe the Wisdom of Providence, and therein the Credibility of this History, when we are told, not only, that some *Egyptians* were permitted to come along with them out of *Egypt*, but afterward, when they enter'd into the Land of *Canaan*, the *Gibeonites* were

were preserved amongst them; who, as they might be a living testimony to those, that should be born in their Days, of what had happen'd in that Country, as to the manner how the Children of *Israel* got possession of it; so they must be a standing memorial to all future generations of the Truth, and Certainty of the thing, when they should see some parts of its Ancient Inhabitants still remaining among them in Servility.

But still, to make all these the more effectual, Providence took care that the History of all these past transactions, should be put into their hands in writing, that they might have a standing record of them; and not only requir'd that every Family should read it continually at home, and inform one another of the contents of it night and day, but that it should be read every Sabbath-day in Publick: And every seventh year 'twas done in a more solemn manner before the whole congregation

gation of that people, who, during that year, being oblig'd to rest from all their ordinary labours, and employments, had nothing else to do but read, and meditate upon it.

And as God took care they should have leisure; so it was their concern to lay hold of every opportunity that offer'd itself, for the Improvement of their Knowledge in this Book.

For, as its precepts related to all the Accidents of life, so that no action could happen, either publick, or private, which it had not some rule or direction for; so the Law made it Death to act contrary to them, out of a principle of Obstinacy, and Presumption; nay, even those transgressions, that were committed out of Ignorance, could not be forgiven without certain Sacrifices, the forms of which were scrupulously prescrib'd, and not to be dispens'd with on any consideration. So that here was a necessity of their being thoroughly vers'd in this Book, and of ha-
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ving a continual recourse to it, when every action of their lives was to be regulated by it, even in many of the smallest circumstances, and especially when every transgression, how involuntary soever, was so strictly to be accounted for.

And when we consider all these together, what better method could there be, more likely to establish the True Religion in their minds, than this was? And that they might be kept Pure, and Undeiled in the True Religion, in respect both of their Knowledge, and Practice, we read, they were not only forbidden, when they should come to *Canaan*, so much as to inquire how those nations serv'd their gods, but they are threaten'd, by *Moses*, with dismal Judgments, whenever they should conform to them, either in their idolatrous, or other wicked practices.

The Historical Books of Scripture, that follow, which were wrote after *Moses's* time, give us many, and strange Instances of the fulfilling these threatenings.

nings. But notwithstanding all, we are told, they frequently fell off both from their God, and their Duty: Whatever good resolutions they were brought to at times, they soon forgot them all again, and stood in need of Discipline as much as ever: And as their Circumstances then called for new dispensations, so God was not wanting to them in such means as might be proper to work upon them, and accordingly sent His Prophets to declare His Will to them: This begat all those Prophetick writings, which are handed down to us in the Scripture, which are nothing else, but the several messages sent to them from God, either to reform their notions, or correct their manners, in bringing them off from Immorality or Idolatry, according as their occasions called for them.

What the immediate occasion of every particular Prophecy, was, we are not indeed told expressly; But as the Children of *Israel* were a people extremely

extremely prone to Idolatry, God had regard to this in all His dispensations toward them, to convince them, that *He was the Lord their God*: And therefore, when He had decreed to punish them for their Sins, He gave them notice of it by His Prophets, as He did, on the other hand, of their deliverance from afflictions, or any other Mercy He intended for them, that they might be sensible it was His Work.

Something of this nature, relating either to Favour, or Punishment, is the Subject of every Prophecy, and this might be proper at all times, for such an unconstant back-sliding people to keep up a Sense of the true God amongst them :

But it was more particularly necessary in case of Punishment, and especially when the Punishment intended was Captivity: When this was the case, as we read it frequently was for their Idolatry, there was always a more particular

cular necessity of a seasonable Prediction of it.

For, had they been given up into their Enemies hands, without being first told the reason of it, considering how highly they valued themselves upon the privilege of their being the people of God, and what Stress they laid upon the ancient Covenant, of the Inheritance of the Land of *Canaan*, as if their whole hopes had depended on it, they might have suspected, that they had been forsaken, and subdued by the Power of the gods of their Enemies: That their own God was not able to protect them, and secure the promise of *Canaan* to them, and so might have been tempted to fall away.

This was the Heathen's way of reasoning (2 *Kings* xviii. 23.) they imputed their Successes against their Enemies to the Superior Power of the gods they worshipp'd: And as this was an argument that they would doubtless

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press upon this people, to draw them off from the God they serv'd ; so it would be too likely to prevail upon them.

And therefore, to prevent this, God all along forewarned them of their punishment, and foretold the particular reason, and design of it, *viz.* That it was not only for their sins in general, but in particular for their Idolatry : By which He let them plainly understand, that the Affliction He intended to lay upon them, was His Work, and His alone : And that He might thoroughly convince them of it, He always adds, That whenever they should repent, and forsake their sins, which had been the occasion of their sufferings, they should see a further proof of His Mighty Power in the removal of their punishment from them.

And as 'tis very remarkable to find in this History, how punctually the Events always answered the Predictions, that is, how the Vengeance threatened,

ened, and the Mercy promised, never fail'd to come to pass, according as they had been foretold ;

So what can we imagine more effectual in the nature of things to affect their minds with a sense of their Duty, and their Sins, and preserve them in the True Religion, than this ?

By these things we see what care was taken by the All-wise Providence of God for the preservation of True Religion, among this People, as it relates to the knowledge, and service of the True God.

What means were made use of for the preservation of the Faith of the Promis'd Saviour.

As for the other part of True Religion, the Belief of a Saviour, one can hardly imagine, they could want any information in this respect, the hopes of this being the great encouragement

that supported *Abraham* in his enterprize, and the foundation upon which their nation was built.

Of TYPES.

But, however, they could not be better instructed in it, than was provided by their Law, if the Ceremonial part of their Religion was, as the *Jews* assert it was, an Emblematick, or Hieroglyphick representation of the dispensation of the *Messias*, and the Qualifications necessary to such, as would be made partakers of the benefits of it.

This was a way of instruction, as I before observed, very proper for this People, and very well understood by them. For as they had lived in *Egypt*, a Nation accusom'd to such Hieroglyphical Emblems, they knew how to interpret the meaning of them, as well, as we do those Pictures, we may have seen of the Passions, the Senses, and the Seasons of the year.

But

But this was not a way of speaking peculiar only to *Egypt*, but was common to all the Eastern nations: And we see throughout the whole Scripture-Story, there is nothing more frequent, than the use of Parables, and Similitudes, and typical resemblances upon almost every occasion.

So that it is no wild imagination to suppose, that this might be the intention of the Legal Ceremonies: And if it was, a little hint would enable them to find it out, and when once discover'd, those Types, and Figures would not only convey a more lively Idea to their minds of the things represented by them, but would more effectually preserve them in their Memory.

But how probable soever this may seem, 'tis hard to know certainly, whether it was so, and we can never have such sufficient evidence of it, as to build any argument upon it: But thus much is certain, that there is a great resemblance between some of

these Ceremonies, and some parts of the Christian Dispensation, which we call the Dispensation of the *Messiah*.

The Lifting up the Brazen Serpent; The Sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb, without Spot, or Blemish; The sending the Scape-Goat into the Wilderness with the Sins of the people upon it; The High Priest's going into the Holy Place at the Great Expiation once a Year to present the Blood of the atonement before the Lord; These are all so like what is taught of the *Messias*, that one can hardly think, but they must have been intended, as signs and representations of what He was to do at His coming; if we may judge in this case, as we do of Pictures, which we usually, and very justly, say, are the Pictures of such, or such things, or persons, by the resemblance that appears between them.

And as in a Family where Pictures are preserved, with great veneration, as the resemblances of such and such

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Ancestors, we have no reason to doubt, but they were so, or, at least, were intended to be so; so we have as little reason to doubt, unless we have some manifest, and more cogent motive to the contrary, but that these Legal Ceremonies were enjoined, as Pictures of the dispensation of the *Messias*, when we have the ancient tradition of the *Jews* for it, who were the Family, and Household of God, and had the keeping of the Oracles of God.

But be this as it will, there were not wanting other means to preserve the Idea of the Promis'd Saviour in the minds of this People.

They had been bred up from *Abraham's* time, not only in the general notion of the Promise, but in a great desire of it, and great expectations of the Blessings they were to reap from it, and had, no doubt on't, been instructed in every thing, that their fore-fathers knew concerning it.

'Twas upon this account, that they valued themselves upon their being the Seed of *Abraham*, because the Promised Saviour was to descend from Him, *and in His Seed all the Families of the Earth were to be Blessed*: And 'tis natural to imagine, that every Parent would inform his Children of the Privileges they were intitled to :

And they had great assurances from their Father *Jacob*, that all the Promises of God should be made good to them, not only in the Inheritance of the Land of *Canaan*, which he divided amongst the Tribes, but also in the Coming of the Expected *Shiloh*, or *the desire of all Nations* ; as the *Septuagint* expresses it.

But notwithstanding this general notion they had of a Saviour, and of the Great Happiness to be expected from Him, they had not yet had any information of the Character of the Person, by whom this salvation was to be wrought, any further than of His being

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ing the Seed of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* ; nor did they know any thing of the manner how this Great Blessedness they expected from Him, was to be convey'd to Mankind : And as this was necessary to be made known to them one time or other, so we read how from a particular occasion given, God here vouchsafes them a Revelation of that matter, *viz.*

That whereas they were so terrified at His speaking to them, as to desire He would not speak to them in that manner any more, He promises, that He would hereafter speak to them by a *Prophet, like unto Moses, one from amongst their Brethren, one of their own nature, like themselves, whom, if they refus'd to hear, He would require it at their hands :*

The words are these, *I will raise them a Prophet from among their Brethren, like unto Thee, and will put my words in His mouth, and He shall speak unto them, all that I command Him,*

Him, and it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken to my words, which He shall speak in my name, I will require it of him, Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

The literal meaning of these words is plain : Here is evidently a single Person spoken of, who was some time or other to be sent to this People : And as this Person was to be a Prophet like *Moses*, 'tis natural to conclude, that He should bear the same Characters, and be indued with the same Powers with *Moses* : And if it be reasonable to infer, that he was to be a Deliverer or Saviour, as *Moses* was, this is the very Idea we have shewn to be understood, by *Bruising the Serpent's head*. And if this Bruising the Serpent's head, and the Redemption intended by it, can be reasonably thought to be that Blessing, which God design'd to be convey'd to all Mankind through the Seed of *Abraham*, it is naturally implied, that this Prophet, who was to
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come, should be the Person, by whom this Redemption should be wrought.

And if, by being a *Prophet like unto Moses*, it is reasonable to infer, that He should not only be a Saviour, as *Moses* was, but also a Lawgiver, and a Mediator of a new Covenant, and indued with the like Power of Miracles with Him, this plainly intimates what the Method was to be, by which this Salvation was to be effected, and this Great Blessing promis'd should be convey'd to Mankind, *viz.* by giving them a New Law, and a New Covenant, confirmed by Miracles, as the *Mosaic* Covenant had been :

And whereas I have before shewn, that by *Bruising the Serpent's head* was meant, the recovering the world from the Wrath of God, and restoring them to Holiness, Happiness, and Immortality ; it is here implied in these words, if this Prophet was to be that Seed of the Woman, that this Covenant of Salvation, which He was to
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open to Mankind, was to be a Covenant of Reconciliation, and the Laws He was to give were to be Laws of Holiness, under the Promise of a Resurrection to Everlasting Life, and Happiness.

And whereas the coming of the *Seed of the Woman to bruise the Serpent's head*, was a Blessing intended for all Mankind, if this was to be effected by the means of a Covenant of Reconciliation, and Laws of Holiness, it is hereby implied, that this Covenant, and these Laws, which this Prophet was to deliver, should be such, as should be calculated for, and offer'd to all the world.

And as the reason of this Promise to the people at that time, was in answer to their own request, that they might not be terrified by the voice of God any more speaking to them in the manner He had done in the delivery of the Law of *Moses*, so it is thereby naturally implied, that this Law and Cove-

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nant to be delivered by this Prophet, should not be attended with those Circumstances of Terrour, that the Law of *Moses* had been.

And, Lastly, Whereas it is here said, that they should *hear this Prophet*, and if *they did not*, *God would require it at their hands* ; by which is to be meant, that He would severely punish, if not destroy them, (see *Acts* iii. 23.) by this it seems to be naturally implied, that this Law, and Covenant delivered by this Prophet, should be the last that He would vouchsafe to them, and if they rejected these, there would nothing remain for them, *but a fearful looking for of Judgment.*

All this seems to be plainly intimated in this general Promise compar'd with what had gone before ; And here is nothing forced, or unnatural in this interpretation, nothing but what is easy, and rational : And if so,

As this was a wise provision at that time to prepare the minds of this
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people beforehand by this general, and distant hint, for that Great change, which should be wrought by this Prophet, when He should come, that however highly favour'd *Moses* was by God, and what regard soever they had for Him, they must remember, that there was another to come after him who should be prefer'd before Him, from whom they must expect another Set of Laws, and a new, and a better Covenant; So it shewed them what Ideas they were to carry along with them of this Saviour to come, and the Redemption to be wrought by Him, *viz.* that it was a Spiritual Redemption, as it was to be effected in a Prophetick way, by a Law and Covenant of Holiness, on obedience to which their Redemption would so entirely depend, that without it they would have no benefit by Him, but be expos'd to the greater condemnation, *as God would require it at their hands.*

Corollary.

And if so, Then, if we shall hereafter find, that there was any Person appear'd in the World under the Character of this Prophet, that was to come, and if He came with the offer of New Laws, and a New Covenant to the *Jews*, of such a nature, and in such a manner, as are here describ'd, and was rejected by them ; and if after this, *God did require it at their hands*, and remarkably pour'd out his Vengeance on them in the total destruction of their Temple, City, and Commonwealth ; this will be a great argument of the Authority of that Person, that He was what he pretended to be, as likewise of the Credibility of this History : But this by the bye.

And thus we see what care was taken to preserve the true Knowledge of the Promised Saviour, and to give this people a true notion of that Happiness they must look for from Him :

And

And if this Interpretation of this Promise of a Future Prophet, that God would raise up to them, be allow'd, this teaches us what we may naturally expect to find in a further History of this people.

For, as here is a Revelation of several things, which were to be fulfilled in this Great Prophet, whom we conceive to be the Promis'd Saviour; and as these things, tho' of the greatest Importance to be known, were yet but imperfectly discover'd, as being only intimated in general words, and left to be drawn out by rational Inference; So we may from hence not only conclude, that some provision would be made in after-times for the preservation of these Ideas amongst them, but also that they would be some time or other more fully laid open, and explain'd to them:

And as this, in the nature of the thing, requires Prophecy, so we may by consequence not only expect to read of Prophecy in a regular History of this
people,

people, but also of such Prophecy, as particularly related to these things; that is to say, such as should relate to a New Revelation of New Laws, and a New Covenant of Pardon and Reconciliation, calculated for the Happiness of all Mankind, and confirm'd by a Divine Power.

And as it will be a great addition of Credibility to this Scripture History, if we afterwards find it agreeing in this Instance; so it will be likewise a strong Confirmation of the Sense we have taken this Promise in.

Whether the Scripture History agrees in this particular shall be consider'd by-and-by.

There is something else still to be taken notice of in this place, relating to the Law of *Moses*, which will be worthy our serious consideration, as answering punctually to what, we formerly observ'd, was necessary to be provided for.

The Law about Virginity accounted for.

As for Instance : I have already taken notice, That the first Promise of a Saviour was deliver'd to the world under the character of the Seed of the Woman : And I have likewise taken notice, that, if it was intended by this Expression, that this Saviour should be the Seed of the Woman only, and that Woman a Virgin, there was a necessity of some means to be prescrib'd, whereby this matter might certainly be known.

And we may further add to this, that if any method for this purpose were provided, it ought to be of a Publick nature, because the Reason of it was of a Publick concern, which every one had a Right to be satisfied in : And if so, then as a thing of this Publick nature must be naturally prescrib'd as a standing Rule, and therefore have the force, and authority of a Law, which every

every one should be oblig'd to submit to; so 'tis natural to expect this Method should be prescrib'd at that time, when they receiv'd the Body of their Laws.

Now, that this was the sense and design of that Promise, we shall have reason sufficient to convince us hereafter; and tho' it does not appear, that *Moses* knew this, there being no probable way to find it out by reason, and we find no hint of any such Revelation in, or before, his time, yet we see a wonderful provision made for this purpose, not only in the Laws relating to Virginity, which prescrib'd certain Rules about it, and punish'd unchastity with an Infamous Death, and therefore oblig'd all Virgins to the nicest Caution of themselves, and all Parents to the strictest guard upon their Children for the Safety of their Life and Honour, but also in the appointment of the Waters of Jealousy, by which it was provided, that in case of doubt, their Innocence

might be tried by a standing Miracle; so that whenever the Promis'd Saviour should be born, this Character of him might be so evidently prov'd, as to leave no room for the least Suspicion. And from hence we see the Wisdom of those Laws, which are sometimes objected against as Immodest, and Ridiculous. We see here a weighty, and important reason for them, as they had a relation to the Promis'd Saviour, and we see there was a necessity of something of this kind, from the nature of the Promise itself: And as this could not be found out by Reason, and was not yet made known by Revelation; so it was what God alone could know, and He alone could provide for: So that these very Laws, which provide beforehand, for a thing unknown, and not to be discover'd, till After-Ages, are so far from affording a just objection to the Lawgiver, that they are a strong proof of that Authority they pretend

tend to be commanded by, and shew the divine hand that gave them.

If there be any difficulty relating to the Law of the tryal of Virginity, as to the uncertainty of it; However it may be so among us, yet it might not be so among them. This will depend upon the custom of those countries; for we may reasonably think, that, this Law being made, all methods would be taken to make it effectual, which the Nature of the Case, and the importance of it would naturally direct them to: And their custom of keeping their Daughters within Doors, (from whence they were call'd *Conceal'd*) and their early marriages, which, some say, were at 12 Years old, might, among many others, very much contribute towards it. But this by the bye.

The Reason of the Law about Genealogies.

Secondly, Another thing we have before taken notice of, is the Necessity there was, some time or other, of some means to be provided for the distinction of families, that since the Promis'd Saviour was to be born of the seed of *Abraham*, and of the line of *Isaac*, His Pedigree might certainly be proved at his coming.

And for this reason we may here likewise further add, that if any thing were done in this kind, it is natural to expect to find it done before they were mixt with other people; And this being likewise of a Publick concern, as we may expect to find it done in a Publick way, by the Authority of Law; so we may here observe, what a wonderful Provision is made for this purpose in the *Law of Moses*.

For the Children of *Israel* are not only divided into several Tribes, but each Tribe into its several Families: And as every Tribe had a distinct Inheritance, which oblig'd them to keep Genealogies of their several Families; so, to make them more exact, and punctual in this, no alienation of any Inheritance was allow'd, for longer than the year of Jubilee, which return'd every 50 years, and then every one that could clear his Pedigree, and make out his Right to the Inheritance of his Ancestors, was to be reinstated in the possession of it: This made it every one's Interest to preserve his Genealogy: But that which still further contributed to this, and made them still more careful in this matter, was the Law of lineal Retreats; that is, Upon failure of an Heir in any Family, the next of Kin was to be Heir at Law, which obliged every Tribe, not only to take care of their own Genealogy, but those also of the several Families of their Kindred, that by know-

ing the several degrees of Proximity of Blood, they might be able at any time, upon failure of an Heir, to make out their title to the Inheritance of their Fathers.

This was the method to be taken throughout their Generations; so that when the fulness of time should come that this Promis'd Saviour should appear to the world, he might by this means as easily and certainly prove his lineal descent from *Abraham*, as we can ours from our immediate Parents.

And thus we see what care was taken thus far for the Preservation of the True Religion amongst this People, as it consists in the Knowledge of the one True God, and Faith in the Promis'd Saviour: We see here what care was taken not only to preserve the General Ideas of this Saviour, and the manner of our Redemption by him, but of such Laws also, as were necessary for the accomplishment of the Promise in the most difficult and doubtful Circumstances.

Various

*Various Revelations necessary after
Moses's time.*

There were several things then left unreveal'd, because they were not yet necessary to be known, and as these were reserv'd for future Revelations, as the Nature of the thing, or the Circumstances of the people should call for them, so that nothing might be wanting in its proper season, we shall see them all afterwards delivered to them in the sequel of these Holy Writings.

What these things necessary to be Reveal'd in after-times are, we have, in a great measure, discover'd already, and it will be a remarkable Instance of the Consistence, and Credibility of these writings, if the Revelations hereafter deliver'd in them be such as, we have before hewn, might one time be expected, as necessary in the nature of things.

I have

I have before shewn, that in the first Promise of a Saviour to come, as there is no time so much as hinted at, when this shall come to pass, so there was a necessity that some time or other, the World should be inform'd of this, as likewise of the Marks, by which He should be known at His coming.

And as I have also before shewn the necessity of the frequent renewal of the Promise to assure the world of the certain performance of it, lest their hopes, through length of time, should droop; so there is a like necessity of giving them true notions of it, and a frequent revival of them, lest they should happen to wear off, or be corrupted: And as this could not be done, without Prophecy, so there was by consequence a necessity of frequent Prophecies relating to this matter, to be delivered at sundry times, according as there should be occasion for them.

And

And lastly, I have likewise before shewn, that as the Promis'd Saviour was to be a *Prophet like unto Moses*, so He was to give New Laws, and a New Covenant, and that a Covenant of Reconciliation, and Laws of Holiness, intended for, and adapted to all Mankind, and that the Salvation He was to procure for them, should be a Spiritual Salvation, confirmed by the Power of Miracles :

And whereas all this, however certainly, yet is but darkly and imperfectly intimated, and is only to be discovered by rational deduction, I have likewise shewn, it is reasonable to expect, that if these things were really intended by the Promise, some future Revelations would be made, to preserve these Ideas in the people's minds, and more fully, and clearly to explain, and confirm them to them.

So that here is a vast compass of matter still behind for future Revelations, which may be expected in a
History

History of this people, and 'tis an eminent, and remarkable instance of the Consistence, and Credibility of the Scripture History, that we see it punctually answer in all these respects.

The Scripture Prophecies consider'd.

For as we have already taken notice of a frequent repetition of the First Great Promise of a Saviour, though in different Expressions, before *Moses's* time, wherein He, who is in one place stiled *The Seed of the Woman, who should bruise the Serpent's head*, is afterward, several times, called *The Seed in whom all nations should be blessed*, and in another place, *The Shiloh*, or, as the Septuagint, *The Expectation of all Nations*.

And as this Promise is afterward renew'd to the Children of *Israel*, and the expected Saviour is represented as *a Prophet like unto Moses*, so afterwards, when the world grew dispos'd
for

for further discoveries, and things became ripe for Revelation, we have an account in the following Books of a Succession of Prophets sent by God to inform His people of what was necessary from time to time.

We read here of various Revelations made, and as the occasions of the people were different, or the nature of the thing requir'd ; so the Revelations rise in different steps, and degrees.

So that the farther we read, the farther we see into the great design : The Ideas multiply, and inlarge upon us, and as we draw nearer to the accomplishment of the Promise, they shew themselves in a clearer, and fuller light, 'till the whole contrivance is drawn out at length, and is set forth in its full proportion.

To evince this more particularly, let us consider the several things before mentioned, which call'd for a future Revelation.

Prophecies of the Time of the Saviour's coming.

The first thing we have observ'd of this kind, was, The time of the Promis'd Saviour's coming : And as this was absolutely necessary some time or other to be made known to the world, so we read of several Prophecies relating to it, which I shall but just hint at, as being well known.

The first of these is in *Gen. xlix. 10.* *The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between His feet, until Shiloh come, and to Him shall the gathering of the people be.*

In which words here is a plain prediction of a Person that was to come, to whom the People, or *Gentiles* should be gathered, who is called the *Shiloh*, which signifies, *He, who is to be sent*, or as the *Septuagint*, and Other translations have it, *The Expectation of*
the

the Nations. Why I take this Person to be the Promis'd Saviour shall be consider'd hereafter.

By *Judah* is meant the Tribe of *Judah*: And by Sceptre, and Law-giver is meant Dominion, and Government.

And when 'tis here said, that *these shall not be taken from Judah, until Shiloh come*; as it is applied on the one hand, that there shall be a Commonwealth, or Government erected in the tribe of *Judah*, governed by their own Laws, which shall continue 'till *Shiloh* come; so it is on the other hand intimated, that at His coming, this Government shall be dissolv'd, so soon as the People, or *Gentiles* shall be come in to Him.

This is the natural meaning of the words, and this is a rational, and consistent sense of them, agreeing with the nature, and reason of the *Jewish* dispensation.

For as I have already shewn, God set this People up as a Separate Nation for the preservation of the true Religion, in the Worship of the One True God, and the Belief of the Saviour to come, that so the rest of the world might be instructed by them, in the Knowledge of the Truth, *'till the fulness of time should come* that the Saviour promis'd should appear; so when this Saviour should be actually come, and the Nations gathered to Him, as this Separation could be no longer needful, because all the world were now to be but one people under Him, there was a natural reason for the dissolution of that Government, which was erected for an end, which was now ceased.

So that, according to this Prophecy, the Time of the Promis'd Saviour's coming was to be before the destruction of the *Jewish* Commonwealth, which should be destroy'd so soon as the *Gentiles* should be gathered to Him.

A Second

A Second Prophecy of the Time of the Promis'd Saviour's coming.

Another Prophecy we read in *Haggai*, That He should come, while the second Temple was standing, which He should adorn, and glorify by His presence. *I will shake all nations, and the desire of all Nations shall come, and I will fill this House with Glory, saith the Lord of Hosts: The Silver is mine, and the Gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts: The Glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts: And in this place I will give Peace, saith the Lord of Hosts, ch. ii. ver. 7, 8, 9.*

In these words, *The desire of all Nations* is spoken of, as to come, which implies, that there was some Eminent Person, whose coming all Nations, either then did, or in time to come would be in great Desire, and

Expectation of: And why we justly conceive this Person to be the Promis'd Saviour, shall be shewn hereafter.

And as it is here implied, that He should come during the continuance of the second Temple, so it is also insinuated, that He should come at a time, when all Nations should be in a great Desire, and Expectation of Him.

And, as 'tis here said, that before His coming Great Changes should happen in the overthrow of diverse Empires, as is afterwards explained in the 22d Verse; so it is likewise said, that at His coming *He would give Peace*: Which words, if they be considered, as spoken in opposition to those disturbances, which would naturally attend those great Changes, they must mean, that He would come in a time of Peace, and Tranquility: Or, if they be considered, as relating to the business He came about, which *was to bruise the*
Serpent's

Serpent's head, and destroy the works of the Devil, by Peace must then be meant Spiritual Peace, or a reconciliation between God, and Man.

A third Prophecy of the Time of the Promis'd Saviour's coming.

We have another Prophecy relating to this matter in *Malachy, ch. iii. ver. 1.* *Behold I will send my Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddainly come into His Temple; even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in, He shall come saith the Lord of Hosts.*

In these words here is a person spoken of, under the Character of *The Lord, whom the Children of Israel sought, or desired, a Person, who was their Delight, one, who was to be the Messenger of the Covenant; which implies some Covenant God had promis'd, and they expected.*

And as here is a positive assurance given, that this Messenger should come, so it is here declared, as in the former Prophecy, that it should be during the second Temple, but not 'till a messenger should have prepared His way, and that then suddainly He should appear.

Now by this *Messenger of the Covenant, the Lord whom they sought*, we say, is to be meant the Promis'd Saviour, and what reason we have for this, shall likewise be shewn hereafter.

A fourth Prophecy of the Time of the Saviour's coming.

Lastly, We have another Prophecy of this in *Daniel*, which I reserve to the last, as being of all others, the most particular and express, and which we read in *chap. ix. 24, 25, 26, 27.* *Seventy Weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the Holy City, to finish transgression, and make an end of*

of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting Righteousness, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore, and build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and after sixty-two weeks the Street shall be built again, and the Wall, even in troublous times: And after sixty-two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, &c.

In these words here is a Period of seventy weeks fix'd, which is universally understood, according to the language, and custom of the Jews, of weeks of years, that is four hundred ninety years, in which Lev. c. xxv. v. 8. the great design, which had been so long carried on, and expected with so much impatience, was to be accomplish'd. And that after seven weeks and sixty-two weeks the *Messiah* (the known character of the Promis'd Saviour) shall come, and be cut off, and

in the following verses it is plain, that it was to be before the destruction of *Jerusalem*.

These are all plain predictions of the time when the expected Saviour was to come.

But this would notwithstanding be of little use, unless He could be certainly distinguish'd at His coming : Many impostors would doubtless set up, as History informs us, that there did. Many pretenders there were among the *Jews*. *Josephus* made the Prophecies to centre in *Vespasian*, as the *Herodians* did in *Herod*, and the reason why *Lentulus* among the *Romans* ingaged in the conspiracy of *Cataline*, was, as *Cicero* seems to intimate, in hopes that the known tradition of a Person, that was about that time to reign over all the world, might happen to be accomplish'd in Him, *Cic. Orat. Cat. 3.*

Now

Now as such pretences would naturally arise from the general Promise, so this shews us an evident necessity of some Rules to determine such pretences by, and some Characters by which the True Person should be known.

This, in the nature of the thing, required Prophecy, and therefore, as I said before, there can be no regular History of this people, without several instances of this kind: And 'tis a remarkable Instance of the Credibility of this History, that it gives us a Series of Prophecies from time to time relating to this matter, in which the whole design is gradually laid open, as different occasions call'd for it.

*The Characters by which the Saviour
was to be known.*

In considering the several Characters of the Promis'd Saviour, I will instance only in such as are undeniable, as be-

ing delivered in plain words, taken in their most natural and obvious meaning, according to the Scripture Phraseology.

Now that I call the most natural, and obvious meaning of words, not only when they do literally, and immediately express the sense we understand them in, but also when things are represented in a Metaphorical, and Figurative, or in a Poetical, or Rhetorical strain, the words are understood according to the natural and known intention of such Expressions.

Thus when God is said *to come down*, and is describ'd, as having *Eyes, and Ears, and Mouth, and Nostrils, and Hands*, it would be an unnatural interpretation to understand these things according to the Letter : And so when 'tis said, that *the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, the Leopard with the Kid, and the Lyon eat hay with the Ox*, and the Infant shall play with *Serpents* ; the most natural meaning of these, and such

such-like expressions is to be taken from the apparent intention of them; they being plainly design'd to shew, in a figurative way, that there should be as great a change wrought upon the world, as there would be, if the natures of those Creatures were so chang'd, as those figures represent them. And so likewise as 'tis no unnatural figure to represent the Church of God by *Jerusalem*, or *Mount Zion*, or *the Mountain of the Lord's House*, and His Worship, by offering *Sacrifice* and *Incense*, so it will be no unnatural interpretation of such Expressions, to take them in such a figurative sense where the plain design of the context, or its agreement with other plain texts of Scripture, directs us to it.

This is an observation necessary to be made, when we are concern'd with a book, that, according to the Eastern way of speaking, abounds with figures and similitudes, and those sometimes very bold, and unknown to these distant

distant ages, and countries: But, however, this interpretation of them is what is common to all people, in all places, and languages, and without it no language could be understood.

This necessary caution being laid down for the prevention of impertinent Cavils, I now proceed to inquire into the characters given us, by the Prophets, of the Promis'd Saviour.

There are many very eminent, and remarkable ones, I will take notice only of some of the most material:

The first of these shall be what I have already observ'd, *viz.* That He was to be a *Prophet like unto Moses*, and, as such, not only a Saviour, or Deliverer, but also a Lawgiver, and a Mediator of a New Covenant: That His Salvation was to be a Spiritual Salvation by the means of a Covenant of Reconciliation, and Laws of Holiness, which He should receive from the Mouth of God, and confirm by His Power,

Power, and all this intended for all the world.

As this was imperfectly hinted in the general Promise to *Moses*; so we see it afterwards confirm'd, and explain'd in the succeeding Prophets:

We read in *Isaiab* of an Eminent Person spoken of, who was to *come forth, a Rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a Branch out of His Roots; and the Spirit of the Lord was to rest upon Him, the Spirit of Wisdom, and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, and Might, or miraculous Power, the Spirit of Knowledge, and Fear of the Lord, so that He should not judge after the sight of His Eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his Ears, Isaiah xi. 1, 2, 3.*

And to the same effect is that other passage of the same Prophet, *chap. xlii. ver. 1, to the 7th*; where this Person on whom *the Spirit of the Lord was to rest*, is call'd *His Servant, whom He would*

would uphold, *His Elect, in whom His Soul delights.*

Of this Person it is there said in the following words, that *He should bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles— That the Isles should wait for His Law.— That He should be given for a Covenant of the people, for a Light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring the Prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.*

The same Ideas are repeated in *chap. lxi. 1, 2, &c.*

To the same purpose, in effect, we read in *Jeremiah, ch. xxxi. 31, 32, 33, to 36. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new Covenant with the House of Israel, and the House of Judah: Not according to the Covenant that I made with their Fathers, in the day that I took them out of the land of Egypt.— But this shall be my Covenant after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my Law in their inward*

ward

ward parts, and write it in their heart, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.—I will forgive their Iniquity, and I will remember their Sin no more, &c.

Nothing can be more plain, and express, than this.

And the Extent of this covenant is not only intimated in the texts above to reach to the *Gentiles* that sat in darkness, *Isai. xlii. 4, &c.* but we have it likewise fully express'd in many other places, *Isa. lxi. 8, 9.—I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, and their Seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their Offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the Seed whom the Lord hath blessed.*

In which words here is not only a promise of an Everlasting Covenant, which shall be offer'd to the *Gentiles*, but it is plainly implied, that by virtue of this Covenant the Great Promise should

should be fulfill'd; of an universal blessing to all Nations.

The same thing is set forth by *Isaiab*, ch. ii. 2, 3. by *Micah*, ch. iv. 1, 2, 3. by *Zephaniab*, ch. ii. 11. and iii. 9, 10. by *Zachariab*, ch. ii. 10, 11, 16. and viii. 20, 21, 22. And last of all by *Malachy* in the plainest words, *ch. i. 10, 11.*—*I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand; From the rising of the Sun to the going down of the same, my Name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place shall incense be offer'd to my Name, and a pure offering.*

And as all this was to be effected by the Root of Jesse, who should stand for an Ensign of the people, to whom the Gentiles should seek, *Isai. xi. 10.* By Him who is the Servant of the Lord, His Elect on whom He would put his Spirit, who was to bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles, *Isai. xlii. 1, 2, 3.* Who

is afterwards call'd by *Malachy*, *The Messenger of the Covenant*, ch. iii. 1 :

So we have an account by what works this Covenant should be confirm'd, *Isa. xxxv. 3, 4, 5, 6.* That *the Eyes of the Blind shall be opened, and the Ears of the Deaf unstopped; that the Lame shall leap as an Hart, and the Tongue of the Dumb sing.*

Thus we see what an agreement here is between these several Prophecies in after-times with the Promise of a *Prophet like unto Moses*, at such a vast distance of time before, by which not only our Interpretation of that Promise is justified, but also it appears, that the same thread is carried on, and the same Person aim'd at thro' them all.

The Promis'd Saviour to be a King.

Another Character of the Promis'd Saviour was, that He was to be a King sitting upon the throne of *David*.

This

This is an Idea of Him, that runs thro' the whole Scripture. In 2 *Sam.* vii. 12, &c. God had promis'd to *establish the throne of the Kingdom of David for ever.* The establishment, and preservation of this Kingdom, He there calls *His Mercy to David*, as His taking away the Kingdom from *Saul* is call'd the *departing of his Mercy* from Him, *ver. 15.*

The after Prophets speak of this Promise, as an *Everlasting Covenant*, and the Person, in whom this Covenant was to be accomplish'd, is call'd *the sure Mercies of David*, *Isa.* lv. 3.

They look'd not on the Promise, as fulfill'd in their days, but speak of it as a thing to come: And as the Person aim'd at was to be a King, like *David*, so they sometimes speak of Him under his name, and expressly call Him *David*; *Hosea* iii. 5. *In the latter days Israel shall return, and seek David their King.* *Jer.* xxx. 9. *They shall serve the Lord, and David their King, whom I will raise*

raise up unto them. Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24. *I will set one Shepherd over them, even my Servant David—and David shall be a Prince over them.*

These things were all spoken by the Prophets many years after *David* was dead.

This Person who is here call'd *David*, is in other places call'd, *The Branch of David*; *The Righteous Branch*; *The Righteous One*; *The Saviour*; *The Rod of the Stem of Jesse*; *The Branch of Righteousness*.

Thus *Jeremiah*, *God will raise up unto David a Righteous Branch, and a King shall reign, and prosper,* cap. xxiii. 5.

And thus says *Zechary*, *Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Sion*; *Shout, O Daughter of Jerusalem*: *behold thy King cometh unto thee, The Righteous One, and That Saviour, lowly, and riding upon an Ass, and on a Colt the Fole of an Ass,* ch. ix. 9. And so to the same purpose we find it in *Isa.* xi. 1,

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3, 4, 5.

3, 4, 5. *Jer.* xxxiii. 14, 15. And 'tis His Kingdom, which the Prophet *Daniel* speaks of, that, He says, *the God of Heaven would set up the Kingdom of the Stone, and the Mountain, which should never be destroy'd,* Daniel ii. 44, 45.

I need not multiply texts for a point so obvious, and known to every eye that reads the Old Testament.

And as the Scriptures are thus clear for the Kingly office of the Promis'd Saviour, so are they no less for the Sacerdotal.

The Promis'd Saviour to be a Priest.

This is another Character, by which the Promis'd Saviour was to be known, that He should not only be a Prince, but a *Priest upon His Throne*, as the Prophet *Zechary* expressly says, *chap.* vi. 13.

As He was to be a Prophet like *Moses*, and a King like *David*, sitting upon

upon the throne of *Israel*; so He was to be a Priest after the Order of Melchizedek; As the 110th *Psalms* has been always understood by the ancient *Jews*.

But whomsoever those words relate to, there can be no doubt of what is in general intended by them: The Office of a Priest, as it consists in being appointed to go between God and Man, to make reconciliation for Iniquity, this is naturally included in the very notion of the First Promise of a Saviour.

For, as He was to come to bruise the *Serpent's head*, by this, we have already shewn, was meant, His procuring Pardon, and Reconciliation for Mankind; and this is afterwards confirm'd by the Prophet *Daniel*, who, speaking of the *Messiah*, expressly says, that He should make Reconciliation for Iniquity, make an End of Sin, and bring in Everlasting Righteousness, ch. ix. 24.

And as we have formerly shewn, that this Reconciliation was to be made by the means of a Sacrifice to be offer'd by Him, in remembrance of which the Institution of Sacrifices was ordain'd; so we afterwards find this Sacrifice was to be Himself: —

The Prophet *Daniel* says of Him, that He was to be cut off, but not for Himself, *ch. ix. 26.* And *Isaiab* expressly, That He should make His Soul, or Life, an Offering for Sin—That He should be wounded for our Transgressions, and be bruised for our Iniquities, that by His Stripes we might be heal'd, *ch. liii.*

These are plain marks of His Priestly Function, and what Sacrifice He was to offer:

But in the execution of this Office, He was not to conform to the Institution of Priesthood under the Law, that is, He was not to be of the Order of *Aaron*, but *Melchizedek*: And that, not because He was to be King, and
Priest,

Priest, as *Melchizedek* was, but because He was not to be subject to the Rules of the Legal Institution, relating to the Priesthood, as the Order of *Aaron* was.

In this there were several things required about the Father and Mother, the descent, Levit. xxi. ver. 7, 13, and genealogy, the days of 14. their ministration, as to their beginning, and end, *viz.* that the Mother should be one, that had not been a *Widow*, or *divorced*, the Father of the line of *Aaron*, for which a Genealogy was to be kept and produced: The beginning of their Ministerial life was at thirty, the end of it at fifty, and then *the Days of their Ministration were accomplish'd.*

But in the order of *Melchizedek*, there was none of this; here was no such Rules prescrib'd;

And therefore, as the Promis'd Saviour was to be of this Order, He was not to be confin'd to the Injunctions of

the Law, and as He was not to produce any Qualifications relating to His *Father*, His *Mother*, or *Genealogy*, nor was confin'd to any time for the *beginning* of His Ministration, so neither was He as to the *ending* of it, but His Priesthood was to continue as long as He should live, which is here called a Priesthood *for ever*.

Thus we see the several offices of the Promis'd Saviour describ'd.

And as all these things that are said of Him must be conceiv'd, as being spoken by the Inspiration of God, to consist with the general design of His coming, which was *to bruise the Serpent's head*, and to be *a Blessing to all Nations*; So we must conclude, That what was before said of His Prophetick, must be equally true of His Kingly, and Priestly Offices, that they were originally appointed, and must be ordered so, as best to answer these intentions.

And

And therefore, that His Kingdom should be such, as, in its extent, to include all Nations, and so order'd, in its nature, as to destroy the works of the Devil, and by consequence must be not only an Universal, but a Spiritual Kingdom.

And likewise that the Reconciliation He was to make, as a Priest, should be such, as should not only be sufficient for, but actually extend to all Mankind.

This is a natural, and reasonable Inference, and it is a great argument of the Credibility of the Scripture History, that we find it consistent both with Reason, and itself : For we find all this taught by the Prophets.

For 'tis not only said, by the Prophet *Isaiab*, that when the Redeemer shall come, *all the Earth shall see the Salvation of God*, chap. lii. 10. and by consequence shall be sharers in the means, that shall be used for that end, and the benefits intended by them ;

But 'tis also said, That his Dominion shall be from Sea to Sea, from the *river unto the ends of the Earth.* Pf. lxxii. 8. That *all Nations and Languages shall serve Him,* Dan. vii. 14. That He shall reign over the Saints for ever, *Dan. vii. 27.* and bring in *Everlasting Righteousness,* Daniel ix. 24. And as in His Reign *the Righteous shall flourish,* so 'tis expressly said, That *all people shall be bless'd in Him, and all Nations call Him Blessed,* Psalm lxxii. 17.

And we read throughout the Prophets, that the time of the *Messias* is all along represented, as a time of Universal Love, and Peace, and Godliness; Wherein, as the Natures of people shall be chang'd, and all Malice, and ill-nature rooted out, *Isai. xi.* so God would give them a Heart to do His Will, and that *He would be their God, and they His People,* Ezek. xi. 19, 20.

These

These are some of the many Prophecies, that relate to the Promis'd Saviour in the Scripture, and these are such as shew the Nature of that Redemption, He was to work for us, and the Universal Extent of it.

There are a vast many more to the same purpose, but these are sufficient for my design, and they are such as are plain and intelligible : And as they were reveal'd from time to time, as the Circumstances of the world call'd for them, or the nature of the thing required, so we see they hang all together, and have a manifest dependance one upon another, and are but as so many different explications of the several Steps the Promis'd Saviour was to take, in order to the End he was to come for, that is, How He was to *bruise the Serpent's head*, and How *all Nations were to be Bless'd in Him*.

There were several other Intimations given of Him, relating to the place of His Birth, that it should be in *Bethlehem*

lehem of Judea, Mic. v. 2. — Of His Life, that He should undergo great sufferings, and *be despised and rejected of men*, Isai. liii. — Of His Death, and Resurrection, that though He was *to be cut off from the land of the living*, yet *His Body should not see Corruption*, Ps. xvi. 10, 11. and notwithstanding His Death, *He should prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in His hand*, Isa. liii. 8, 10. — Of His Ascension into Heaven, and session *at the right hand of God*, Psalm cx. 12. — Of His sending down various gifts upon the *Gentiles*, and after that a terrible day should come, as in *Joel* ii. 28, 29, to 32.

These things we think are all plainly reveal'd in these several texts, and what reason we have for it shall be shewn by-and-by :

And from these Revelations, if rightly understood, we see what Knowledge was imparted to this people, the sum of which, in short, was this,

'Tis

'Tis evident, they were sufficiently taught, that there is but one God, and who that one God is, as also to abstain from all Idolatrous Worship, and how to serve Him acceptably.

And as for the Promis'd Saviour, they were plainly instructed, that He was to *destroy the Works of the Devil*, and on this account, that *all Mankind were to be Bless'd in Him*.

That this Blessing was to be conferr'd in a Prophetick way, by the Revelation of a New Covenant, and New Laws, Laws of Holiness *writ upon their Hearts*, and a Covenant of pardon, and reconciliation between God, and Man :

And in order to this, that the Spirit of the Lord was to rest upon Him, and shew itself in all proper acts of *Wisdom, and Understanding, Counsel, and Might, &c.*

That He was to be a Priest to offer Sacrifice for this reconciliation between God and Man, though not of the Order

der of *Aaron*, but *Melchizedek*, and that this Sacrifice should be His own Life, and with this, He should *make an End of Sin*, that is, of all Sin-offerings for ever.

That after His Death, He should not continue in the Grave, nor *His Body see Corruption*, but He should live again, and nevertheless be a great Prince, sitting upon the throne of *David*, whose Dominion should extend to all nations, and *His Kingdom be without end* :

That His Kingdom should be a Kingdom of Righteousness, under which a Pure, and Holy Worship should be preserved, and a spirit of Love, Peace, and Godliness, should rule among all people.

That He was to *sit on the Right hand of God*, and send down a great Effusion of Spiritual, and Prophetick gifts upon all sorts of people, as well Old, as Young, and after this, that a great and terrible day should come.

That

That the Person by whom all this was to be effected, was to be the Seed of the Woman, born in *Bethlehem* of *Judea*, during the standing of the second Temple, and before the departure of the Sceptre from *Judah*.

That before His appearing to open His Ministry, a *Messenger* should come to prepare His way, and that all should be accomplish'd in *seventy weeks* of years from the going forth of the *Commandment* to restore, and build *Jerusalem*.

These things they knew, as being plainly reveal'd, though they might not know how to reconcile them together : They knew not probably what was thoroughly intended by His being the Seed of the Woman, nor how to reconcile His dying a sacrifice, or offering for sin, with His being a King for ever :

This was not yet necessary for them to know, and therefore, remained to be

be cleared up afterward : But they knew enough for their purpose.

And now when all things were thus laid open, that were necessary for those, and future ages to know, relating to the nature of the Redemption promis'd, the Person, by whom, and the manner how it was to be effected, and no further Revelation was wanting in these respects :

And when the People of God with whom these Oracles were lodg'd, were thoroughly purg'd from their proneness to Idolatry, which had so often call'd for Revelation, and therefore there was no longer need of it ; Then God withdrew the Spirit of Prophecy, from amongst them, the end and reason of it being ceased.

But yet 'tis nevertheless worth your observation, because there was a great length of Time to be between the last Prophet, and the coming of the *Messias*, how He before-hand provided them with proper supports in that Interval,
that

that their hopes might not droop, nor their faith fail.

For He had already foretold them of Great changes that should happen, and which they should, e'er long, see fulfilled, in the Great Empires of the world :

And as these were to be the fore-runners of the *Messias*, and were not to happen all at once, but at several times in distant periods ; so when they should afterwards live to see any part of the Prediction fulfilled, the evident accomplishment of it in that Instance, would be a certain earnest of the future completion of the rest :

And as every New Change, that should happen, which appear'd to be foretold, would be a New assurance given to their Faith, so from these they might be as sure of the coming of the *Messias*, as they were, that they saw these Empires overturn'd.

And

And as these things, with what God had already given them, were sufficient to keep their hopes alive, and therefore no further Revelation could be necessary for this ; so this might probably be the reason, for ought we know, why there were no further Revelations made to them, but God left them to improve the notices they had, which were already sufficient for their purpose, and wait for the completion of them.

Thus have I led you through the Scripture History, and shewn you what methods were taken throughout, for the preservation of the true Religion in the world.

As the Children of *Israel* were a people chosen, and set up by God for this very purpose, I formerly shew'd you, there was a necessity that they should be informed in all things necessary to that end :

And as I have before shewn, what the True Religion of Sinners is, *viz.*
that

that it consists not only in the Knowledge and Service of the True God, but also in the Obedience of Faith in the Promis'd Saviour, so in the preservation of True Religion amongst them; I likewise shew'd there was a necessity that they should be supplied with a suitable provision, and proper assistances for these great Ends :

And as this Book contains a History of this People, I have all along shewn, how it agrees accordingly, and what care, it acquaints us, was taken in this matter; not only in the Laws that were given to them, and the various Providences exercis'd towards them; but in a Series of particular Revelations, and Prophecies: Which as they were carried on through several ages by different persons, and not only deliver several things in their own nature necessary to be reveal'd, and of which some Revelation was one time or other to be expected, but also have a manifest coherence with, and dependance

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upon

upon one another; so they are a sufficient proof of the Consistence, and Credibility of the Scripture History, in which they are handed down to us; which is all that I aim'd at upon this Head, and all that my Method requir'd of me.

We are now to consider this people in another view, as not only set up for the preservation of true Religion among themselves, that they might be a Holy people to the Lord, but as a Conduit, or Canal, whereby it was to be convey'd to others, that all Nations might, by their means, be brought to the Knowledge of the Truth, and a proper disposition to enjoy the Blessing of the Saviour promis'd.

And as there was a necessity of some methods of Providence, in order to bring about this end; so it will be a great addition to the Credibility of this History, to find it agree in this respect.


Whether it does this, is our next Inquiry: But before I proceed upon it, there

there is one thing to be settled, upon which the whole of what I have said depends, and that is, How we know that we rightly understand those Scriptures, which we call Prophecies, and Revelations, when we apply them to an Expected *Messias*, and that they were really Prophecies relating to that Person, and deliver'd with that view, which has here been represented, and have not been fulfill'd in any other.



C H A P. XIV.

The Scriptures Prophecies to be rightly understood by us, prov'd.

 HIS is a very material point, and ought not to be pass'd over without examination: And, for the clear resolution of it, we may observe;

First, That the sense we take the Prophecies in, as relating all to one and the same Person, and End, is most likely to be the true sense of them, as being allow'd by those, who were most likely to know their meaning, I mean the Ancient *Jews* before our Saviour.

For, as this Book was deliver'd to their keeping, and writ in their own native language, they may reasonably be suppos'd to understand their own phraseology best.

And as their Ancestors were the people to whom the Prophecies were spoken, 'tis reasonable to think, they were let into the knowledge of them in some degree, where they could not be otherwise understood:

For, whatever distant aspect these Prophecies relating to a Saviour had to future times, (as 'tis plain they all speak of things to come) 'tis certain, they had each of them a particular relation to those Persons, or People, to whom they were particularly and severally

rally spoken, and were intended for some particular End at that time, which those Persons, or People, were then immediately concern'd in :

By which I do not mean, that they were all spoken in a double Sense; but only that they were always intended to supply some necessity, that call'd for such Revelation at that time, when they were deliver'd.

Every one that reads them, may partly see the immediate occasion of them; that they each of them was spoken, either as a Confirmation of the Faith of those they were deliver'd to, who, at that time, might be wavering, or doubtful, either thro' their own weakness, or the Scoffs of Infidels, as was sometimes the case: Or else, as a Comfort to support their hopes under present or approaching Calamities :

This was visibly the immediate design of them: And if so, there was a necessity of their being understood in

some measure, or else the present End could not have been attain'd.

And if there was a necessity of their being understood, either they must have been deliver'd in such a way of speaking, as the people were capable of understanding of themselves, or else they must have been explain'd to them, by the Prophets that deliver'd them, so far as that Explanation was necessary.

That they might be ordinarily capable of understanding them of themselves, is very reasonable to think, however difficult they appear to us:

We, as a learned Prelate observes, labour under disadvantages, which they had not: We are ignorant, in a great measure, of their way of speaking: “ The *Hebrew*, as other Eastern Languages, is intirely different from the “ *European*. Many things are there “ left to be supplied by the quickness “ of the reader's apprehension, which “ are with us express'd by proper words, “ and repetitions. Particles disjunctive, “ and

“ and adverbative, significative marks
 “ of Connexion, and of Transition
 “ from one Subject to another, are of-
 “ ten omitted here: Dialogues are car-
 “ ried on, Objections answer’d, Com-
 “ parisons made, without notice in the
 “ discourse; And through frequent
 “ change of Persons, Tenses, and Num-
 “ bers, we are left to guess who are
 “ the persons spoken of, which gave
 “ no difficulty to them, whose living
 “ language it was.

“ And there are several other diffi-
 “ culties we are imbarra’s’d with from
 “ the nature of the Prophetick Stile; as
 “ also from the little or no order the
 “ Collectors of these Prophecies have
 “ placed them in.” See *Def. of Chri-
 stianity, by the Bishop of Litchfield,*
Pref. p. 13, 14, 15.

These are disadvantages, which the
 people of those times, wherein the
 Prophets lived, had not; and therefore
 they might be capable of understand-
 ing those writings better than we

can be, where the expression is dark and difficult.

And accordingly we find from the *New Testament*, which I here consider only as an Ancient Book, that the people were well versed in the Prophetick Writings in the Days of our Saviour Christ.

He appeals to those Writings for a Testimony to Himself: And, tho' He speaks to the Multitude, He bids them *Search the Scriptures*, manifestly implying, that the Prophecies relating to their *Messiah*, were such, as they did, or might understand: And if they did not see the relation those Prophecies bore to Him, it was their own Fault.

And in another Place, where He is reprovng His Disciples for their Unbelief of what the Prophets had spoken, He does not impute it to the darkness of the Prophecies, or the difficulty of understanding them, but to their backwardness to believe what was sufficiently reveal'd, if they had not been *slow of heart* to receive it.

'Tis true, indeed, some Prophecies were dark, and intricate for a time in some particulars, and 'twas necessary it should be so: For otherwise they probably would not have been fulfilled, as depending on the actions of free Agents.

But what was necessary to be known, was necessary to be explained, if it could not be known without it.

And if they had any such Explications given them, 'tis natural to conceive that those Ideas would be handed down by tradition from generation to generation.

And though some things might be mistaken, and some traditions corrupted, yet we cannot suppose but they would be right in the main, especially in the fundamental Articles.

And therefore, when we find the tradition of a Saviour universally received amongst them, and that built upon the Authority of Scripture Prophecies, and those very texts, we make
use

use of, applied to Him, we have no reason to doubt, but this was the true, and natural sense of them, though we at this distance who are strangers to the Eastern Phraseology, should not be able to make every thing out so clearly, as cavilling men may expect, and demand of us.

But this is not our case, nor do we depend upon them alone, for we have sufficient reason for our Interpretation of most of the texts I have here made use of, had we never known what the *Jews* have thought of them. For,

Prophecies of the Messias understood in their natural meaning.

Secondly, The Sense we take them in is such, as the plain, natural meaning of the words themselves, or other like plain expressions of Scripture direct us to, considered and compared together.

To make this appear beyond all doubt, let us look back upon the several Prophecies again.

To begin at the first Promise to our First Parents, that *the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's head*; 'tis plain here is a Person foretold to come, and from the occasion of the words, I have given you a natural and reasonable interpretation of them, *viz.* that whereas the Devil had brought them into a State of Sin, Misery, and Death, this Person should defeat the Cunning, and destroy the Works of the Devil, by procuring pardon and reconciliation for them, and restoring them to a state of Holiness, Happiness, and Immortality :

And as this was a Blessing intended for them, and their Posterity, and the greatest that God could bestow upon them, and by consequence the Person, who was to do this, was to be an Universal Blessing to all Nations, so 'tis reasonable to think, that this might be the

the General Character under which He might be expected, and ordinarily spoken of: However, when we afterwards read of a Person promis'd to come, *in whom all Nations should be Bless'd*, 'tis very natural to understand this of the Person spoken of before, who was to do that for all the world, which must be allow'd to be the greatest Blessing that God could bestow upon them.

And as the tradition of this Promise would be naturally handed down to all Posterity, and a great desire excited in all the world for the coming of this Person: And as He was to be born of the Seed of *Jacob*, as He would therefore be more particularly desir'd, expected, and look'd for by the Children of *Israel*; So 'tis natural to conceive, that He might be commonly spoken of, as, *He, who was to come, or to be sent; The Desire of all Nations; The Expectation of the People; or, The Delight of the Children of Israel, or the*

the like : However, when we afterwards read of *Shiloh coming*, which signifies, *He who is to be sent*, and, *That the gathering of the People or Gentiles should be to Him*, or, as some translations have it, *He shall be the Expectation of the Nations* : And in another Place of one, who is, by way of Emphasis, call'd, *The Desire of all Nations, The Delight of the Children of Israel*, one whom they sought, and look'd for, is it not natural to understand this of that Person *in whom all Nations were to be Bless'd*? Mal. iii. 1.

But be this as it will : There can be nothing plainer than what we read afterwards of a Promise, of a *Prophet like unto Moses*, whom God would one Day raise up to His people.

And as these words denote a single Person, so I may appeal to any one, whether they may not naturally imply, that He should bring a *New Covenant*, and *New Laws*, as *Moses* did.

And

And if so, then as no one could be this Prophet spoken of, who did not come to them with the offer of a New Covenant, and New Laws, so if we read of a Person afterwards who is represented as to come under this very Character, is it not reasonable to think that He is the Man ?

And if it be reasonable, as I have before shewn, that this New Covenant and Laws should be offered to all the world, then, when we read in *Isaiab* xi. of a time to come when *there should come forth a Rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a Branch out of His Root, on whom the Spirit of the Lord should rest, &c.* which manifestly betokens a Prophet of the House of *David* : And when 'tis said of Him, *ver. 10.* that He should *stand for an Ensign of the People, and to it should the Gentiles seek,* and that *He shall recover the remnant of God's people from the most distant nations,* which is the same thing, that was before spoken of *Shiloh,* that
to

to Him should the gathering of the people be ; Gen. xlix. 10 :

And when we afterwards read of a Person, on whom God would put *His Spirit*, and who should bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles, and whose Laws the Isles would wait for, who should be for a Covenant of the people, for a Light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, and bring the prisoners and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house, Isaiah, Chap. iv. ver. 1, 3, 5, 6.

And when this Person is called the Servant and Elect of God, *My Servant whom I uphold*, (by way of Emphasis) *My Elect in whom my Soul delighteth* ; are not these plain tokens that these places refer to the same Person ? for are not the Characters the same ?

And when we afterwards read in the plainest words possible in *Jer. xxxi. 31.* of a New Covenant, that was still to be expected, and *that not such a one,*

one, as they had, when they came out of the land of Egypt, by which it appears, that the *Prophet like unto Moses*, was not yet come:

And when we afterwards read in *Malachy, chap. iii. 1.* of a Person still to come, call'd, by way of Excellence, *The Messenger of the Covenant*, which naturally implies some known Messenger, and Covenant they expected, is it not reasonable to conclude, that this was the Covenant promis'd by *Isaiab*, and *Jeremiab*, and this *Messenger* the Person before spoken of, *on whom the Spirit of God was to rest; the Servant, the Elect of God, the Branch of the root of Jesse, the Prophet like unto Moses?*

And as 'tis natural to conceive that these Promises so often repeated would excite a strange desire of the fulfilling of them, and particularly in the Children of *Israel*, so when we see this *Messenger of the Covenant* is particularly called *The Desire of all Nations*,

the

the Delight of the Children of Israel, the Lord whom they sought, or look'd for, so these are plain tokens that this Messenger, and this Covenant were the same, that those Promises related to.

Can there be any thing clearer than this ?

And so again further ; If this Messenger of the Covenant, and the Branch of the root of *Jesse*, in *Isai. xi.* be the same person, as appears, when we in another place read of a Person, who was to come, called *The Branch*, by way of Emphasis, and the *Righteous Branch, the Saviour* ; and when 'tis said of this Branch, that *He shall reign as a King, and prosper* : And when *this King, the Branch*, is spoken of, not only as a *King, but a Priest upon His Throne*, and that even after *David, and Solomon* were dead ; is it not reasonable to think, that the Person meant is the same in both places, and by consequence that *this King and Priest, The Branch*, is the same Per-

son with *the Messenger of the Covenant*.

And when we in another place read in plain words of a *Prince* that was to come, called, expressly by *Daniel*, *Messiah*, who should *make reconciliation for Iniquity, and be cut off, but not for Himself*, Chap. ix. 26 :

And when in *Isaiab* we read of the *Servant, the Elect of God, His Righteous Servant*, that *He should make His Soul, or Life an offering for sin, and justify many, whose iniquities He was to bear* ; that *He was to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities, that by His Stripes we might be healed* ; is it not reasonable to understand the *Messiah* in *Daniel* to be the same Person with the *Elect, the Righteous Servant* in *Isaiab*, and the same thing to be aim'd at in both ?

And if so, then if our Interpretation of the first Promise that *the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's head*, be true, *viz.* That the Person meant

was

was to procure pardon, and reconciliation for Mankind, and to restore them to Holiness, Happiness, and Immortality, when we read of the *Messiah* spoken of in *Daniel*, as a Person who should *make reconciliation for iniquity, make an end of sin, and bring in Everlasting Righteousness*, is it not natural to conclude, that this *Messias* is that *Seed of the Woman* ?

Nothing can be more reasonable than this Interpretation from a parity of Ideas in different places. This is a way that all reasonable men allow, of finding out the meaning of any author, to compare one place, and expression with another. And I have done it in this case with the utmost impartiality: Here is nothing forced, or unnatural, nothing but what is plain and obvious to every understanding, and discovers itself to us at the first view.

And if these texts be rightly understood, this gives us a Key to the rest of the Scripture, and teaches us how to

interpret a thousand other places : For it will be very reasonable to apply all such expressions as spoken to the same purpose, as appear to carry in them the same Ideas, and bear a natural relation to the same design, though there be no other particular character in them to direct us to it ; and though we, who know so little of the Prophetick stile and language, should not be able otherwise clearly to make it out.

Thus, for instance, since we see here was a New Covenant promis'd, which seems to imply an Abolition of the Old one ; when we afterwards read of sacrifices and oblations spoken of, as of no value or esteem with God, even whilst the Law was still in force ; 'tis reasonable to understand such expressions as relating to the time of the New Covenant, when these things were to be done away :

And whereas this Covenant was to include all Nations, where-ever we find any such expressions, as relate to an

an Union of all people in the Worship of the True God, 'tis no force upon those texts to understand them of that time when this Covenant shall be delivered to them, and of that Person who is to be *the Messenger of it*.

And so we may interpret a vast multitude of texts.

But be that as it will ; 'Tis evident there can be no reasonable doubt, but that these texts we have now examin'd are rightly understood ; for the Expressions are not only plain and intelligible in themselves, and have a manifest relation one to the other, but they carry on a regular consistent design :

When we have already shewn from the nature of things, what reason there was to expect Prophecy, and when these Prophecies are such, as we have reason to expect, according to our meaning of them ;

And when in our meaning, we have likewise shewn, they all conspire to make up an intire Scheme, through

which the same Idea runs like a Warp through the whole Webb, and the several Prophecies in it, are but like so many descriptions of the different features of the same face, which, when united, make up a perfect Harmony, What better token can we have of Truth, than this ?

But especially, when, as I said before, these Prophecies were always so understood by the antient *Jews*, who not only knew their own language best, and how to interpret it, but were descended from those very persons to whom these Prophecies were spoken, from whom probably they must have had some traditions about them, as either they themselves had understood them, or had had them occasionally explain'd to them by a succession of Prophets, that had lived amongst them.

But, Thirdly, We have still further reason to understand them in our sense, as this has been confirm'd by several Prophets since those days: I mean our
Saviour

Saviour and His Apostles ; who, as they have given full proof of their Mission from Heaven, that they were *Teachers sent by God*, we have reason to rest upon what they taught, as the truth of God. And they have not only confirm'd us in this general notion, that there had been a Promise given of a Saviour to come, but that many Prophecies of the *Old Testament* were spoken of Him.

They have not, indeed, particularly mention'd and interpreted all the several texts, that I have before hinted at, but only some of the more considerable: But as they have confirm'd the general notion of a Redeemer, or *Messiah*, to be rightly founded in that Book: And as the Texts that point to Him are appeal'd to by our Lord, as well known, and understood, or at least capable of being so, by all that would *search the Scriptures* :

So, whatever Texts we find there, that in their natural meaning must re-

late to Him, especially if they have been anciently so understood by the *Jews*, we have reason to think this meaning of them to be so far confirm'd, and justified, tho' not particularly mention'd by them.

But we have not only this general Confirmation of our sense of these texts, but we have several of them, relating to some of the most material points, particularly explain'd by them.

The Promise to *Abraham*, that *in Isaac should his Seed be called*, meaning that *Seed in whom all Nations should be Bless'd*, is directly applied by *St. Paul* to the *Messias*, *Gal. iii. 16*. As likewise that afterwards to *Moses*, of a *Prophet to be rais'd up like unto Him*, is understood in the same sense by *St. Peter*, *Acts iii. 22, 23, &c.*

The *cxxth Psalm*, where *David* speaks of *His Son*, as *His Lord*, and afterward as a *Priest after the Order of Melchizedek*, is applied by our Saviour, and *St. Paul*, to the *Messiah*; and by
the

the former is said to be spoken *in Spirit*, that is, by a Prophetick Inspiration, *Heb. vii. 17. Mat. xxii. 43.*

And when He speaks in *Psalms xvi.* that *His Soul should not be left in Hell, nor His Body see Corruption*, He is expressly said to have spoken this by a Prophetick foresight of the Resurrection of the Christ or Messiah Promis'd, and that by this Resurrection He was to be advanc'd to the throne of *David*, according to the promise given to Him, that *of the fruit of his loins God would raise up one to sit on his throne*, which He here says was likewise spoken of the Christ, or Messias, *Acts ii. 25, &c. Ps. cxxxii. 11.*

And so again, when our Saviour says, that He would *send the Promise of the Father* upon His Apostles, to enable them to *be Witnesses of Him*; and in the next words intimates, that this Promise of the Father was to be fulfill'd in their being *endued with Power from on high*, for which they
were

were to wait at *Jerusalem*; And when by this *enduing them with Power from on high*, was apparently meant His sending the Holy Spirit upon them, it is from hence plainly to be *inferred*, that the sending the Holy Spirit in that manner, had been *promis'd by the Father*, Luke xxiv. 48, 49.

And when those words of the Prophet *Joel*, wherein he speaks of God's *pouring out His Spirit upon all flesh*, &c. chap. ii. 28. are applied by St. *Peter* to this very event, we cannot reasonably doubt, but that this was one of those texts, wherein this extraordinary Gift had been *promis'd by the Father*.

There are several other texts applied by the Apostles in this manner, that is, as spoken not in an accommodated, but Prophetic sense: And this I take to be a sufficient argument, that this is the true sense.

For, if the Prophecies were dictated by God, we cannot doubt that to be the meaning of them, which God Himself

self directs us to understand them in ; and therefore we cannot doubt that explication to be true, which we have from Christ and his Apostles, if they are allow'd to be teachers sent from God.

And tho' in some cases it should be suppos'd, that we might not have been able, many times, to find out, from the tenour of the Prophets words, that those texts so explain'd by Christ, and his Apostles, were to be understood in that sense, yet that is not a sufficient objection against it : For if they have so explain'd them, and were sent by God, we are as sure of their Explication, as we are sure of their Mission.

But lastly, That which puts our Interpretation beyond all doubt, is still behind, which is, that we have seen all these Prophecies fulfill'd in the sense of them ; as we have them all centring in Jesus Christ, and the Redemption He has wrought for us.

Whether

Whether this be so, or not, shall be consider'd by-and-by : But if it be so, I say, it is an undeniable Proof, that they are, as we apprehend them, real Prophecies rightly understood by us, and that He is the Person meant by them.

For (to illustrate this by a foremention'd Instance) if there were a dispute about a Picture, whether it were drawn with any particular view, to represent, for instance, any particular Face, or Story; as the natural way to find out the Painter's design, would be to consider the likeness there is between them; So when we consider the Scripture Prophecies, as representations of a Person, and an Event to come, and afterward see a Person, and Event, exactly corresponding to them; we can no longer, with any reason, doubt, but that that Person, and that Event, were intended by them; unless there be any other Person they equally agree to : But this, I think, cannot be pretended :

The

*The Prophecies not fulfill'd before
Christ.*

There are several texts indeed, it must be own'd, that we apply to the Messiah, which the Modern *Jews*, since the coming of Christ, endeavour industriously to evade, by shewing the completion of them, in some other Person before his time: But the reason of this is manifest; they are forced to do this in their own vindication, to justify their rejection of our Saviour.

However, let the thing be fairly made appear, and we are ready to give them up, as nothing to our purpose.

But after all that they, and other Infidels have done this way, 'tis evident to every impartial man, that there is not any one of those Prophecies, whose Completion they contend for, that agrees to the Person they apply them to.

There

There is no general Character can be given of any one, but in some parts of it, and in some respects, may agree to many others; but it is then only fulfill'd in its proper meaning, when all the parts centre in one: And yet there is not any one of those texts, which they pretend to be fulfill'd before our Saviour, but has some eminent and material Character in it, that disagrees to the Subject they apply them to.

Had any of them been fulfill'd before our Saviour, the Ancient *Jews* of those days would have been the best judges of it: But they are so far from thinking them so, that they understood them all as we do. And at the very time of our Saviour's appearing, there was not only an universal expectation of a Saviour, promis'd by the Prophets, but also of a Saviour, under those very Ideas represented by the Scriptures *,

* Mat. xi. 3. John vi. 14. —xi. 27. —i. 19, 20. —iv. 25. Mark xi. 10. John iv. 42. Mat. xxii. 42. John vii. 41, 42. —i. 49. —xvi. 12, 13.

viz. As, He who was to come; That Prophet; The Christ; The Christ the Son of God, that was to come into the world; The Messiah that was to come; He that cometh in the Name of the Lord; The Christ the Saviour of the world; The Son of David; The King of Israel:

And as these things, I say, do evidently shew, that they thought these Scriptures not fulfill'd; so, if we and they have rightly understood them, 'tis certain they were not, and could not have been fulfill'd:

For, I have already shewn, that there is a Connexion between them; that they all depend upon one another, and have relation to the same one Person; and therefore they cannot be fulfill'd by any one, who has not fulfill'd them all.

So that unless we find a Man, who came to make reconciliation for Iniquity by procuring pardon for Sin, and to restore us to Holiness and Immortal
Happi-

Happiness, and shew'd Himself to be a Blessing to all Nations; Unless we find a Man indued with the Spirit of Prophecy, that came to be a Light of the *Gentiles*, and brought a New Covenant, and New Laws, confirm'd by Miracles, and adapted to the Condition of all Mankind; A Man that lived a life of Contempt, and Affliction, and offer'd Himself a Sacrifice for Sin, and after Death *His body did not see Corruption*, but He was rais'd again, and became a King, *sitting at the Right hand of God*, having *dominion over all People, Nations, and Languages given to Him*, and sending down a vast effusion of Spiritual and Prophetick gifts upon His people of all Sorts, both old and young:

And unless this man was born in *Bethlehem of Judea*, of the Seed of *David*, and the tribe of *Judah*, and came during the Standing of the second Temple, in a time of Peace, before the Determination of *Daniel's Weeks*, and
the

destruction of the *Jewish* Commonwealth; having a Messenger going before him, like another *Elias*, to prepare his way; unless, I say, we can find such a man, as this, these Prophecies do not appear to be fulfill'd;

And if there be any such Person, He is the Man, and in Him our Interpretation is confirm'd by its Completion.

Now such a Completion, we Christians think, we have in Jesus Christ, in whom all these several Circumstances agree, like lines that meet in the same Centre: But whether this be so, or not, shall be consider'd by-and-by.





C H A P. XV.

The last thing requir'd in a History of the Children of Israel, found in the Scriptures.



IS now proper to inquire into the last point, which the method I have laid down, and the nature of my argument, demands the consideration of, *viz.* What methods have been taken, from time to time, for the conveyance of the True Religion to other Nations, which had so carefully been preserv'd among this People.

If you remember, I have already shewn the necessity of something of this kind: This was the great end of raising up this People, and keeping them a Separate Nation, that the True Religion being preserv'd, amongst them,
the

the rest of the world might be so enlighten'd by their means, as to forsake their idolatrous, and other wicked Practices, and serve the One True God in the True Faith, and Expectation of the Benefits of the Saviour Promis'd.

And as 'twas reasonable to expect, that some methods would be taken, that would naturally contribute to this end; so we find by this History, in the account of this people, that God had all along this design in view, in all His dispensations towards them.

If we begin at *Abraham*, we may observe of him, that he is no sooner call'd from his Father's House, and Family, but he, and afterward *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, are kept continually in a traveling way, moving from place to place.

By this they became known to all those people; and as we read how God remarkably bless'd them, and shew'd many distinguishing favours to them, and made them so considerable in the people's eyes, that they were afraid of

their Power, and sought their Friendship, and enter'd into alliance with them, this was a very likely means of propagating their Notions there.

There is a Natural Curiosity to inquire into the manners, opinions, and religion of those we have to do withal; but there was a particular reason in this case to think, it would more remarkably shew itself:

For, as they were look'd upon as the Favourites of Heaven, or, as this History expresses it, *The blessed of the Lord*, Men would naturally inquire from whence this was; What God they served, and the manner How, to intitle them to so great blessings from Him: And by this means, every one of this numerous family might become, as it were, a Preacher of the True Religion, and an Instrument of promoting it, where-ever they came.

'Twas for the same End, probably, that God rais'd up *Joseph* to such eminent dignity in *Egypt*, and afterward
brought

brought *Jacob* and his family thither, that they coming into that Idolatrous nation, might inlighten them with their Light, and Knowledge, and by degrees draw them to the true Faith, and Worship :

And 'twas for the same End, that He afterwards brought them out thence with such miraculous Judgments, and carried them into *Canaan* with so high a hand, and in so amazing a manner : It was, that * *His name might be declared throughout all the Earth*, as is particularly said in the case of *Pharoah* ; and that † *all the Earth might be fill'd with the Glory of the Lord*.

* Exod. ix.
16. — xx. 9.

† Num. xiv.
15, 21.

And as these things must naturally convince all people, that this God who could do such mighty things, must necessarily be the only Great, and True God ; so one would hardly think it possible, but that it should prevail with many, and that many should be converted by it.

'Twas for the same reason, probably, that God, tho' Good and Gracious to his Creatures, was yet pleas'd to make use of that seemingly cruel method of rooting out the *Canaanites* by the Sword, because there was no way so likely to convince the Heathen world of His Almighty Power, as this:

Had He done it by Famine, or Pestilence, or other Methods, His hand would not have appear'd so clearly in it, because that might as well have been ascrib'd to the Power of their own Gods, as Him: But in this way He left them no room to doubt, not only that the Work was done by Him, but that He, who could do this, was the only God.

For, as it was the Universal practice of the whole Heathen world, to put their several Nations under the protection of some Tutelar Deity, whose Power they usually judg'd of by their Victories over their Enemies; so in this method God appeals to their own notions,

tions, and lets them see in their own way, that He was as much above other Gods, as His Power was greater than theirs * : And 'tis for this

reason, probably, that He is ^{*Exod. xviii.} so often call'd in Scripture, by _{11.}

way of Emphasis, *The Lord of Hosts.*

'Twas for the same End, that God afterwards rais'd up this Nation to such eminent Dignity, and Glory, as we read He did in the Days of *David*, and *Solomon*:

In the Reign of *David*, 'tis said, that *the fame of him went out into all lands, and that* ^{1 Chr. xiv.} *the Lord brought the fear of* _{17.}

him upon all Nations. And as the means, by which He did this, was by giving him Success against his Enemies; so the manifest reason of this Success was, as 'tis express'd by the

holy *Psalmist*, that *His Glory might be declared amongst the* ^{Pfal. xcvi.} *Heathen, His wonders among* _{3, 10.}

all people, and that the Heathen might say, The Lord is King.

But how high so ever this Nation was advanced in *David's* Days, it was still more glorious, and powerful under *Solomon*.

* *He reign'd, 'tis said,*
* 2 Chr. ix. 26. *over all the Kings from the River Euphrates, even to the Land of the Philistins, and the Border of Egypt.*

And as his great, and extensive trade carried the fame of him into far distant countries; so his Wisdom became so renown'd in all places,
1 Kings x. 24. *that all the Earth is said to have sought to Him, to bear the Wisdom that God had put into his heart.*

We read of his friendship with the King of *Tyre*, and of a Visit made him by the Queen of *Sheba*, (a Great Princess, that is said to have reign'd over *Ægypt* and *Æthiopia*) and that merely out of Curiosity to see the man,
 and

and *bear his wisdom*, that was so renown'd.

These things could not naturally fail of bringing the knowledge of this people, with their Manners and Religion, to those countries :

What the Success of this was, we are not told ; but if by Strangers we are to understand Profelytes, we read of * vast multitudes in the beginning of *Solomon's* reign, no less * 2 Chron. ii. 7. than 153,600.

And whatever may be suppos'd of the Conversion of the Queen of *Sheba*, and the King of *Tyre*, thus much we are sure of, that the former *Bless'd the Lord God of Israel*, the latter acknowledg'd Him to be the True God, by owning Him to be *the Maker of Heaven, and Earth*.

Thus it was, as to Religion, in *Solomon's* Days.

After His Death, we read of several things that would naturally contribute, and might, in reason, be suppos'd to be

be intended for carrying on the same design.

The falling off, for instance, of the Ten tribes from the Kingdom of *Judab*, and the Erection of the Kingdom of *Israel*, could not fail to disperse the Knowledge of their Religion to *Egypt*, *Syria*, *Babylon*, and other nations, with whom they were often ingaged in War, and Alliances.

But that which was, above all other Methods, the most effectual for this, was, God's punishing His People with Captivity.

The Ten Tribes were intirely carried away, and howsoever they were afterwards dispos'd of, they carried their Religion along with them.

And as the other Two Tribes were 70 years in *Babylon*, dispersed over the Provinces of that Great Empire; so there were several very remarkable Incidents concurr'd to fix the Knowledge of their Religion there, and establish the Fear of that God they serv'd.

We

We read of *Daniel's* Interpretation of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Dream, and of *Belshazzar's Mene Tekel*, and for this of his Promotion to be *Ruler over the whole Province, and Chief of the Governors of all the Wise Men of Babylon.*

Now, these things must naturally make a noise amongst them, and incite their Curiosity to inquire after that God, that could inspire him with so much Wisdom, above all the *Magicians, Astrologers, and Sorcerers* of the Country.

But his deliverance afterwards from the *Lyons Den*, and that of *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego*, from the *fiery Furnace*, were such glaring Instances of the Almighty Power of the God they serv'd, and trusted in, as could not but be universally taken notice of.

And when these Deliverances were afterwards followed with Two publick Edicts on this account; not only confirming the Truth of the Facts, and
acknow-

acknowledging the Divine hand, by which they were done ; but also that their God was the True God ; One

Dan. iii. 29. requiring that *none should dare to speak amiss of Him ;*

Ibid. vi. 26, 27. *The other, that all should fear, and tremble before Him,*

what could be more effectual than this ?

But that which still further'd this design, and made this people, and their religion still more known, was, the famous Edict issued out by *Cyrus*, which was afterwards confirm'd by *Darius*, and *Artaxerxes*, for the building of the City, and Temple of *Jerusalem*, with a Licence to the people to return thither.

And as *Cyrus* is expressly said to be chosen by God, not only for the Restoration of His people, but that *all the world might know, from the rising of the Sun, and from the West, that He is the Lord, and none else ;* So the reason given for their
Restora-

Restoration is the same, *That* Ezek. xxxvi.
23, &c.
His Name might be known
among all the heathen.

Thus was the God of *Israel* known in *Babylon* through the whole compass of that mighty Empire, by the means of the Captive *Jews*, and this Knowledge must naturally disperse itself to all those places that held any Commerce with them, or had any kind of dependance on them.

And that this Knowledge they had got, might be afterwards preserved, when the *Jews* were gone away to their own land, it is worth your observation, that all would not return, but many still remain'd behind : As if it had been ordered so on purpose, that since the Seeds of Truth were now sown amongst them, some persons should be left to cherish, and improve them, that they might not be overrun with the weeds of Error, and Superstition, but nursed up into a plentiful Harvest.

I might

I might add to this, the progress that it afterwards made under the *Gre- cian* Empire, when they were again dispers'd into foreign parts, and parti- cularly into *Syria*, and *Egypt*, where *Onias* built a Temple for the *Jews*, in imitation of that at *Jerusalem*; and *Ptolemy* procured a Translation of the Scriptures into *Greek* by the *LXX.* by the means of which their Religion became known not only to that, but afterwards to the whole *Ro- man* Empire.

And many other things concurred to make it so; but my method con- fines me to the Old Testament History which does not descend so low.

However these Instances confirm to us, that God was not wanting in His Wise Providence to carry on this great design of propagating the Truth over all the World, and this was done with so great success, that we read after- wards in the New Testament, of *de- vout men*, met together at *Jerusalem*,
at

at the Day of *Pentecost*, (by which was meant those, that fear'd the True God, the God of Acts ii. 5. *Israel*) out of every Nation under Heaven.

To this we owe probably all the fine things that are so much magnified among the Heathen Philosophers, which though they are esteemed to be the fruits of bare Reason, we are not without grounds to think, they were only the gleanings they pick'd up in the several Countries through which they travell'd in search after Wisdom, and which they either receiv'd immediately from the *Jews* that they happen'd to find there, or from traditions they had left behind them, or from the Books of the Old Testament.

The fabulous Inventions of the Heathen Poets are evidently built upon those Books, and the main of them are only the Scripture Stories in disguise.

And

And 'tis from the Corruption of the Ideas derived from thence, that a great part of their Religion may be accounted for.

The notion of the Supreme God, as *the Father both of Gods and Men*, as they express themselves, seems to have been taken from those Expressions in Scripture, where the Angels and Princes are called *Gods*, and *the Sons of God*, whilst they are, at the same time, represented, as His Creatures :

And their setting up *Dæmons*, and Hero's, and famous Men, as objects of their Worship, may very probably have arisen from the Corruption of the Tradition of a Promis'd Mediator, through whom God would be reconciled to Mankind, which prompted them to find out Mediators of their own, according to their vain Imaginations.

But as the Light of True Religion increas'd upon them, the vanity of these superstitions were, in time, seen thro'
by

by the more thinking and inquisitive men; and though the faint Knowledge they had, was not sufficient of itself to correct the too popular Errors of those times, that were too strongly intrench'd by Power, and Interest, yet it brought the world into a proper disposition for that Reformation He intended for them.

For, as some men had, in some measure attain'd to juster Notions of God, and discern'd the Folly of the Vulgar Idolatries, so all the world were in Expectation of the Saviour promis'd, and probably of that Reformation He was to bring with Him.

The Heathen Historians speak of a Tradition that had prevailed over all the East, of some Person who was to come out of *Judea*, that should rule over all the world; which Tradition is said to be found in the ancient Books of the Priests, by which, it is more than probable, is meant the *Jewish* Books, the Holy Scriptures. See *Tacitus, cap. xiii. Suet. in Vesp. cap. iv.*

And if *Virgil* can be supposed to refer to the same Tradition, and same Person, in his Famous Eclogue to the Son of *Pollio*, as 'tis very reasonable to think he did, from the characters he describes Him by, exactly agreeable to the Old Testament; In this Eclogue he plainly shews us, what Notions they had of this Expected Prince; What a change he was to make upon the world, and what Happiness he was to bring along with Him.

From these general Hints, from the Heathen writers, we see how far the Knowledge of the True Religion had spread: We see how they were prepared for a better Scene of things, and look'd for the Person by whom it was to be effected: So that here was a great progress made.

To bring the World to this, was the Great End, I have said, that the Divine Providence seems to have had in view in His various transactions, relating to the Children of *Israel*, and as
this

this is the last thing, that, I have already shewn you, we might reasonably expect to find some account of in a History of this people, since the Scripture History answers in this respect, it is so far a Consistent, and Credible History.

And now having run through my several heads, it will be here proper to look back a little, and take a short view of what I have done, that by seeing the design I had before me, and the method I have persued it in, you may be better able to comprehend, and judge of the argument, and what is still behind to compleat the Whole.

A Recapitulation of what is past.

My Design was, as you may remember, to prove the Credibility of the Scripture History from the Consistency of the matter contained in it, as being all but one continued thread of Facts founded in the Nature of things.

Under the notion of the Scripture History, I must be understood to take in the whole Book, and though some part of it consists of Prophecies, which are not properly Historical, yet as these Prophecies have a necessary relation to those Facts, which make up the History, and are represented, as means to carry on the end and design of the History, I consider them as Parts of it:

And as the whole is visibly intended to give us an account of the various steps of the Divine Providence, in bringing Mankind to Happiness, after their First falling into sin; so my business was to shew you the Consistency, and Credibility of this account from its agreement with the natures, and reasons of things; that is to say, that the several methods of Providence related in this book, to have been made use of from time to time, were such as the nature, and reason of things required, and therefore, must reasonably be
be-

believed to have been as they are here said to have been, if Mankind may be supposed to have ever been in those circumstances, that call'd for them.

And as the reason of all the various dispensations of Providence was Sin, and by consequence, a History of Providence must be a History of the Rise, and Progress of Sin :

And as the End of Providence must be the Happiness of Mankind, and by consequence, a Rational History of Providence must give us an account of various methods taken, to make Mankind Happy, according as their different Circumstances required ;

So in the Examination of the Scripture History, I began, as the Scripture does, at the First sin, and from the nature of things endeavour'd to shew, how it must have happened, what it must have consisted in, what condition the First sinners were brought into by it, and what Providences were necessary to their Happiness, considering that

condition they were fallen into, and how this History agrees in every respect :

And as I shew'd the necessity of various Revelations at that time, and particularly of a Remedy for sin, and the Credibility of the account this History gives us of the Promise of a Redeemer, who should destroy the Works of the Devil ;

So I likewise shew'd, from the nature of this Promise, the necessity of various other Revelations, to foretel the Time when He should come, and the Characters by which He should be known at His coming.

And as these things were not to be done at once, but were to be carried on by regular steps, according as the different circumstances of mankind required them, I went on to shew you what account this History gives us, of the Circumstances of Mankind from time to time, and what a suitable Provision was made for them.

And

And as the End of Providence is, as I said before, the Happiness of Man, and the Happiness of Man consists in Holiness, and by consequence, all the methods of Providence must be order'd for the prevention of sin, and making them Holy ; so I shew'd you what means were made use of for this purpose, and the natural suitableness of them :

I need not repeat the several particulars ; I shall pass over them all, 'till the calling of *Abraham*, which is the Hinge upon which the whole History depends : And the reason and end of it was this ;

God had done many things for the amendment of the world, which were sufficient to influence Rational Creatures, but they so far withstood them all, that they were all become universally Idolaters ; even the Posterity of *Shem* were corrupted with it, and the case was such, that they must be either left to the Power of the Devil, and

given over to their own Inventions, or some new means must be applied for their Reformation, and for the maintenance of God's Honour, and Authority amongst them :

For this purpose God calls out *Abraham*, from amongst his Idolatrous kindred, to be the Seed of a New, and Better Generation, as a Nursery for the preservation of True Religion, and Vertue :

And in order to this, He took him and his Family under his own immediate conduct, and that He might keep them pure from the General contagion, he kept them, in a manner, separate from other People : They at first lived in a travelling way, as it were by themselves, and afterwards He settled them in *Ægypt*, and when they were grown into a sufficient Body, He led them out thence, and formed them into a Regular Commonwealth, under such Laws, as not only were calculated to make them a Holy people, but
also

also to keep them separate from their Idolatrous Neighbours.

And as they wanted assistance at any time, or according as they fell from their Obedience, He sent several Prophets to reveal His Will to them, either to give them Information of what they wanted to know, or to denounce vengeance on them for their Wickedness. And,

As the two great hinges of True Religion were the Knowledge of Him, the One True God, and Faith in the Redeemer that was to come, so in all His Dispensations towards them, He took care to preserve these Ideas in them :

The former by the many amazing Instances of His Power, either in their Favour, or their Punishment, all which were intended to convince, and assure them, that He, and He only, was the Lord.

The latter, by sending His Prophets frequently to remind them of His Promise, and of such things as were necessary to be known, concerning the Redeemer, to keep their Hopes alive, 'till the Fullness of time should come, for His actual appearance.

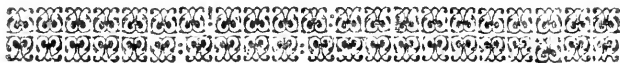
And when, by various means He had perfectly purified this people from Idolatry, and by various Revelations he had inform'd them of every thing necessary to be known, so that now there was no further need of Revelation, He then withdrew the Spirit of Prophecy from amongst them, and left them to improve the Notices they had.

But as all this was not intended barely for the benefit of this particular Nation ; but that True Religion being preserved pure, and undefiled amongst them, it might be thence communicated to all mankind, so I have shewn you what account this History gives us, of
various

various methods of Providence for this purpose :


And when the world was so far actually inlightened by them, as to know Him, the One True God, and, in some measure, to see the vanity of the then establish'd superstitions, and a General Expectation was rais'd amongst them of a Great Prince, that was to come, who was to introduce a New, and Glorious Scene of Happiness over all mankind ; here was the End of this dispensation accomplish'd : This was what this nation was rais'd up for, and this end being attained, there was now no longer need of their separation, nor of those Laws that were appointed to keep them separate. And therefore,

This seems in the nature of things to be a proper time for the appearance of the Promis'd Saviour : And whether He came, or not, and who He was, is the next thing to be inquired into.



C H A P. XVI.

That the Saviour Promis'd, is come.

 **HAT** the time for the coming of the Promis'd Saviour appointed by the Prophets is expir'd, is certain, even by the consent of the *Jews* themselves.

The Sceptre is long since departed from *Judah*, and there is not the least shadow of a Common-wealth amongst the *Jews* in any part of the world that we know of :

The second Temple was destroyed near 1700 years ago, in which he was to have appeared, and 'twas about that time, that *Daniel's* weeks expired ; and yet these were the rules to calculate His coming by.

And

And now the Question is, Whether there was any Person appeared at that time, who answered the Prophetick Characters, and might reasonably be supposed to be the Person, they design'd :

That there were many Pretenders set up about that time appointed by the Prophets, I have already hinted to you : The Scriptures of the New Testament mention some ; and other Books, inform us of several more ; but withal they tell us, that they came to nought, and shew'd in the end, that they were, either only a parcel of poor deluded wretches themselves, or else designed to put an Imposture upon others.





C H A P. XVII.

That JESUS *is the Saviour*
Promis'd.



HE only person that has been able to make his pretences good, that He was the Person the Prophets aim'd at, was *Jesus Christ*: And that He has done this to the conviction of every unprejudiced man, is our next business to prove.

And in doing this, as I have before shewn the Connexion of the Scripture Prophecies concerning Him, so I will here shew the Connexion, and Correspondence there is between *Jesus Christ*, and those Prophecies. And that we may be able to make the comparison the more easily, I will run them over in the order I have before consider'd them.

The

*The first Prediction of a Saviour
fulfill'd.*

To begin with the First Prediction to our First Parents, That *The Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head*: This has a wonderful completion in Jesus Christ, if by this expression it was intended, that the Person meant by it should be the Seed of the Woman only, by being born of a Virgin-Mother :

As this was a Circumstance so very extraordinary, that we can hardly imagine any sensible Impostor would have laid such a Stumbling-block in the very entrance of his design, had it been a mere delusion; so we have reason to think it was intended in the Promise, from the natural relation it bears to those Laws about the tryal of Virginitie, that I have already taken notice of, of which no reasonable account can be given, but that they had an eye to the
 Birth

Birth of the Redeemer; so that when He should come as the Son of a Virgin, there might be some approv'd and authentick Proofs, by which such pretences might be legally determin'd.

And as this Circumstance was so remarkably fulfill'd in Jesus Christ, who was conceiv'd in so Miraculous a manner, as to be *the Seed of the Woman* only; so it will hereafter appear, that He was that very Seed, which was promised in those Words, and which was *to bruise the Serpent's Head*.

By *bruising the Serpent's Head*, I have already shewn, is meant His defeating the Devices of the Devil, by which he sought to bring Mankind to ruin, in the Delusion of our First Parents.

And if this be the proper meaning of the words, for this end Jesus Christ is said to have *appear'd, that He might destroy the Works of the Devil*, those works, in which *he sinn'd from the beginning*, 1 John iii. 8.

And

And accordingly to effect this, As the design of the devil apparently was to deprive our First Parents of the favour of God, and that Happiness they were made for, by drawing them into Sin, and Death;

So this design is defeated by Jesus Christ, as He has reconcil'd Mankind to God, and procur'd pardon for their Sins; and as He has assur'd them of, and procur'd for them, a deliverance from Death, by a Resurrection to Everlasting Life, and Happiness.

He has not only promis'd Pardon; and Reconciliation, but he has taught us the true, and only rational and natural way to it, by Repentance; and as he laid down His Life in Confirmation of his Doctrine; so God was pleas'd to accept of his Death, as a Sacrifice of Expiation for us, to which, if we Repent, we have liberty to appeal for pardon; And to assure us of His acceptance of this Sacrifice, God rais'd Him from the dead:

And so again, He has not only promis'd a Resurrection to Everlasting Life to all, that will make themselves capable of it; but He has given us His own Resurrection, as an Instance of the thing, to shew us the Possibility, and Certainty of the Event, that as he has rais'd up Himself from Death, so *would He raise us up at the last day.*

And lastly, He has not only promis'd Happiness to us, but He hath taught us the true, and only natural and rational way to attain it, which is by Holiness.

And as He has given us such Ideas of our Happiness, as are suitable to a Rational nature; so He has given us such rules of Holiness to attain it by, as are not only made the indispensable condition of it, but such as are, in the nature of things, the necessary qualification for it:

And He has likewise not only given us such motives to inforce those rules, as are most proper to work upon a Rational

tional Nature; but He has promis'd us such assistance, as is sufficient for us, to enable us to live accordingly.

And whereas the Happiness He promises is in Heaven; to assure His Disciples, that there is such a place, He visibly, and in their presence, ascended thither:

And as he told them beforehand, that *He would go thither to prepare a place for them there, and promis'd to endue them with Power from on High*; so He afterwards gave them evidence of His being arrived there, by sending down those Gifts upon them from above, which he had before promis'd to endue them with; these Gifts being such, as could come only from above, and were abundant Proofs of a Divine Power.

And as He has given us this assurance of a Resurrection to Life, and Happiness; so He teaches us, that this Happiness shall be compleat, and everlasting, a Happiness both of Body and Soul for ever, without any possibility of

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dying any more. Our Spirits shall be made Perfect, and our Bodies chang'd, *this Corruption having put on Incorruption, and this Mortal, Immortality.*

And as He is now in Heaven at God's right hand, where all things are made subject to Him, and has taken possession of this Happiness in our name and behalf; so He has given us assurance, that He will one day come again *to Judge the world in Righteousness:* And as He will then actually confer this Happiness on all those for whom it is prepar'd; so he will execute vengeance upon his enemies, in a place of torments prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels.

This is a general view of the Christian Religion; and what is there wanting here to compleat this character of the Saviour promis'd, as He was *to bruise the Serpent's Head?*

*The second Prediction of a Saviour
fulfill'd.*

Another Promise we read of the Saviour to come, That He should be one *in whom all Nations should be Bless'd.*

This we have already shewn to be the same thing in other words, with what had been promis'd to our First Parents by *bruising the Serpent's head*, this being the greatest Blessing that God could bestow upon Mankind:

And accordingly when St. *Peter* applies this Promise to Christ, he seems to intimate, that He was the Person intended by it, as He was *sent to Bless us in turning every one of us away from our Iniquities.*

For, as it was Sin that first brought misery into the world, and still continues it amongst us; so 'tis by our deliverance from this, that we must be made capable of Happiness, even in this world, as well as that which is to come.

And therefore as Jesus Christ came to be a Blessing to all Nations, He laid His foundation in their Reformation: He came to *save them from their Sins*:

And as He came to a World that lay in Wickedness, the first Step He took was, *to teach them to deny all Ungodliness, and Worldly Lusts, and to live Soberly, Righteously, and Godlily in this present world.*

And in order to this end, as He has done all, that is consistent with a Rational nature, on the one hand, by His Doctrine, His Precepts, His Promises, His Threatnings, His Life, His Death, His Resurrection, His Ascension, and Mission of the Holy Ghost *to abide with us, and work in us, both to Will, and to Do according to his good pleasure*;

So He has done all that is necessary to make us Happy, not only in a future, but this present World:

He has furnish'd our Understandings with Light, and Knowledge of all useful

ful and necessary Truth, which Mankind either could not at all, or at least not so perfectly have discover'd, as was necessary to their Reformation, considering the sad bewilder'd State they were then fallen into:

He has taught us how to regulate our Wills, and to reduce all our Irregular Appetites, and Passions, into Subjection to sober Reason :

And the Laws He has given us to walk by are such, as are really for our advantage, consider'd either in our relative capacity, in the Peace, and Order, and Well-Government of Society ; or in our Personal, in the Quiet of our Minds, the Health of our Bodies, the Security of our Liberty, Property, and Reputation, and the comfortable Enjoyment of all the valuable pleasures of the Animal, and Sensitive life :

And that there might be nothing still wanting to compleat our welfare in this world, so far as we are capable of it, whereas we are all liable to many

Evils, He has provided us with proper assistances and comforts under them, so as either totally to remove them, or take away the sting, and burthen of them.

Thus, for instance, As Mankind were continually involved in doubts about things of the greatest moment, which fill'd their minds with great disquietude, and made their lives restless, and uneasy, He has totally removed that Error, or Ignorance, which was the root from whence it sprung, and given us a view of all things necessary :

As we are perpetually liable to Wants, which naturally excite tormenting Cares, He has taught us how to moderate those Cares, by teaching us, that we have *a Father that takes care of us*, and that we ought therefore to *be careful for nothing*.

And as we are expos'd to various and great Afflictions, which occasion great and pungent Sorrows, and are oft a grievous burden to our lives, he has taught

taught us how to bear all these with Patience, by shewing us the Wisdom of the Hand, that lays them on, and the advantages that we shall certainly reap from them, if we are not wanting to our selves.

And lastly, As we are all certain one day to dye, which of all things is most terrible to Humane Nature, especially when that day approaches towards us, He has furnish'd us with a sufficient remedy for this, by assuring us of a better Life, and that Death is but as the gate or passage thither.

And now when we consider all this together, what is there still wanting to be done to make Himself a Blessing to all Nations, when He appears to have done all, that is necessary to their Happiness, consistent with their Rational nature, considering them, either as Rational, as Sinful, as Ignorant, Indigent, Afflicted, or Mortal Men?

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*The third Prediction of a Saviour
fulfill'd.*

Another Character given us of the Promis'd Saviour, was that of a *Prophet like unto Moses*; by which, I have already shewn, was meant, that He should not only be a Prophet to Reveal the Will of God, but a Redeemer, and a Lawgiver, a Mediator of a New Covenant, confirm'd by Miracles, as that of *Moses* had been :

And that this Redemption should be a Spiritual Redemption; the Laws such as are written upon the Heart, and therefore Laws of Righteousness, and Holiness; and the Covenant not such a one, as *Moses's* was, but a better Covenant, a Covenant of Peace and Reconciliation between God and Man, and this calculated for the benefit of all the world.

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This is all implied in this general Promise, as I have shewn, and is the Substance of all the Prophets.

And what is there wanting in *Jesus Christ* of all this ?

It is evident, He has brought us a full, and perfect Revelation of the divine Will, which he receiv'd immediately from God, in such a manner, as no one beside Him ever did. For the very Godhead dwelt in Him, and spake by Him : He had, as the Prophets foretold, *the Spirit of Wisdom, and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge, and Fear of the Lord*, and this the New Testament says He receiv'd *without measure*.

He came as a Saviour, and Deliverer of God's people, as *Moses* was, but the Salvation He wrought for them was not a deliverance from bodily slavery, as that of the *Egyptians* was, under a Tyrannical *Pharaoh* ; but it was, as I have shewn it ought to be, a deliverance
of

of a higher Nature, from a worse bondage, more cruel enemies, and greater miseries : 'Twas such a deliverance, as the Prophet describ'd, by opening the Prison-doors of Darkness, and giving Light to the Blind, and Ignorant, and loosing them from the Chains and Captivity of sin : 'Twas, in a word, a deliverance from the power of Sin, and Satan, and the dominion of our lusts and passions, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

This was such a salvation as the world wanted ; this was what He came into the world for ; for this He had His Name ; and this was His Work.

He came as a Ruler, and a Law-giver, as *Moses* was, but His Laws were of a higher, and nobler Nature, not such as consisted in burthensome Rites, and costly Ceremonies, in temporary, and occasional Institutions, which were given because of Transgression ; but they were *Statutes which were good*, founded in Nature, and
Reason,

Reason, suitable to the Nature of God and Man, such as were worthy of God to give, and necessary to the Welfare of Man to observe.

He came as a Mediator of a New Covenant, as *Moses* was, but such a Covenant as was of a better, and more perfect Nature, and built upon better promises, than his: A Covenant of Peace, and Reconciliation, such as the Prophets had foretold it should be, wherein God promises, if we *will take Him for our Father, we shall be to Him as Sons and Daughters; if we will be His People, He will be our God.*

And if we have not done this in time past, if we will turn from *our Wickedness that we have committed, and do that which is Lawful and Right, He will blot out our Iniquities, and remember them no more, and we shall save our Souls alive.*

This

This is the Covenant describ'd in the Prophets, and this is evidently the nature of the Christian Covenant.

And all this He confirm'd by Miracles, as *Moses* did ; and that not only such Miracles, as the other Prophets had foretold should be done by Him ; such as *opening the Eyes of the Blind, and the Ears of the Deaf, making the Lame to walk, and the Dumb to speak* ; but His whole Ministry was one Continued scene of Miracles, such as were works of Mercy, and Charity, done in His *Father's Name*, and with such force of Evidence, that they not only extorted Confession from the Multitude, that *He was a Teacher sent from God*, but that *He was That Prophet, that was to come into the world*.

And, Lastly, As we have before shewn, that the Promis'd Saviour was to be one, *in whom all Nations should be Blessed*, and therefore, all He was to be, or do, must be so order'd, as to be a Blessing to all the world ; so was it here

in *Jesus Christ*: the Revelation He deliver'd, the Salvation He wrought, the Laws He gave, and the Covenant he made, were such, as were not only intended for, but according as the Prophets had foretold they should be adapted to the condition of all Mankind.

The Revelation was such, as all were equally concern'd in; the Salvation such, as all were equally capable of, and equally stood in need of; the Laws such, as all alike in every place were, and always will be obliged to; and the Covenant such, as actually includes all, and is offer'd to all, and is equally suited to the necessities of all.

This is the substance of what the Prophets foretold of the office, and business of the Promis'd Saviour, which is all completely answered by *Jesus Christ*: And as the benefit of all this was, you see, intended for All the world, so He took care to have it preach'd to All Nations. And as He chose out
proper

proper Persons for this Work, so He endued them with proper powers for it.

And when they had preach'd the Gospel to all Nations as our Saviour had foretold, *that the End should come*, that is, the End of the *Jewish* Dispensation ; and as God Himself had likewise told the *Jews*, that, when He should send them a *Prophet like unto Moses*, *if they did not bear*, and receive Him, *He would require it at their hands* ; So 'tis very remarkable, that God then destroyed *Jerusalem*, the Temple, and the Government of the *Jews*, and has preserv'd them ever since, only as the *Gibeonites* formerly amongst the *Israelites*, as Witnesses that there was anciently such a people ; as preservers of those Books, in which are delivered the Oracles of God, and as a standing Monument of the Vengeance of God, which he had before threatened, and they afterwards invoc'd
upon

upon themselves, upon their rejection of the Lord of Life and Glory.

A Fourth Prediction of a Saviour fulfilled.

But, Fourthly, As the Promis'd Saviour was to be a Prophet like unto *Moses*, so was He to be a King, like *David*, sitting upon his Throne for ever, having *the Heathen for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the Earth for His possession.*

And in this likewise *Jesus Christ* agrees. For what was to be here meant by the Throne and Kingdom of *David*? Not a Temporal Government certainly.

The *Jews*, indeed expected a temporal Government, when all the world was to be brought into subjection to them: But this was a vain imagination, not consistent with the character of their *Messiah* in other respects:

He was to *be a Blessing to all Nations*; but this was not a likely way to be so, to make them all Vassals to one people :

He was to *bruise the Serpent's head*, to overcome the Devil, and to deliver Mankind from the consequences of his devices, Sin, Death, and Misery, into a State of Holiness, Happiness, and Immortality.

And every thing, ascrib'd to Him, must agree with this : And in order to this, as there were various methods to be taken ; as for instance, some things to be Taught, and Reveal'd from God, for which he usually made use of Prophets ; and other things to be done in the way of Expiation, which belong'd to the Office of a Priest ; So He is represented in Scripture, under these Characters.

And as there were several other things to be done, in the way of Government, such as giving Laws, and executing Judgment, and the like, so
on

on this account, He is represented as a King.

But then, as all this is only for the one Great end of *bruising the Serpent's head, and bringing in Everlasting Righteousness*, this Kingdom must be evidently a Spiritual Kingdom, as I have formerly shewn.

And 'tis upon this account that 'tis call'd the *Kingdom of David*, and represented, by *sitting upon His Throne*.

For though the Kingdom of *David* was a Kingdom in this world, it was erected with a spiritual view: It was a Government set up for the protection of the Children of *Israel*, a people Chosen out of the rest of the world, as Holy to the Lord, and whom He kept separate from them for the preservation of the True Religion, in opposition to Idolatry, as I have all along shewn:

And therefore, when 'tis promis'd that the *Messias* should sit upon *David's Throne*, it can be meant only,

that he should rule over the *Israel* of God, His Elect, and Chosen people, and that as from His Kingdom all Idolatry should be banish'd, and the True God only Worshipp'd in it, so His Subjects should be a People *Holy to the Lord*.

And, as all are not *Israel*, that are of *Israel*, but they only are *the True Israel, the Chosen, and Elect of God*, who serve Him faithfully in a sincere Obedience; so this Promise of the *Messiah's* Kingdom, seems plainly to imply, that there shall be a time, when all the World shall be of the same Religion, and all the people *Holy to the Lord*; when *the Will of God shall be done, on Earth, as it is in Heaven*; and then His Kingdom will be come; which is that Kingdom our Saviour seems to have taught us to pray for; *A Kingdom that shall, as the Prophet says, be possessed by the Saints, for ever and ever, Dan. vii. 18.*

If this be the meaning of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, it is yet to be fulfilled.

And as this *Kingdom of the Saints*, which *Daniel* saw in Vision, was given to the *Son of Man*, when He came with the Clouds of Heaven before the *Ancient of days*, sitting in Judgment ; So we may conceive there will be a time, when, as God will call the world to Judgment, so the *Son of Man* shall come in the Clouds of Heaven, and shall enter upon His Kingdom ; that is, He shall be appointed the Judge of all, and then He shall reign over the Saints for ever, which agrees exactly with what we are taught to believe of *Jesus Christ*, that He is to be *Judge of Quick and Dead*, and then He will separate between the Righteous and the Wicked, and give the Kingdom to the *Blessed of His Father*, that was prepared for them from the beginning of the world ; By which is plainly to be meant that Happiness

which was promis'd at the beginning of the world, by the coming of *the Seed of the Woman*, in the possession of which they would enjoy the *Blessing*, which His Father had *promis'd to all Nations* through Him.

This is the full Completion of our Saviour's Kingdom and Glory :

But He has a Kingdom, even now, and that too over all the world, as the Promis'd Saviour was to have ; and in this He was invested at His Ascension into Heaven, (whither He ascended in the Clouds of Heaven) God having then Highly *exalted Him, and given Him a Name, or Authority, above every Name ; all Power being given Him both in Heaven and in Earth, Angels, Principalities, and Powers being made subject unto Him :*

And as the Preaching the Gospel was an Introduction to this Authority, He was to be advanced to, and was an actual Promulgation of those Laws, which He required every one to pay
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Obedience to, that would be intitled to His Favour here, or the Glory of His Kingdom hereafter, so this is frequently called in the Gospel, *the Kingdom of Heaven*, as it is a beginning of that dispensation, which was to go on by degrees, 'till all Nations should become the Subjects of Christ, and enjoy the Privileges of the Gospel here, and such as would fit themselves for it, should be afterwards admitted into His Kingdom of Glory with all the Saints hereafter.

A Fifth Prediction of the Saviour fulfilled.

Fifthly, The Promis'd Saviour was to be a *Priest*, the Prophet said, as well as a *Prince upon the Throne*, and as such, not only to make Reconciliation for sin; but also, as we are likewise told, to give His Soul, that is, His Life, an Offering for it, and to undergo great sufferings, *the Just for*

the Unjust, that by His Stripes they might be healed.

And what can more exactly agree than this, with *Jesus Christ*? who not only came into the world *to seek, and to save, that which was lost*, and underwent the greatest afflictions to bring us to God, but actually laid down His Life for our sakes, that *we might have Redemption through His Blood* :

And as He did this by God's own appointment, God having prepared Him a Body for this purpose, and having performed the Will of God, He had, by consequence, paid the Price of our Redemption, which He had now a Right to: so He then *Ascended up into Heaven*, as the High Priest used to do at the Great Expiation, to present the Blood of His Sacrifice in the Holy Place.

And by thus shewing Himself before God in that Body, in which He had suffered, and by that suffering had performed the Condition of our Reconciliation;

conciliation : As He did then by that Act intercede for us, and, as it were, claim that Redemption, He had by His suffering purchased, so, as *He lives for ever at God's Right Hand*, He ever lives to make the same *Intercession for us, that He may save to the uttermost those, that come unto God by Him.*

And thus you see how He fulfill'd the Character of a Priest, whose Office is to go between God and the People in order for their Reconciliation to Him.

I might now proceed to the other things which I before observed to have been foretold of the Promised Saviour, relating to His Family, that He should be of the Seed of *David* ; and the Place of His Birth, that it should be *Bethlehem* : as likewise that He should not only *be Cut off* for Sins of others, as has been just now taken notice of, but that He should *Rise again, Ascend into Heaven*, and *send down Gifts among*

among Men, that their Sons, and Daughters might Prophecy.

These are things which are usually understood upon very good reason to be foretold, and if so, I need not spend time in shewing how they agree to *Jesus Christ* : Every one that knows any thing of Christianity, must know that, if they are foretold, they have been literally fulfilled :

That His Family, the place of His Birth, and that He was to *be cut off, but not for Himself, &c.* were foretold, will not bear a reasonable dispute, and if the Prophecies of His Resurrection, Ascension, and Mission of the Holy Spirit be not so plain, as to satisfy some people they were foretold, then these Events must be considered in another view, not as a completion of former Predictions, but as Events that were necessary, in the nature of things, for the accomplishment of that design He came for ; or else, as Testimonies to His Authority, that He was *a Teacher sent*

sent from God, and as proofs of His being the Person, He pretended to be, and of the efficacy and acceptance of what He did, in order to the End He came for.

In this view they do not fall under our present argument, which is only to shew our Saviour's agreement with the Scripture Prophecies ;

But nevertheless, since there are several Texts in the Old Testament, that, beside the natural meaning of them, seem to be applied by our Saviour and His Apostles to His Resurrection, Ascension, and Mission of the Holy Ghost, and that not barely by way of Accommodation, but as Predictions, if the Facts be true, that Christ did Rise and Ascend into Heaven, and send the Holy Spirit, as related in the New Testament; they are, I think, a sufficient proof, that these Persons were Teachers sent from God, and that therefore they have rightly interpreted those Texts ;

And

And if so, they are a double Confirmation of Christianity, not only as they are in their own nature Miracles, but as they are a completion of former Prophecies.

The Predictions of the Time of the Promis'd Saviour's coming, fulfilled.

I come now to consider the last thing relating to the coming of the Promised Saviour; which is, The Circumstance of Time, when this Great Event was to happen, and how *Jesus Christ* agreed in this respect :

And First, As it was foretold by the Prophet *Haggai*, chap. ii. 6, 7. that He should come, whilst the second Temple stood, at a time when all the world should be in expectation of Him, and after great changes, and commotions in the Great Kingdoms of the Earth; so we find all these agree to the coming of our Saviour Christ.

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Every one that knows any thing of History, knows, that as the Great *Assyrian* Empire had, at the time of this Prophecy, been transferr'd to the *Medes*, and *Persians*, and not long after the *Persian* Empire was overturn'd by the Power of the *Greeks* under *Alexander*: So was this Empire, after *Alexander*, divided among his Chief Commanders; and afterwards, by degrees, was swallow'd up by the *Romans*.

And when after various Wars, and Conquests, the whole Empire of the then known world was reduced under one Head, the then Ruling Emperor *Augustus*, and settled in a perfect Peace, and Tranquillity, then was Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, born, to bring the Tidings of Peace between God and Man.

He was born while the second Temple stood, and frequently appeared and taught in it; and he came at a time, when, as the very Heathen Historians confirm,

confirm, there was an Universal Expectation of Him :

So that nothing can more punctually agree than this.

But, Secondly, The Time of the Promis'd Saviour's Coming was more particularly determin'd by the Prophet *Daniel*, to the Expiration of 70 Weeks after the going forth of a decree to build *Jerusalem*.

And at this very time Jesus Christ appeared: The General Expectation of His coming at that very time, when He appeared, is a proof, that that generation understood the Prophecies on which they built their Expectation, were then to be fulfill'd, and that they had not been fulfill'd before: And 'tis very remarkable, that however the Calculation of this time be made, it wonderfully agrees to Jesus Christ, either as to His Birth, or Suffering, or the Destruction of *Jerusalem*.

Thirdly, We have a further account of the time of the promis'd Saviour's Coming,

Coming, in the Prophet *Malachy*, chap. iii. 1. —iv. 5. according to whom, He must not only come, as the Prophet *Haggai* had before said, during the second Temple, but He must have a *Messenger* come before Him, as an *Elias*, that is, one in the Power, and Spirit of *Elias*, to prepare His way, and then suddenly after He should appear. And,

How aptly does this concur with the Preaching of *John* Baptist? who, as he is reported, even by *Josephus*, to have been a person of so eminent Holiness, that he imputes the miseries that afterwards befell *Herod*, and his Family, to his unjust Murder of that good man; so he, that Good man, not only profess'd, that he came for that end the Prophet had foretold, namely, *to prepare the Way of the Lord*, and for this reason, *preach'd Repentance to them for the remission of their Sins*; but also expressly declar'd, *That Jesus was the Person,*

Person, The Lamb of God; that taketh away the Sins of the world.

And, Lastly, Was all this to come to pass before the Sceptre should depart from *Judah*, and a Lawgiver from between his feet? Thus also it was fulfill'd in Jesus Christ.

For, at the time of his coming, all Authority and Power had not departed from *Judah*; they had still a Commonwealth remaining in that Tribe, and were govern'd by their own Laws, and the Kingdom had its name from *Judah*:

But soon after his coming, when the *Gentiles*, as *Jacob* had foretold they should do, had gathered themselves to Him by the preaching of the *Apostles*, then came the End of that dispensation; The whole *Jewish* Policy was overturn'd, the City and the Sanctuary destroy'd, and all tokens of Authority and Dominion totally erased; The People were dispers'd, their Tribes and Genealogies confounded, and the *Romans*
took

took away both their place and nation.

And as this was a strong Testimony to Jesus Christ; so is it also of the Wisdom of that Providence, by which it was effected, at that particular time.

For, as the *Jewish* Ceremonies had been Instituted by God, for the Cure and Prevention of the Idolatry of that people, who had been set up by God for the preservation of the True Religion, in the Knowledge and Service of the True God, in the Faith of the promis'd Saviour, for which he gave them several Injunctions to keep them separate from the Idolatrous world, and several Revelations from time to time to correct their Notions, and support their Faith:

And as they were likewise intended, notwithstanding their Separation, to be a means of Communicating Light, and Knowledge to the rest of Mankind; so when the *Jews* were now no longer prone to Idolatry, and therefore there

was no longer reason to continue them a separate people, nor any necessity of those Laws, which were given for that End:

And when that Saviour was already come, the Expectation of whom they were to propagate, and when the Knowledge of the True Religion was actually imparted to all nations in its full perfection, by the preaching of the Apostles; There was then no need of continuing the *Jews* under a distinct dispensation, as before, because the reason of that dispensation was now ceas'd: And therefore God in Wisdom put an End to it; and that not only by the Destruction of the Temple, and the Confusion of their Tribes, and Genealogies, but even by dissolving their very nation, and scattering them over all the world: Intending, no doubt, that as He now design'd that they, and all Mankind, should be but one people, so it should not be in their power to keep themselves separate, and observe that
that

that dispensation any longer, by which they were obliged to meet and worship at *Jerusalem* only.

And if so, it seems to be an argument of no little weight, that Jesus Christ was the Person, in whom that dispensation centred, when, so soon as He had finish'd what that dispensation requir'd, it was then abolish'd and destroy'd, according as it had been foretold it should be when *Shiloh* should come, and the people should be gathered to Him.

Thus you see, How the Prophecies agree to Jesus Christ, in respect of the Time, in which the Promis'd Saviour was to come.

There is one thing more, that I think proper to add in this place, and upon this head, relating to the Time of our Saviour's coming, which is, That He not only came at the Time appointed by the Prophets, but that it was, of all others, the most seasonable and suitable time that could possibly be imagin'd for it :

For we have before shewn, That by the means of the *Jews*, great Knowledge had been convey'd through the greatest part of the World: There were some among the Heathens, who had gain'd so much light, as in some measure to discern the Vanity of the Vulgar Superstitions, tho' they knew not what to substitute in their room: And many of them had reform'd their notions of God in some respects; and as they liv'd in the Expectation of some great change, so they were in some degrees prepar'd for it, by the previous light they had receiv'd.

We may likewise observe, that Learning was then arriv'd at its utmost perfection, insomuch that that Age was the Standard of all after-times, and as this qualified them to understand and examine Truth, and was a great preservative from Error and Imposture; so there was a noble Spirit of Curiosity reigning amongst them, that prompted them to inquire after Truth, and vast numbers

bers of men of a Free, and Inquisitive Genius, that employ'd themselves in New Discoveries; and tho' this probably arose only from Vanity, and Ostentation, yet it was a proper disposition for the opening of Christianity to them, and might procure it, at least, a favourable Hearing.

There was likewise a general Peace thro'out the world, and all the known parts of it were then reduced under one Head, under Subjection to the *Roman* Empire; and as there was, by this means, an easy and safe passage open'd for commerce from one Kingdom and Nation to another, so there could be no time more seasonable for the opening the Gospel, which was to be preach'd to all Nations, than this.

But that consideration which is of greatest weight in this matter, and most worthy your notice, is, That there was an absolute necessity of a Revelation, both to *Jew*, and *Gentile*, at that time, and that therefore He came in the most

proper season, as He was then needed most.

The necessity of a New Revelation to the *Gentiles*, at that time when our Saviour came, has been already prov'd in my former discourses; And there can be as little doubt of the same, in respect of the *Jews*, if we consider the Condition they were then fallen into.

'Tis evident, that notwithstanding all the methods God had taken for the establishment of True Religion and Vertue amongst them, they still needed a Reformation in Both respects.

Tho' they preserv'd the true Ideas of God in general, yet His Worship and Service was reduced to a mere Formality: Those Ceremonies, which had been appointed only for a time, and as means of keeping them a Separate people, lest they should be infected by the contagion of an Idolatrous world, were then the whole of their Religion, as if the observance of those external Rites would alone be sufficient to procure

cure them the favour and acceptance of God:

The *New Testament* tells us, which we consider only, as an Ancient History, that their Law had been so corrupted by the false Glosses of the Scribes, and Pharisees, that they render'd it in a manner void, and useles: And they made so many additions to it by their traditions, *teaching for Doctrines the commandments of Men*, that it became a grievous, and burthensome Yoke, which *neither they nor their Fathers, could bear.*

We have several Hints in the New Testament of some notions they received intirely destructive of the whole Moral Law.

John Baptist seems to intimate, that they thought their being the Children of *Abraham* alone would be sufficient for their purpose, without *Works meet for Repentance*, Mat. iii.

And in another place, by a Question proposed to our Saviour, *Which was*

the Great Commandment of the Law? they are generally understood to have thought, that the punctual observance of some one more remarkable duty, (such as Circumcision, the Sabbath, the Payment of Tythes, or the offering of Sacrifices) would exempt them from their Obedience to all the rest.

These were such opinions as would be easily receiv'd, and were of dangerous consequence to Religion, and Morality.

And with this, there was then a modern, but prevailing sect amongst them, that not only rejected a great part of the Holy Writings, but maintained, that there was *no Resurrection, nor Angel, nor Spirit.*

Whether they meant by this, that there was no separate state of Spirits, and as they believed no Resurrection, nothing could be expected beyond the Grave, I am not sufficiently informed :

However that be, there does not seem to have been at that time a sufficient Revelation of a future State.

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The Belief of another Life is always necessary to the practice of Virtue, and without a thorough sense of it, considering the corruption of Mankind, 'tis a great hazard, but Immorality must universally prevail; and therefore 'tis always necessary, that this point should be firmly settled; but it was more particularly so to the *Jews* at that time.

'Tis very certain their Law chiefly promised them temporal Privileges, and little is said in it from first to last, relating to another life, but what was to be gathered from Implications:

And as present things are too apt to gain upon us, and make us careless of future hopes, even though never so clearly revealed, and firmly grounded, so they would be much more likely to do so in their case, under only imperfect Hints.

'Tis true, indeed, I have already shewn, that the Certainty of a future Resurrection to a state of Immortal Happiness had been clearly intimated

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in the first Promise of *the Seed*, that should bruise *the Serpent's head*.

But this was to be discover'd only by rational deduction, and though it might be clear enough to thinking men, yet the way that this notion was ordinarily carried on, so far as it was believ'd among the Multitude, was probably by Tradition :

And as Tradition is usually too weak to struggle against the afflictions, and temptations of a wicked world, so, according to the accounts we have of that people, they seem to have been wholly taken up with the Interests and Concerns of this present life :

And thence it was, that we read, when they labour'd under great Calamities, how they murmur'd against God, as if they had serv'd Him *in vain* ; and all their hopes had been defeated by those calamities.

'Tis true, indeed the Principle of a Resurrection is said in the New Testament to have been believed by the

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Pharisees ; but upon what foundation we are not told : And we find they had very gross notions of it, whilst they are said by *Josephus* to speak of another life, as the Heathens did. Antiq. lib. 18. cap. 2.

And if so, 'tis no wonder it had no better effect upon their lives : For the same *Josephus* tells us, De Bello, 6. 16. the whole nation were become so profligately Wicked, and so abandon'd to Vice, that at the time of their destruction, if the *Romans* had not come against them, the earth must have swallowed them up, or fire from heaven consumed them.

These things being thus, this plainly shews us, how ineffectual all former methods had proved, and how necessary a New Revelation was at that time for the Reformation both of their Notions, and their Manners : And particularly to give them a better and more full Idea of another life, built upon a better bottom.

And

And since the Promis'd Saviour was to come at this time, and to bring a New Covenant with Him, as it shews us the particular wisdom of God, in sending such a Covenant at such a time, when the people stood most in need of it, so it teaches us what to expect in this New Covenant, *viz.* that it provide for all these necessities :

And since *Jesus Christ* not only came at this time, but came with a New Covenant to them, and such a one, as, every one knows, that reads the New Testament, was, in all respects, suitable to their Circumstances ; a Covenant, wherein their errors, and false notions were corrected, their abuses of their Law condemned, and the defects of it fill'd up ; a Covenant *bringing in better hopes, and establish'd upon better promises*, and wherein every thing necessary was provided for their Reformation, and the bringing them to eternal Happiness ; What stronger proof can we have, that He was the very Person
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son the *Jews* expected, that God had promis'd, and the Prophets had foretold should come?

And when He had actually made an offer of this Covenant to the *Jews*, and was rejected by them, and there was then no possible Hopes of their Reformation, this gives us another reason for the destruction of that Nation: As being a people unworthy of the continuance of God's Favour to them, as being Vessels fitted only for destruction, having shewn themselves incapable of being wrought upon; and therefore it was but just that *He should require it at their hands*, as He had before threatened He would do, *if they would not hear the Prophet that He should send to them.*

And thus you see how all things agree in *Jesus Christ*, in every Circumstance foretold.

And as the completion of them in Him, is a full confirmation of our foregoing Interpretation of them, so this
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will likewise give us a Key, by which to explain several other places, which would not otherwise so well be understood.

For if it be true, as we have shewn, that there are real Prophecies of a Saviour to come, which have been literally fulfilled in *Jesus Christ*; from hence we may infer, as we have before done in another case ;

That whatever is told us of *Jesus Christ* in the New Testament, that has a natural relation to what we read in the Old, we have reason to think, that relation might be intended, and may reasonably interpret one by the other :

Thus, for instance, when we see a manifest Resemblance between *the Serpent lifted up in the Wilderness*; *the Scape-Goat*; *the Paschal Lamb*; and *the High Priest's going into the Holy of Holies once a year to present the blood of the Atonement before the Lord*; And *our Saviour's being lifted up upon*
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the Cross, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish; His bearing our sins in His own Body; His dying for us, that through His Blood we might be delivered from the vengeance of God; and after that, of His going up to Heaven, with His own Blood, to appear in the presence of God for us: When, I say, we see such a resemblance as this, is it not reasonable to think, that these Institutions under the Law, might be design'd, as Types of those several things, that are so manifestly represented by them in the Gospel?

And so, Secondly, When we read in this History, of *Jesus Christ*, that *He was born of a Virgin*, and are from thence sure, that God always intended, and decreed it should be so; When we find the Promise of *Isaiab*, quoted by the Evangelist, as fulfilled in Him, where 'tis said, *A Virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name Emmanuel*, is it not

reasonable to conceive, that this Prophecy might relate to him, and be spoken of Him, though the Prophet himself might not probably know it? especially when the Characters there mentioned of the Person to be born could belong to no other Person but Him, being described not only by such illustrious titles, as *Emmanuel, Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Father of the age, the Prince of Peace*, but also as one, *who should sit on the throne of David for ever*, which is an apparent character of that King, who was to come of *the Root of Jesse*, whom we have already shewn to be the *Messiah*.

And therefore, though we could not so clearly make it out, as we think we are able to do, that this was a real Prophecy of Him, from the circumstances of the Place, and Story, yet when we know so little of the Prophe-tick language, and see the literal sense of that Prophecy agreeing exactly with
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the Event, and that too so strange an Event as this was, 'tis not unreasonable to think, that this Expression of the Prophet is not barely applied to Christ by way of accommodation only, but as it was originally spoken of Him.

And so again, Thirdly, When we read the History of our Saviour's Death, and the several Circumstances of it, That *He was mocked, and laughed to scorn, that they pierced His hands, and His feet, and stood staring, and looking upon Him; that they parted His garments, and cast lots for them, and when He was upon the Cross, cried out with scorn, He trusted in God, let Him deliver Him; and at last, before His giving up the Ghost, that He Himself cried out, with a loud voice, saying, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!*

And when, after this, we read in the *xxiid Psalm*, the very same things spoken of there, though they seem to be spoken by *David* of Himself, yet,

as they do not appear to have been fulfilled in Him, and therefore cannot properly belong to Him ; so considering *David* as a Prophet, it is not unreasonable to think he might have spoken them with a Prophetick view of some other Person, and since they all concur in *Jesus Christ*, and are actually fulfilled in Him, it is natural to conceive they were spoken of Him.

Thus we may conclude of a vast multitude of Texts, which will open a great part of the Scripture to us ;

But such Interpretations, however reasonable, are of use only to ourselves : They may inlarge our own Ideas, and strengthen our Faith, but no argument can be drawn from them for the conviction of others.

The Prophecies therefore that I have here made use of, have not been of this nature ; but such only as are plain and intelligible to every impartial reader ; and I think there is nothing wanting, beyond what I have urg'd, to
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shew that they agree in *Jesus Christ* ; which was the thing to be demonstrated.

The CONCLUSION.

Thus have I finish'd what I first propos'd, which was, To shew the Truth of the Christian Religion from the relation that it bears to the History of the Old Testament, the Credibility of which, I was to shew from the consistency of the several parts of it, with the natures, and reasons of things.

And for this purpose, as I have examin'd it Step by Step, and consider'd what the design of it was, and demonstrated the necessity of various Prophecies, and Revelations, to support that design, which this History gives us a suitable account of ; So I have shewn likewise such a consistency between those Prophecies, and Revelations, and that design they were intended for, that they all appear to be but one continued thread, though de-

livered by different Persons, and several of them in different, and distant ages :

And as the whole History, both in the design, and the Prophecies of it, had a manifest relation to one Event, without the accomplishment of which it could neither be perfect nor true ; So I have shewn you, how every thing delivered in the Old Testament, had its full completion in the New.

The Relation between them is so manifest, and the Correspondence so exact, that the Whole is but one intire Scheme, like an Edifice, built by degrees :

The design of it was first drawn by God Himself, and the Foundation laid in a Covenant He made with our First Parents ; a Covenant of Reconciliation through the Promised Seed, in the Faith of whom they should be accepted by Him.

What was thus begun, and for some time continued immediately by God Himself, was afterwards carried on by
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the mediation of His Servants, the Prophets, and then finish'd by *Jesus Christ*, and His Apostles :

I have shewn you, how the Structure, as we have it now compleated, corresponds to the Design, and Foundation originally laid, in which there is such an intire Agreement, that the Old Testament, and the New are but the same thing :

The same Religion, the same Doctrine of Salvation is set forth in Both : Only in the former it is like a Man in His Infancy, and Childhood, and in the latter, as in his full age, and perfection :

So that if we believe the History of the Old Testament, the Christian must be the True Religion ; which was the thing to be demonstrated.

And thus have I finish'd my argument ; but before I put an End to this discourse, I have one thing more to observe to you, and it is this : That in all this long train of Reasoning, as
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I have considered the Scripture only as a History, and the Prophecies only as Facts, which are parts of it, so I have deduced the Truth of the Christian Religion only, from its consistency with, and its necessary relation to those Facts :

I have taken no notice of the Evidence of Prophecy in itself, as it is in its own nature a Divine Revelation, and by consequence, whatever is so Revealed by the Prophets must be true, as having a Divine Testimony to it :

And yet we see Christianity is the result of many Prophecies, and that not barely as a thing that should come to pass, but as a design laid and carried on by God Himself, and which He intended should come to pass, and therefore must be a Divine Revelation.

And if to this we add, That Christianity is not only a design carried on by God Himself, in a Series of Prophecies

phesies evidently fulfilled in Christ, but that the Ideas delivered in those Prophecies concerning Him, are such as could not be fulfilled, without the concurrence of a Divine Power, such as His doing Miracles, His Resurrection, Ascension, and Mission of the Holy Spirit; these things carry a double Testimony along with them, not only as a Completion of former Prophecies, but such a Completion, as must have been effected by God :

And by consequence, that Christianity was not only a design laid, and carried on by God Himself, but was actually finish'd by His own Hand, and was, from first to last, His own Work.

And now what is the proper Inference from hence, but that as we have such evident proof for our Religion, we should *take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of Unbelief?* But, on the contrary, that we thankfully rejoice in the Happiness we enjoy
above



