

A
DEFENCE
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT,

IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS,

ADDRESSED

TO THOMAS PAINE,

Author of a Book entitled, *The Age of Reason*, Part the
Second, being an Investigation of True and of
Fabulous Theology.

BY DAVID LEVI,

Author of Letters to Dr. Priestley, in Answer to
his to the Jews, &c. &c. &c.

The fool hath said in his heart, *there is no God.*

Psalm xiv. 1.

The wicked worketh a deceitful work.

Prov. xi. 18.

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1797.

THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

AND OF THE
THEIR PROCEEDINGS

FROM THE YEAR 1660 TO 1703
IN TWO VOLUMES
BY JOHN WALLIS
M.A. F.R.S.
OF THE SOCIETY
AND OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
LONDON
Printed by J. Streater, at the Sign of the Gun, in St. Dunstons Church-yard, near St. Pauls Church
1705

1705

INTRODUCTORY LETTER.

SIR,

IT is some months since I read your Book entitled “The Age of Reason, part second, being an investigation of true and fabulous Theology :” and do not scruple to pronounce it one of the most violent and systematic attacks on the word of God, that ever was made ; not on account of the novelty of the objections contained therein, for in truth there is no novelty in them, but from the acrimony and abuse ; the illiberal satire, pretended ridicule, and impertinent witticism, so liberally scattered throughout the performance ; and which, coming from the pen of a man that has acted so distinguished a part on the theatre of the political world ; and whose writings have been read with avidity in almost all parts of Europe, may perhaps, be of fatal

consequence to the faith of many : I, therefore, was determined to endeavour to apply an antidote to the venom of your poison of infidelity ; (as far as my poor abilities would allow) but being then engaged in translating the Prayers of our nation, from Hebrew into English, and arranging the copy for the second volume of my Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament, I was obliged to postpone it till the present : at the same time hoping that some one, far more capable, would have undertaken the laudable task, and thus have rendered my interference unnecessary. But, although several answers have been written, by men of great abilities, yet, I humbly presume to think, that there is still much to be said on the subject : especially as you seem to treat Christian priests and preachers with such contempt, that it is to be supposed you pay but little attention to their arguments, as you think*, “ that they only waste their time, and heat themselves in frac-

* P. 2d. p. 2.

tious disputes about doctrinal points drawn from the Bible." You are also pleased, in a self conceited important tone, to tell them that their answers to the first part of your Age of Reason, is as "cobwebs brushed away by accident." It therefore is to be hoped that these letters, written by one that is neither a Christian priest, nor a preacher; and who consequently has no interest in preaching up tithes, as he is but a poor, simple *Levite*, without any living in the Jewish Church, may find grace in your sight, and not be considered as "cobwebs brushed away by accident;" and thus obtain a favourable reception, not in the vain hope of making you a profelyte to revelation, but only to shew you, that you are not possessed of a thorough knowledge of the subject of which you treat: it therefore, is no wonder, that you have blindly followed Morgan, Tindal, Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, Spinoza, &c. all of whom, have long since started one or other of the objections, that you have been collecting as it were

to a focus, in order to dazzle the eyes of the ignorant and unwary : the fallacy of some of them, I have already exposed ; * and with God's blessing, hope to shew the futility of all the others.

I know not your motive for thus attacking the word of God : nor will I be so uncharitable as to ascribe it to malevolence : I will not question your sincerity, though I cannot approve of your mode of attack ; it is not the manner of a sincere enquirer after truth ; but of one, who affects to be free from vulgar prejudice, and of being thought wiser than the rest of mankind : it is this, that has led many into infidelity. But, whether it is the love of truth, fame, ambition, or malevolence, that has induced you to take this step, I will candidly consider your arguments, and reason freely with you

* See *Lingua Sacra*, Radix דָּרְוָה where I have clearly shewn the falsity of the charge brought by Voltaire, Tindal and Morgan, against the law of God : viz. that the Jews were therein commanded to sacrifice human creatures. See also my *Dissertations on the prophecies*, Vol. II. p. 314. concerning Jews being *cannibals* and *man-eaters*.

(7)

on the subject, without the least asperity;
and although I cannot flatter myself with
the hopes of convincing you of the truth
of Revelation; yet, if I should be so
happy, as to save but one soul from im-
bibing the poison of your pernicious tenets,
I shall think my labour well rewarded.

I am, Sir,

Your most Obedient,

Humble Servant,

D. LEVI.

Mile End New Town.

August 30, 1796.

LETTER I.

SIR,

IT is not my intention in these Letters to follow you step by step through all your turnings and windings, as that would answer no other end but to bewilder the Reader; as seems to have been your intention: it will be sufficient for our purpose, if we can prove the absurdity and falsity of your position, in the plainest manner possible: I shall, therefore, consider your objections against the Old Testament, in the following order: First, as to Moses being the Author of the books ascribed to him. Second, as to the doctrines contained in those books. After which I shall proceed to consider your objections to the prophets, the prophetic books, as also the others contained in the Old Testament.

You observe, (p. 5.) “My intention is to shew that those books (the five books of Moses) are spurious, and that Moses is

not the author of them : and still further, that they were not written in the time of Moses, nor till several hundred years afterwards," &c. The proofs you adduce, are, first, that * "the whole of these books is in the third person ; it is always the *Lord said unto Moses, or Moses said unto the Lord, &c.* and this," you observe, "is the style and manner that historians use, in speaking of the persons whose lives and actions they are writing." Thus you argue, to prove that Moses did not write the Pentateuch : though, as if sensible of the weakness of your argument, you seem to abandon it immediately after, by allowing that, according to grammatical right, a man may speak of himself in that manner†. But, if you had the least knowledge of the language in which Moses wrote, its genius, idiom and phraseology, so different from all others, you would certainly not have trifled thus with your readers : for allowing your objection all

* Page 6.

† This we know without your concession : for *Cæsar, Xenophen, and Josephus* writing of themselves, wrote in the third person.

its force, it does not prove that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch; nay, it in some measure proves that he was the author: this will clearly be perceived, when we consider the different parts of the Pentateuch; and arrange them under their proper heads, viz. *Historical* and *Preceptical*. Now, as some parts are purely historical, it was proper that he should write in the style that historians generally write in. For in the name of goodness, let me ask, in what other style ought Moses to have written when he wrote the historical part of the Pentateuch? The whole book of Genesis is historical, and the facts related therein, are prior to the birth of Moses: he must therefore have received an account of them; and this account, he received from God; he therefore, very properly, wrote as one that is dictated to by another. And this, he expressly informs us of himself, Numb. xxxiii. 2. “*And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journies, according to the word* of the Lord.*”

* Heb. Mouth.

Hence the propriety of Moses writing in the third person, as an historian, is manifest; and which, if duly considered, will presently shew the futility of your reasoning on the subject; for as Moses wrote what God dictated to him, your objection to the historical and chronological evidence, instantly falls to the ground: for as God is Omniscient; with him there can be no futurity; he could therefore, as easily instruct Moses to write what was to happen in five or six hundred years, as he was able to acquaint him with what happened at the creation, or on the very day that Moses wrote. Hence also, it is manifest that, your objection against the expression of Moses, (Gen. chap. xiv. ver. 14.) of Abraham's pursuing the enemy to Dan; "that there was no such place as Dan till many years after the death of Moses; and consequently that Moses could not be the writer of the book of Genesis, where this account of pursuing them unto *Dan* is given."* is of no force to invalidate the historical and chronological evidence of

* p. 10—11.

the books ascribed to Moses, as the author of them; because, he did not pretend to write those things of his own knowledge, but only as they were dictated to him by the Almighty, to whom all events are known.

As the same argument equally applies to what you advance concerning the kings of Edom that reigned before any king reigned in Israel: of the manna which the children of Israel eat till they came to the borders Canaan; and concerning the bed of Og, &c. it would be only wasting of time to shew the fallacy of them; as it must be visible to the meanest capacity. I shall however, take notice of what you advance concerning the flimsy pretence of prophecy, as you are pleased to call it.

You say,* “the two instances I have given would be sufficient, without any additional evidence, to invalidate the authenticity of any book that pretended to be four or five hundred years more ancient than the matters it speaks of, or refers to,

* p. 16.

as facts ; for in the case of *pursuing them unto Dan*, and of the *kings that reigned over the children of Israel*, not even the flimsy pretence of prophecy can be pleaded. The expressions are in the preter tense, and it would be downright idiotism to say that a man could prophesy in the preter tense." Here sir, we have a specimen of your profound criticism, and the great knowledge you have of prophetic writing : What ! attempt to criticise on the Bible, and not know that prophecies are sometimes delivered in the preter tense ! Do you not know, (and if you do not, it is civility to inform you) that the delivery of prophecy in the preter tense is often made use of, and which is to shew the truth of it ; as if it were already come to pass ? This is well known to all those that are in the least acquainted with the prophetic writings ; numerous instances of which might be adduced, if it was necessary.

It must also be considered that Moses was not prophesying then ; but writing of history, under the guidance of the

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supreme being? he therefore related things as if they were actually come to pass, being directed by God so to do: and which accounts for all your objections to the historical and chronological evidence of the books ascribed to Moses.

That Moses wrote those books by divine inspiration, is manifest from the exact accomplishment of every event foretold by him. Of this, I shall produce such clear and unequivocal proofs, as to strike the Deist and infidel dumb.

That which I shall principally insist upon, is the dreadful denunciations of Moses relating to our dispersion, wherein he tells us, (Levit. xxvi. 33. and Deut. xxviii. 64.) that we shall be scattered over the face of the whole earth, among all nations: but what is most wonderful, he tells us, that we shall nevertheless remain a SEPARATE people, capable of being gathered together in the latter days. This he assures us of in the following words. *“ And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break*

*my covenant with them : for I am the Lord their God**. This fir, is corroborated by the other prophéts, (whom you have also been pleased to treat with such contempt) for Jeremiah observes (chap. xxx. 11.) “ For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee : though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have dispersed thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure ; and will not altogether consume thee.” And Amos (chap. ix. 8.) says, “ Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom ; and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth ; yet will I not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations ; as (one that) sifteth (corn) with a sieve : and a grain shall not fall upon the ground.” That is, the collective body of the nation shall not be destroyed ; as I shall shew at large in the

* Levit. xxxvi. 44.

† See also chap. xlvi. 28.

explanation of that prophecy, in my dissertations on the prophecies of the Old Testament: the second volume of which, is just published.

Hence it is manifest, that although Moses and the other prophets, assure us that, the nation should be scattered among all nations, and sorely afflicted; yet should they not be utterly destroyed, as was the case of other nations, as we see it fully verified at this day. And now, sir, give me leave to ask you, how it was possible for Moses, without being divinely inspired, to foresee that, the dreadful punishments which he had denounced against them, should be so fully accomplished, as they are allowed on all hands to be; because, a number of accidents might have arisen, to prevent their completion, which no human foresight could have foreseen? As for instance, the greatest part of our sufferings have arisen from the persecutions which we have suffered from Christians, on account of the difference of religion, and the charge brought against us, of crucifying the Lord of life, and Saviour of the

world. Now, if this had not taken place, it is most probable, that we should not have suffered such cruel and dreadful persecutions, &c. as we have experienced for so many hundred years.

Again; how could he foresee, but that the nation, after its being driven out of its own country, scattered in all parts, and suffering such misery, might not thereby be induced entirely to abandon Judaism; and so fall in with the religion of the different countries, where they were dispersed: and thus become incorporated with them, and entirely swallowed up among them; as has been the case of the greatest monarchies. Indeed; nothing could, or would be more probable: for as to what some Deists (who when driven from one entrenchment, retire into another, and from that into a third; and all along behave like an adversary who fights, not with the hopes of success, but for the vain glory of not yielding till he can hold out no longer) pretend, that the law he gave them, which contained the prohibition of meats, intermarriages with other

nations, &c. is the sole cause of it, is puerile, and carries its own confutation with it. Because, as I have observed, how was he sure, that as well as they fell into idolatry, and other enormous crimes, they would not violate those prohibitory precepts, whose transgression was so much less heinous; and thus be mingled among the nations: for surely, nothing else could in all human probability be expected; considering what they have suffered during this long and dreadful captivity; for I am free to assert, no nation ever suffered the like, during a space of almost eighteen hundred years. But Moses, contrary to all human foresight, informs us, that notwithstanding the severe, and almost unparalleled chastisements that they should experience, yet, should they still be preserved a distinct nation. How exactly all this hath been fulfilled to this very day, need not be insisted upon; as it is visible to every eye, and manifest to the meanest capacity; although a period of upwards of three thousand years hath elapsed since the delivery of this prophecy. I therefore would fain ask you, or any other

Deist, Whether it was possible that Moses, or any other person could foresee such a wonderful event, by any human means whatever; or how you, or they, can account for it, on any other scheme, than that of divine prescience?

If we enter into particulars, we shall find, that all the punishments which he denounced against them, have been so exactly fulfilled in every particular, that it is no wonder, if infidels were to have recourse to the old hackneyed objections, that the facts were prior to the predictions, and that the prophecies were written after the histories. If, therefore, the accomplishment of the preceding prophecy, which may properly be called, a standing miracle, even to this very day, the like of which hath never been seen or heard of in the world, should not be able to convince you or other unbelievers, how can we expect that any other argument should, how strong soever? But, as I would not by any means, omit adducing any argument that may serve to illustrate the subject, or tend to carry conviction home to the doubting and wavering mind,

I shall just take a brief view of the accomplishment of some of the most remarkable of these denunciations.

He tells them, that numbers of them shall be destroyed. “And ye shall be left few* in number,” &c. This, not to mention the other slaughters and massacres which they have suffered, was fully verified in the last siege of Jerusalem, when invested by Titus; when, as Josephus says,† an infinite multitude perished by famine: for he computes that, during the whole siege, the number of those that were destroyed by that and the sword, amounted to eleven hundred thousand, as the people were assembled from all parts to celebrate the passover; and Basnage gives us an account of one million, three hundred and thirty nine thousand, six hundred and ninety persons, that were destroyed in Jerusalem, and other parts of Judea, exclusive of ninety nine thousand two hundred, taken prisoners, as he has collected from the accounts of Josephus‡.

* Deut. xxviii. 62.

† Bell. Juda. Lib. VI. Cap. 3. Sect. 3.

‡ History of the Jews, Book I, Chap. viii. Sect. 19. p. 8. Note.

Indeed, there is not a nation upon earth, that hath suffered such a number of massacres and persecutions: their history abounds with little else; and if God had not promised them his particular protection, the whole race, would long ere this have been extirpated; for as Basnage observes,* “Here is also another circumstance, that heightens this prodigy. This forlorn and persecuted nation can scarce find one place in the universe to rest their heads, or to set their feet in. They have waded through floods of their own blood, and are as yet preserved. That infinite number of *Jews*, which we shall see hereafter murdered through a cruel and barbarous zeal, weakened, but did not destroy that nation. For notwithstanding the joint persecutions of Christians and Idolators, who designed their ruin, they are still in being.”

He also told them, “And ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it.”† This is most

* Ibid. Chap. I. page 2.

† Deut. xxviii. 63.

singular, and really worthy of observation, that even before they had entered the land to take possession of it, he assures them, that if they disobeyed the Lord's commandments, they should be plucked off from it. Now, I defy you, or any one else, to produce any instance of a legislator ever staking his reputation thus; and the exact manner it hath been fulfilled, is clear from their history; for they were indeed plucked off from their own land, when the ten tribes were carried away captive by the king of Assyria; and of whom we know nothing certain to this hour; and when the other two tribes were carried captive to Babylon: but more especially, when their city and temple were destroyed, and the nation carried captive by the Romans.

From that time to this, their country hath been in the possession of foreign lords and masters, few Jews living in it; and those of a low and poor condition. A celebrated Jew of the twelfth century,* who travelled into all parts to visit his bre-

* Benjamin of Tudela in Spain.

thren, and inform himself of the exact state of their affairs, acquaints us that Jerusalem was almost entirely abandoned by the Jews; for he did not find there, above two hundred persons,* who were mostly dyers of wool; the monopoly of which trade they purchased every year. They all lived together under David's tower, and made very little figure. In other parts, he found one or two in a city, in another twenty, in others more; and in many none at all. An accurate and faithful English traveller,† who had been in the holy land says, that, "It is for the most part, now inherited by Moors and Arabians; those possessing the valleys, and these the mountains. Turks there be few: but many Greeks with other christians of all sects and nations, such as impute to the place an adherent holiness. Here be also some Jews, yet inherit they no part of the land, but in their own country do live as aliens."

He also informs them, that they should be scattered among all nations; "And

* Benjamin Itiner, p. 41.

† Sandy's travels, Book III. page 114.

thou shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth*." Again, "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all the people, † from one end of the earth even unto the other." ‡ This indeed, hath been most amply fulfilled since the great dispersion of the Jews by the Romans. For what people have been scattered so far and wide as they? and where is the nation that is a stranger to them, or to which they are strangers? They swarm in many parts of the east, are spread through most of the countries of Europe and Africa, are pretty numerous in the West Indies, and there are several families of them in America. They circulate, as a Christian author says, (Bishop Newton) through all parts where trade and money circulate; and are, as I may say, the brokers of the whole world.

But though they were to be thus dispersed; yet he assured them that, they should not be totally destroyed, (as already mentioned) "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies," &c §. On this, an author of great

* Deut. xxviii. 25. † Heb. Peoples.

‡ Ibid. 64. § Levit. xxvi. 44.

note,* observes, and what a marvellous thing is it, that after so many wars, battles and sieges; after so many fires, famines and pestilences; after so many rebellions, massacres and persecutions; after so many years of captivity, slavery and misery, they are not *destroyed utterly*, and though scattered among all people, yet subsist as a distinct people by themselves: where is there any thing comparable to this to be found in all the histories, and in all the nations under the sun?"

But though they should not be utterly destroyed, yet should they suffer much, and not have rest long in any place. "And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest†," This hath indeed been fully verified, for they have been so far from finding rest, that they have been banished from place to place, from country to country. In many places, they have been banished, and recalled, and banished again. I shall just take notice of some of their great banishments in

* Basnage.

† Deut. xxviii. 65.

modern times, from countries well known. About the latter end of the thirteenth* century, they were banished from England by Edward I.† and were not permitted to return and settle there again, till Cromwell's time, or rather under Charles the second. In the latter end of the fifteenth century, as Mariana observes,‡ they were banished from Spain, by Ferdinand and Isabella: and according to his account, there were seventy thousand families, or eight hundred thousand persons, that left Spain upon the execution of this edict. Some§ reckon an hundred and twenty thousand families. They were indeed received in Portugal by John II. but he made them pay a dear price for a refuge; and a few years after they were banished by his successor Emanuel; who violated his faith with them, “By depriving them of their liberty to carry away their children under fourteen years of age, which reduced them to that despair, that some of them killed themselves, and others fa-

* Basnage, Book VII. Chap. xix. Sect. 20, &c.
 † Some say it was Henry III. ‡ Basnage, B. VII. Chap. xxi. § Abarbanal. Cordoso las Excellen. &c.

crificing nature to their religion, turned executioners to their own bowels.”* This leads us to what Moses says, concerning their children, “Thy sons and thy daughters *shall be* given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail *with longing* for them all the day along: and *there shall be* no might in thine hand.”† How exactly hath all this been fulfilled in several countries; but especially in Spain and Portugal, where they formerly were so numerous; and where their children were taken from them by order of the government, to be educated in the Popish religion; as mentioned in the first prophecy of Moses, in my Dissertations on the prophecies, Vol. I. page 32. And Basnage‡ observes, that the fourth council of Toledo, ordered that all their children should be forced from them, for fear they should partake of their errors; and that they should be shut up in monasteries, to be instructed in the Christian truths. He adds, “We shall see in the

* Basn. Book VII. Chap. xxi. Sect. 25.

† Deut. xxviii. 32.

‡ Hist. of the Jews, B. VII. Chap. xiii. Sec. 14.

sequel the lamentable effects of these rapes." And it has been shewn, under the preceding head, that when they were banished from Portugal, all their children under fourteen years of age, were taken from them, and baptized. A practice not at all justifiable adds the historian.*

He also tells them, that they shall be oppressed and spoiled continually. "And thou shalt be only oppressed, and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee,"† &c. Now it is well known what frequent seizures have been made of their effects, in almost all countries, either to supply the necessities of the state, or the luxury of the prince: How often have they been fined and fleeced by almost all governments? How often have they been forced to redeem their lives by sums extorted from them? The instances are innumerable. I shall just mention what an English historian‡ says, that Henry III. "Always polled the Jews at every low ebb of his fortunes. One Abraham, who was found delinquent, was forced to pay seven

* Mariana, Book XXVI. Chap. vi. † Deut. xxviii. 29. ‡ Kennet. Vol. I. page 179.

hundred marks for his redemption. Aaron, another Jew, protested that the king had taken from him at times, thirty thousand marks of silver, besides two hundred marks of gold, which he had presented to the queen."

And in the year 1240, when the king attempted to fleece them to the utmost, a most respectable author observes,* that he "commanded *all* the Jews of both sexes throughout *England*, to be imprisoned, till they would make a discovery of their wealth: which he appointed officers to receive in every county, and return to his *exchequer*. Many of them, no doubt, pleaded poverty, or pretended to have given up all: but as the *tyrant* was in earnest to have their last farthing, he extorted it by the most cruel torments."

Stow says, that the generality of them had one eye put out. And Matthew Paris† tells us, that from one particular *Jew* at *Bristol*, the king demanded no less than ten thousand marks of silver, (a prodigi-

* See *Anglia Judaica*. p. 70.

† *Matth. Paris* and *Stow*, anno 1210.

ous sum in those days!) which being resolutely denied him, he commanded one of his great teeth to be pulled out daily, till he consented. The poor man had the courage to hold out seven operations, but then, sinking under the pain, ransomed the remainder of his teeth, at the price demanded. And when they were banished in the reign of Edward I. their estates, &c. were confiscated, which brought immense sums to the crown. Thus have they been served, almost every where; a plain demonstration of the full accomplishment of this prediction.

In verse 34 he says, "Thou shalt be mad, for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see." And have we not seen into what madness and desperation they have been driven by the oppressions, extortions, and cruel usage they have experienced? Have they not in mere fury and desperation destroyed themselves, their wives and children? Josephus* mentions, that after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, some of the Jews took refuge in the castle of Masada, where being closely

* Joseph. De Bell. Jud. Lib. VII. Cap. viii et ix.

besieged by the Romans, they, by the persuasion of their leader, Eleazer, first murdered their wives and children; after which, they chose ten men by lot to slay the rest; when this was done, they chose one of the ten to kill the other nine in like manner; which having performed, he set fire to the place, and then stabbed himself. There were nine hundred and sixty, who perished in this miserable manner. Instances of the like behaviour hath often occurred since; I shall only take notice of one mentioned in English history. When in the reign of Richard I. the people rose in arms to make a general massacre of them, fifteen hundred of them retired into York castle,* where being closely besieged, they offered to capitulate, and to ransom their lives with money. The offer being refused, one of them cried in despair, *That it was better to die courageously for the Law, than to fall into the hands of the Christians.* Every

* Basnage, Book VII. Chap. x. Sect. 20. page 638: who for his authority quotes Matth. Paris, p. 111, and Polyd. Virgil. L. 14. p. 248. See also Anglia Judaica, p. 25.

one immediately took his knife, and stabbed his wife and children. The men afterwards retired into the king's palace, and set it on fire, in which they consumed themselves with the palace and furniture.

He tells them, that in this dreadful captivity, they shall serve other gods.—“And thou shalt serve other gods, wood and stone.”* Again, “And there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known,”† &c. This hath been exactly fulfilled during this woful captivity, when the Jews in Spain, and other countries were obliged to comply with the idolatrous worship of the church of Rome, &c. and to bow down to stocks and stones, rather than to have their effects seized and confiscated, or their persons murdered by the inquisition, &c. which has caused such a number to apostatize †, &c.

In verse 37, he tells them, “And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations whither

* Deut. xxviii. 36.

† Ibid. 64.

‡ See Levi's Dissertations on the prophecies, Vol. I. p. 18, Note 2d.

the Lord shall lead thee." Hath not this been fulfilled, and as we may say, is fulfilling every day? Is not the pretended avarice, usury, and hard heartedness of a Jew become proverbial? Is it not said, that their very countenances commonly distinguish them from the rest of mankind? And has not a great master of nature, drawn the portrait of a Jew, in a most detestable character, in his Jew of Venice? Do not Heathens, Christians and Mahometans, however they may differ in other points, yet agree in abusing, vilifying and persecuting the Jews? And has not a Christian writer† of our time, vilified them in a most unwarrantable manner; although it is well known, that there is not a people on earth, more friendly and favorable to good order and good government, or more obedient to their rulers, than they are? Yet, are they treated in all respects, as if they were of another species.

He also tells them, that, "The Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues,

* The right honorable Edmund Burke.

and of long continuance*," &c. And have not their calamities been of long continuance? Have they not continued upwards of seventeen hundred years? Their former captivities were very short in comparison of this: besides the time of their redemption was well known and ascertained: and during the Babylonish captivity, they had prophets† among them, who exhorted and comforted them; but during this long and dreadful captivity, there is not one true prophet among them, to inform them of the end of their calamities; as the psalmist says, "We see not our signs, (there is) no more any prophet, neither (is there) among us any that knoweth how long‡." In their former captivities, they had the consolation of being together in one place: in Egypt, they dwelt together in the land of Goshen; and they were all carried together to Babylon; but at present they are scattered all over the face of the earth. What nation hath ever suffered so much, and yet continued so long? What nation hath sub-

* Deut. xxviii. 59. † Ezekiel and Daniel.

‡ Psalm lxxiv. 9.

sisted as a distinct people even in their own country, so long as these have done, tho' dispersed in all countries, without having any place they can call their own? And what a standing miracle is this, thus exhibited to the view and observation of the whole world?

Lastly, he tells them that they shall be carried into Egypt again, and exposed to sale as slaves, but there would be none to purchase them. "And the LORD shall bring thee into Egypt again*, in ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee, thou shalt see it no more again: and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bond-men and bond-women, and no man shall buy you." This, is a striking contrast to what happened to them when Moses brought them out from Egypt; for then, they came out in a triumphant manner, as mentioned Exod. xiv. 8. "And the children of Israel went out with an high hand." But now, he says, they shall return thither as slaves. This was fully accomplished; for it appears from Josephus,† that in the reign of the two first

* Ver. 68. † Jos. Ant. Lib. XII. Cap. 1. et 2,

Ptolemies, a number of Jews were slaves in Egypt. And when Jerusalem was taken by Titus,* he sent many of them captives, who were above seventeen years of age, bound to the works in Egypt: those under seventeen, were sold; but so little care was taken of these captives, that eleven thousand of them perished for want. The markets were so overstocked with them, that as Josephus says elsewhere, they were sold with their wives and children at the lowest price. And after their last overthrow by Adrian, many thousands of them were sold; and those that could not be sold were transported into Egypt, and perished by shipwreck or famine, or were massacred by the inhabitants. All which is a manifest proof of the accomplishment of this remarkable denunciation, in every particular.

These fir, are manifest proofs of prophecies: of prophecies delivered above three thousand years ago: and which we nevertheless plainly see fulfilling in the world at this very time: and what stronger proof can we have, or desire, of the

* Bell. Jud. Lib. VI. Cap. viii. Sect. 2. p. 1288.

divine legation of Moses? For what legislator durst ever attempt to stake his credit thus, by denouncing such severe denunciations against a nation for disobedience of religious ceremonies only: for as to what deists assert, that any wise and intelligent lawgiver might easily foresee that, the observance of the judicious laws instituted by him, would tend to make a nation flourish, and that the rejection of them would lead to their ruin, is futile: because such foresight could at any rate only comprehend political institutions; and therefore, the non observance of such might end in the loss of their liberty, or the subversion of their government: and which might easily be foreseen. But even this, was not always the consequence: for although we find, that the Lacedaemonians did not make so great a figure, after they had fallen from the observation of the rules which Lycurgus (whose sole aim was to train them to war) had enjoined them; because they could not then make war against, conquer, and command all those round them; yet we find, that

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the Romans, on the contrary, advanced their state to the highest pitch of glory. after they had changed the constitution from what it was in Numa's days; whose only concern was, that Rome should continue in peace and amity. Whence it is manifest, that Moses, could never have foreseen by any human sagacity, the calamities which have befallen them, as the consequence of the transgression of laws purely religious: as it is impossible, according to the laws of nature, that a nation, as a collective body, and state of government, should be happy or miserable, merely for the sake of religious institutions, whose object was not peace or war: and yet, we see with what exactness these *particular* predictions have been fulfilled. Can we then in reason any longer doubt the divine mission of Moses? I really know not, how these instances may affect you, or any other unbelievers, but for my own part, I must freely acknowledge, that they not only convince, but astonish and amaze me, beyond utterance. They are indeed, what Moses predicted they should be,

a sign and a wonder for ever, as he says, in chap. xxviii. 45-46. “ Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments, and his statutes which he commanded thee. And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.” For they are a sign of their rebellion against God, and a wonder of their preservation, amidst all those dreadful calamities which they have suffered for so many hundred years.

I shall now proceed to take notice of the character of Moses, as stated in the Bible, to see if it is as you say,* “ *the most horrid that can be imagined,*” I am confident, it will appear to be the very reverse of what you have asserted it to be. The evidence that I shall produce will be such as you can have no objection to, as it is the same that you make use of yourself; † I mean *the books themselves.* So far we are agreed. Now for the proof.

* P. 6.

† P. 5.

According to the account we have in these books of the first calling of Moses to his mission, it does not appear that he was *a vain and arrogant coxcomb*; but on the contrary, it shews him to be a meek and humble person; one that was fully sensible of the importance of the business he was to engage in; and, therefore, he says to God*, “Who (am) I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel from Egypt? In this humble state of mind he continued, till the Lord was angry† with him; and commanded him to go. When he came to Pharaoh, he did not behave like an arrogant coxcomb‡, but with a becoming dignity, unappalled at the presence of the Egyptian king, in all his pomp and pride, he acted like the messenger of the greatest king, who he was confident was able to protect him; and of whose omnipotent power, he constantly endeavoured to make them sensible: for which reason, he always warned them of the day that the plague was to commence, and also granted their re-

* Exod. iii. 11.

† Exod. iv. 14.

‡ Exod. v. 1. &c.

quest to remove it; and that, at their own appointed time: as he himself says*, “According to thy word: that thou mayest know that (there is) none like unto the LORD our God.” Thus did he endeavour to make Pharaoh sensible with whom he was contending; and that he ought, therefore, to submit to him, and to save himself and his people from the destruction that would certainly attend his disobedience. This, Sir, is not the behaviour of *an arrogant coxcomb*, nor yet that of *a detestable † villain*; but on the contrary, that of a pious, virtuous person, who tried every means in his power to avert the dreadful judgment that hung over Pharaoh and his people for their wickedness.

When he brought the nation forth from Egypt, with what gentleness did he lead them! even “as a nursing father, beareth the sucking ‡ child.” With what patience did he bear their frequent reproaches and murmurings. But when they were in danger of being destroyed,

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* Exod. viii. 6. &c. † Page 15.

‡ Numb. xi. 12.

what public spirit, what love did he shew for his people*! How often did he earnestly supplicate the supreme being in their behalf, to save them from the punishment they had so justly merited for their sins. And when he was fully assured of his death,† his only concern was for them; earnestly requesting God to appoint one to govern them, “that the congregation of the LORD, might not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” And now, give me leave to ask you, whether this action shews him to be an impostor? for had he aspired to the regal power, no man ever had a better opportunity of accomplishing it. But he never thought of it: all his actions shew that he acted under the immediate authority of God. He, therefore, saw, without murmuring, his brother and his brother’s children raised to the sacerdotal office. And what adds to the lustre of the action, he himself puts them in possession of this dignity, whilst he leaves his own children mixed in the crowd of

* See Exod. xxxii. 32.

† Numb. xxvii. 13. &c.

Levites, without hopes of ever rising to any higher preferment: for by the constitution of the priesthood, they were barred from ever having any share in the honour, power, or wealth of the priests, and rendered totally incapable of ever enjoying the authority and dignity of the high priest's office. These, Sir, are some of the actions of Moses; and they are such as shew him to have been a person of eminent virtue and piety. And, as he was virtuous and pious himself, so he endeavoured to form a virtuous people, who, by a faithful service paid to the one true God, should give an example to all the nations of the earth, of a pure and reasonable worship. This Sir, was the sole end of the legislation of Moses, so much superior to all other forms of government; for as the illustrious author of the Spirit of Laws, says, "Besides the common object which all governments have of supporting themselves, each of them has besides a peculiar one." Thus Sparta formed soldiers, Rome conquerors, and Carthage merchants and navigators; but this object of Moses, I am bold to af-

firm, was much more noble, and more worthy of a wise legislator, than any of those.

I must farther observe, that the most famous legislators made it a rule not to change any thing in the ancient superstitions, but to leave the people at full liberty to prostitute their adoration to inferior gods; to the stars, the elements, plants, reptiles, &c. While Moses considered it as a most important obligation, to instruct his nation in its duty towards the great Creator and governor of the world. To make them sensible of his power, goodness, justice and providence; and to teach them how to deserve an happy existence under his almighty protection, by an exact observance of his laws. Do you not think, Sir, that a conduct like this, deserves encomiums even in a philosophical light?

Moreover, what legislator ever spoke of the supreme being to his people, as Moses did to the Hebrews? he gives them the most sublime ideas of him, and shews them the most manifest proofs of his particular providence, &c. And

which leads me to take notice of an observation that I have made elsewhere*, in support of the truth of the divine dispensation of Moses.—It is as follows.—The modern philosophers, such as Voltaire, &c. take a pride in representing the Jews as an ignorant, stupid, and barbarous nation, compared with the more polished nations of antiquity. Let us now for a moment grant the truth of their assertion, it of course will follow that, from a people so ignorant, stupid, and unpolished, as they are represented to be, we naturally should not expect to find sentiments and doctrines, far superior to any thing of the kind that we find among the most improved nations.

Now, it is well known that the ancient nations the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Tyrians, &c. were the neighbours of the Jews, and completely surrounded them. These, were all sunk into the most gross and stupid idolatry: for they worshiped not only the sun, moon, and stars: which they sup-

* Dissertations on the prophecies of the Old Testament. Introd. to Vol. Ist. p. 44.

posed to be animated, and on whose influence they imagined their good and bad fortunes depended; but dead men, heroes, &c. Jupiter, Venus, Adonis, &c. as also animals, insects, and even onions. It therefore is requisite to enquire, how the Jews thus surrounded by these nations, became possessed of such just and sublime conceptions, with respect to the Deity; and the most exalted ideas of his pure UNITY, as inculcated in the writings of Moses; and where could they have learned such rational worship? A worship confined to one invisible, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent, being; the maker and governor of all things, visible and invisible, from whom the sun, moon, stars, and every thing else derived their existence, and in whose power it is to dispose of them as he pleases. It is clear they could not have learned it from these nations, nor any other; because their religion was so essentially different from that of any other nation in the ancient world: for they all, without exception, practised the most impure, as well as the most cruel rites in ho-

nour of their Gods; and their public festivals in general, were scenes of riot and debauchery.

Many of their ceremonies were most horribly barbarous. Their priests cut and mangled themselves, in a most horrid manner, and practised the most dreadful mortifications in the course of their worship. Innocent children were not spared by their parents, who madly devoted them to the most cruel death; that of burning them alive, either to appease the wrath, or secure the favour of their gods. A remarkable instance of which, we have in the life of Themistocles, the renowned Admiral of the Athenians, as related by Plutarch. "When Themistocles was about to sacrifice upon the Admiral galley, there were three very beautiful captives brought to him, well dressed and gloriously adorned with rich vests of gold, said to be the children of *Autarctus* and *Sandauce*, sister to *Xerxes*. As soon as the prophet *Euphrantides* saw them, and observed that at the same time the fire blazed out from the offerings, and cast forth a more than ordinary bright flame, and that one sneezed,

to the right, which portended a fortunate event; he took *Themistocles* by the hand; and ordered that the three children should be consecrated and purified for sacrifice, and offered up as a vow for victory to *Bacchus Omastès*, or *the Devourer*; for hereby the *Greeks* should not only save themselves, but also obtain victory.—*Themistocles* was startled at a prophecy that carried so much cruelty and inhumanity in it; but the populace, according to their manner in all pressing difficulties, trusting more to any absurd and extravagant methods of appeasing the Deity, than to such as are reasonable, with one voice invoked *Bacchus*, and bringing the captives to his altar compelled him to perform the sacrifice, as the prophet had commanded.”

They also practised many shocking indecencies, not proper to be recited; women, in other respects chaste, were taught that prostitution (in which the choice of a partner was not thought of, as being totally excluded) was a necessary mode of recommending themselves to the favor and protection of their deities. This be-

ing the case, of which, we have the most unexceptionable evidence of both Greeks and Romans: and as every *effect* must have an adequate *cause*, I wish that you, or any other of the modern philosophers, would be pleased to inform me, how you, or they, can account for the phenomena of a little *Jewish horde*, as Voltaire delights to call them, being thus possessed of the true knowledge of the one living and eternal God, his providence, &c. while the learned, polished, and civilized nations, were sunk in the most gross, barbarous, and stupid Idolatry, unless they had received the knowledge thereof by divine revelation. I shall farther shew from the whole tenor of the Mosaical dispensation, in particular from the precepts of the law &c. that these institutions could be none other than divine.

Of all vices (as one of my learned brethren says*,) the most hurtful to society, of all wrongs the most irreparable, of all

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* Jews Letters to Voltaire.

crimes the blackest, is certainly calumny :
for as a great poet says,*

“ No might nor greatness in mortality
Can censure 'scape : back-wounding calumny
The whitest virtue strikes. What king so strong
Can tie the gall up in the sland'rous tongue?”

And of this you have bestowed not a little on Moses; whom you describe as “ the wretch that first began and carried on wars on the score, or on the pretence of religion;” &c. And of which you say, you shall state but one instance: which is that of the Midianites. You say, † “ When the Jewish army returned from one of their plundering and murdering excursions, the account goes on as follows, Numbers, chap. xxxi. ver. 13. “ And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp; and Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came

* Shakspear's Measure for Measure, Act 3. Se. 2.

† p. 14.

‡ p. 14.

from the battle; and Moses said unto them, *Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now, therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known a man by lying with him; but all the women-children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.*"

This is the text: and on which you comment as follows.* "Among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man, it is impossible to find a greater than Moses, if this account be true. Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers, and debauch the daughters." Let us now fir, consider this heinous charge, which with all the abuse that you are master of, you have exhibited against Moses: in order to which, we must take

* p. 15.

notice of the cause of this war; and which we shall find to be not a “plundering and murdering excursion,” but undertaken at the express command of God, to avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, for what they had suffered through their seduction; and also for God’s vengeance against them, for the crime of idolatry which they had caused Israel to commit against him: for both these are mentioned in ver. 2 and 3. “Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites, &c.—And avenge the Lord of Midian.” For by the diabolical scheme of the Midianites prostituting their women, the children of Israel, were seduced to commit idolatry: for which crime, twenty four thousand of them were cut off. They therefore were commanded to make war upon them: and the astonishing success of the expedition, plainly shewed, that it was undertaken and conducted under the immediate government of God: for though the Jewish army consisted of but twelve thousand men, yet did they not lose one single man, in fighting against the host of Midian; and which made so great an impression on the

minds of the captains of the host, (of which you take no manner of notice, though if the one part be true, the other must be equally so) that they offered an oblation to the Lord, for his gracious interposition in their behalf.

When this army returned thus victorious, Moses and the princes of the congregation went out to meet it; and Moses observing the women captives was wroth with the officers; and in a tone of surprise, asked, "Have ye saved all the women alive?" For the officers of the army were fully convinced that, according to the rules of war, none were to be put to death, but those that opposed them; and therefore, women and children were excepted; as we find Moses himself had laid it down as rule for the nation, when making war against any other nations, than the Canaanites: Deut. xx. 10. "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against, &c.—And if it will make no peace with thee, &c.—Thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and

the cattle, &c. shalt thou take for a spoil to thyself." The officers therefore, slew all the males in Midian, and took the women, and the little ones captive. But Moses tells them, that here the case was far different; for, "Behold, *these* caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor," *These women* were the principal actors in this abominable and atrocious crime; for by their prostituting themselves, they seduced Israel, and drew them to the impure worship of their idol god Baal-peor; "and thus there was a plague among the congregation." It therefore, is but justice, that they should be punished in an exemplary manner; as also to prevent their ever again alluring the nation to the love of licentious pleasures, and the practice of idolatry. The young males were ordered to be put to death, (as Abarbanal observes) to prevent the mischief that might ensue from their being spared; by becoming as "pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides," either by attempting to avenge what they would esteem

their country's wrongs, or by leading the nation into idolatry. But the young maidens who had done no injury to the nation; and being as yet unpolluted with the abominable and atrocious crimes of their mothers, were not likely to injure them, were permitted to live, to be employed in domestic uses in their families, or given as wives to their men servants, as will be shewn hereafter. This is the real state of the matter. But, you, sir, without any regard to truth or decency, assert,* that "it appears from the 35th verse of this chapter, that the number of women-children consigned to debauchery by the order of Moses, was thirty-two thousand." But whence, sir, does this appear? is it to be found in the words of Moses? Certainly not. Prove it then, sir, it is incumbent on you to prove it. Prove this, I say, and I will never more defend Moses; but will acknowledge him to be that detestable villain and horrid monster that you pronounce him to be. Prove this, and I will then acknowledge the

* Page 15.

Old testament to be what you have called it, "a work of lies, blasphemy, and wickedness; a bad book; the worst of books;" any thing, whatever you please. Once more, I say, prove this, or I must tell you plainly (excuse my freedom) that you are not only a *base calumniator*, but the *basest of calumniators*, thus to misrepresent God's proceedings in such a barefaced manner; and which even your predecessor, Voltaire, and the other infidel critics, were not hardy enough to do: for they only objected to the great number of girls that could be found in a country of the extent that Midian was of. But not a word, did they presume to say, about the order of Moses for debauching the women children: No sir, they knew better; they knew that they could be easily detected in making such an assertion; for they knew that Moses was so far from ordering any such thing, that his laws did not even permit it: this is clear from Deut. xxi. 10—14. where it is ordered that a man shall not even *marry a captive*, without several previous formalities: and if he afterwards did not like

her, he was obliged to let her go free; and durst not by any means dispose of her, "because he had humbled her."* All which, shews the falsity of what you have advanced so injurious to the character of Moses; and which must now recoil on your own head.

* This is to be understood of the abasement which she had experienced, by being confined to severe trials, in the house of a stranger during a month; and then seeing herself cast off by him, at the very time she expected to become his wife. For it is the opinion of the Talmudists of Jerusalem, of Josephus, and of Philo, that the law did not allow the first familiarities of the soldier with his captive. He was obliged to marry her. See also Abarbanal on Deut. xxi. 10, &c. This is a manifest proof of the tenderness with which the laws of Moses treated prisoners of war: and I am confident that no one can produce any ancient nation, whose government ever treated them with the like tenderness and respect.

LETTER II.

SIR,

I Shall now proceed to take notice of your objections to the Books of Moses themselves; and shall shew, by their internal evidence, that they are justly entitled to the appellation of being the word of God.

To begin with the book of Genesis. You observe,* “Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange belief that it is the word of God has stood, and there remains nothing of Genesis, but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities, or of downright lies.” This, sir, is the polite language which you make use of, in speaking of the book of Genesis; a book that teaches us the origin of the world, the genealogies of our first parents, the settlements

* Page 14.

of ancient nations, and the rise of arts. Concerning these things, I am free to assert, that antiquity cannot supply us with more veritable and precious monuments than is contained in this, and the other books of Moses. For as the authors of the ancient universal history observe,* Moses is the only authentic writer of what happened before, and for several ages after the flood. He is by universal consent allowed to be the most ancient historian now extant: as it is certain, that his history was composed, not only before all the histories, but even before the fables of the Greeks. For there is nothing contained in them relating to the time before the deluge, that has any appearance of truth:† of this, every discerning mind will be fully convinced, on comparing the fabulous histories of Sanchoniatho, Manetho, Berofus,‡ Herodotus, and Diodorus Siculus, with that of Moses.

* Vol. Ist. Anci. Univ. Hist. preface, p. 13.

† Ibid page 27.

‡ See his fabulous account of the deluge, Univ. Hist. page 50, &c. As I have mentioned the deluge, I deem it necessary, for the information of those who wish to see the history of Moses strength-

His philosophy also, is not that barren and fruitless one, whose subtilty evaporates

ened by the testimony of those that are called profane writers, to observe that the deluge, or universal destruction by water, is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of the most ancient writers; as the authors of the Universal History observe, (Vol. I. p. 55.) "That there was such an universal destruction by water, is confirmed by the concurrent testimonies of several of the most ancient writers and nations in the world. What account the Chaldean records (meaning the history of Berosus) give of it, we have already seen. The Indian and Persian tradition we may mention hereafter. That the Egyptians were no strangers to this event, appears not only from those circumstances of Osiris and Typhon mentioned above; but also from the testimony of Plato: who says, that a certain Egyptian priest recounted to Solon, out of their sacred books, the history of the universal flood, which happend long before the particular inundations known to the Grecians. The inhabitants of Heliopolis, in Syria, shewed a chasm or cleft in the earth in the temple of Juno, which swallowed up the waters of the flood. Nay, the very Americans are said to acknowledge and speak of it in their continent: and we are told, that there is a tradition among the Chinese, that Puncu, with his family escaped the general deluge," &c. Thus we see that most nations have some idea of a deluge, though none have so clear an account of it, as that given by Moses.

in empty reasonings, and whose powers spend themselves in discoveries of no use to the happiness of men: it is not that disastrous philosophy, which, with an axe in its hand, and a veil over its eyes, throws down, overturns, and destroys every thing, and builds up nothing: which in its impious phrenzy, makes matter its God; and which distinguishes man from beast only by his shape. No Sir, it is the wise philosophy of a good man, who wishes to render his fellow creatures happy: for Moses begins his history, with informing us, that there is a God, and that he created the world, and all that is therein. This was the grand fundamental principle, to bring men to the knowledge and worship of him that made them: for it is manifest to demonstration, that if man does but give himself time to reflect, that God made him, and gave him hands to feel, legs to walk, &c. and endowed him with powers and reasoning faculties, far beyond that of the brute creation; he will naturally love and reverence that great and awful being, that

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can mould him as he pleases. The knowledge of this sublime truth, effectually destroys all those false notions entertained by certain philosophers, of the eternity of matter, and a fortuitous concurrence of Atoms. It lays the axe to the root, and at once annihilates that foolish, absurd, and impious tenet: and which is a demonstration that the philosophy of Moses, was most beneficially conducive to to the happiness of mankind.

He is also to be admired as an historian; for, as a learned christian* observes, "Whatever defects may be noted in his history upon the whole, when compared with the more regular and more laboured productions of the polished historians of Greece and Rome; yet in many parts of it he has given evident marks of superior abilities as an historian. The history of Joseph, for instance, is an example of simple, noble, elegant, interesting, pathetic narration: of a justness, neatness, and perspicuity of historic composition; to which nothing equal, or in any degree

* Lowth's letter to Warburton.

comparable, can be produced from Herodotus or Xenophon, Sallust or Livy."

As an orator, his exhortations in the book of *Deuteronomy*, carry with them a force, a spirit, and an elegance, equal at least, (considering the subject) to any thing ever penned.

As a poet, his beautiful ode, recorded in *Exodus*, is superior to any thing of the kind: but his prophetic poem in *Deuteronomy*, is not to be equalled. It contains six parts, as I have shewn in another * place. The first part consists of the first five verses, and is a prefatory introduction to the poem: The second part contains nine verses; the subject of which is the kindness and beneficence of the Supreme Being towards *Israel*: The third part consists of the next four verses, in which he describes the sin and wickedness of the nation: The fourth part consists of the next seven verses, in which he recounts the afflictions with which GOD would punish them for their disobedience: The fifth part contains the next eight

* Introduction to *Lingua Sacra*, p. 4.

verses, wherein he describes the final destruction, which the Supreme Being might have been induced to have brought upon them for their enormous crimes, had it not been for one particular reason, and which he inimitably describes: The sixth and last part contains the last ten verses of the poem, in which he rehearses the consolation of *Israel*, and the vengeance which GOD will take on their enemies.

And I cannot forbear observing in proof of the prophetic inspiration of this poem, that the first five parts of it, have been fully accomplished, viz. The kindness and beneficence of the Supreme Being towards *Israel*, in giving them possession of the holy land, and their prosperity under David and Solomon: their sins of idolatry, &c. their captivity, and the severe punishments that followed, and their preservation as a distinct nation to this very day, notwithstanding all their sufferings, and which undoubtedly, is one of the most wonderful things in the world, as (shewn at large in my *Dissertations on the Prophecies* vol. I. p. 17, &c.) whence, I pre-

same to think, that the completion of the first five parts, may be considered as a pledge and earnest of the accomplishment of the sixth, which mentions the redemption of the nation, &c. And it is very remarkable, that the prophet Jeremiah hath clearly evinced the truth of this position, in the following words,* which he produces as an argument, in support of what he had delivered as a prophecy, foretelling the future restoration of the nation: “For thus saith the Lord, like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.” A stronger proof than what is contained in these words of the prophet, in support of the spirit of prophecy, cannot be required; for the accomplishment of the evils predicted, is a sure pledge of the completion of the good promised: and therefore, as it is allowed on all hands, that the first five parts of this poem, hath been fulfilled in every particular fact, it consequently

* Jerm. xxxii. 42.

is manifest, that not the least doubt ought to be entertained of the full accomplishment of the last part. And which is a demonstrable proof of the divine mission of Moses.

I am, &c.

LETTER III.

SIR,

I SHALL now proceed to the other books of Moses; viz. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These, sir, contain our laws, Religious and Moral, Civil, Political, and Ritual; (though I do not mean to treat of them all thus distinctly arranged; but only of a few of them as they occur to illustrate the subject we are treating of) from all which I hope to prove, to the satisfaction of every candid and liberal mind, that these laws were every way worthy of God, who was pleased to bestow them by the hands of his servant Moses, on his people Israel.

There is one God, says the Pentateuch, and but One. This God alone deserves to be worshipped. He is the Supreme Being, the necessary origin of all beings; no other is comparable to

him. He is a pure spirit, immense and infinite; he cannot be represented by any bodily shape. It is he that created the universe by his power, and governs it by his wisdom. He views all our actions; nothing can escape his watchful eye; and with an equitable hand he rewards and punishes us according to our deserts.

All this we learn from these books; for the belief of the existence of God, is founded on the first great commandment, *I am the Lord thy God.**

That he is *One*, we are taught from Deut. vi. 6. *Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is ONE.*

That he alone is to be worshipped, is contained in the second and third commandments, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, &c. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them, &c.*

That he cannot be represented by any bodily shape, we are taught from Deut. iv. 15. *For ye saw no similitude on the*

* Exod. xx. 2. & Deut. v. 6.

day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb.

This doctrine was likewise strongly inculcated by the prophet Isaiah*, who says, “To whom therefore will ye liken God? and what is the *form of resemblance* that ye will compare with him? Against, To whom will ye liken me? and to whom shall I be equalled? saith the *holy one.*”

That God knoweth all the thoughts and actions of mankind; and is not so indifferent and unconcerned about them, as the unbelievers think; who say, “the *Lord* seeth us not; the *Lord* hath forsaken the earth,” (Ezek. viii. 12.) But on the contrary, he observes, and takes cognizance of all our actions: this we are taught from Gen. vi. 5. “And God saw that the wickedness of man (was) great in the earth.” See also Gen. xviii. 20, besides several other parts of these books.

That God rewards and punishes with an equitable hand, we are taught in Exod. xxxii. 32, 33. “Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin: and if not, blot me, I

* Isai. xl. 18.

† Ibid. 25.

pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written, And the Lord said unto Moses, whosoever have sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

We are also taught, that although a temple was commanded to be built; ministers appointed for its service; sacrifices and offerings instituted; yet all this is nothing in his eyes, if the sentiments of the heart do not give it life. The worship that he requires above all things, and before every thing, is the acknowledgment of our entire dependance on him, and of his supreme dominion; thankfulness for his benefits; trust in his mercy, reverence and love. Thus he says,*
 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. And now† Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. To keep the commandments of the Lord, and

* Deut. v. 6. † Ibid. x. 12

the statutes which I command thee this day for thy good." See also chap. xi. ver. 13, &c. where these true and sublime ideas are also strongly inculcated; and which so eminently distinguish the Jewish from all ancient legislators; and plainly shew that the doctrines, which recommend such a pure worship, can be none other than divine; as being every way worthy of God.

Let us now examine the morality taught in these books, what beauty and purity do we find in this morality! There is scarcely a vice which it doth not condemn. It is not enough that evil actions are forbidden, even desires are prohibited, "Thou shalt not desire*. Thou shalt not covet†" In inculcating this morality, Moses not only requires perfect equity, untainted probity, justice, faithfulness, and the most exact honesty; but he would also have us be humane, compassionate, and charitable: ever ready to do unto others as we should wish they would do unto us, as he says‡, "But

* Deut. v. 21. † Exod. xx. 17. ‡ Levit. xix. 19.

thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

This love is also to be extended to the stranger ; “ And if a stranger sojourn with you in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you, shall be unto you as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself ; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.* Love ye therefore the stranger : for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.”† Thus you may perceive that this brotherly love and charity was not confined to those that were Jews born ; as every other person might share in them : for it is, and ever was, a fixed law amongst us, to admit into our religion and commonwealth, all those that were willing to submit to our laws and customs ; and who after submitting to the right of circumcision, and performing ablution, were incorporated among the nation, and became as one of them : for thus the law speaks of the stranger. “ Let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it ; and he shall be as one that

* Levit. xix. 33-34 † Deut. x. 19.

is born in the land ; for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is home born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you*. Now Sir, is not this law far more humane than that exclusion of strangers, ordained by so many other legislators † ?

Let us now consider the humane and charitable laws, ordained for the relief of the poor, the widow and the fatherless : of the servants and slaves : and we shall presently perceive how superior they were to all the laws of the ancient polished nations.

Of the poor.

“ And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him : *yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee.* Take thou no usury of him, or increase : but fear thy God, that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase. I am

* Exod. xii. 48-49. † Thus among others, we find Lycurgus excluding all strangers from his common wealth. See his life by Plutarch.

the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God*.—If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother. But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, *in* that which he wanteth†.—If thou lend money to *any* of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as a usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury. If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it to him by that the sun goeth down, for that *is* his covering only, it *is* his raiment for his skin : wherein shall he sleep? And it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear : for I *am* gracious‡. When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. Thou shalt

* Levit. xxv. 35. † Deut. xv. 7—8.

‡ Exod. xxii, 25—27.

stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shalt bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. And if the man *be* poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge. In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God*.”

Of the widow and fatherless.

“Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry: And my wrath shall wax hot; and I will kill you with the sword: and your wives shall be widows; and your children fatherless†.”

Of hired servants.

“Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant *that is* poor and needy, *whether he be* of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that *are* in thy land within thy gates. On his day thou shalt give *him* his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he *is* poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he

* Deut. xxiv. 10—13.

† Exod. xxii. 22-24.

cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee*.”

Of a purchased servant.

“ If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve : and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.”† If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself : If he were married, then his wife shall go out with ‡ him. If his master have given him a wife, § and she have borne him sons or daughters ; the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out by himself. If thy brother an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew wo-

* Deut. xxiv. 14-15.

† Exod. xxi. 2.

‡ This denotes one that had been sold by order of the judges for theft ; as mentioned (Exod. xxii. 2.) “ If he have nothing, then shall he be sold for his theft.” And of one so sold, the master became subject to the maintenance of his wife and children : for as she had no other support but her husband's labour ; the law obliged the master to maintain them. Here, sir, is an additional proof of the wisdom and humanity of the laws of Moses, compared with those of the most civilized nations.

§ This denotes a female slave like those taken from the Midianites, &c. and not an Hebrew maid servant.

man be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty: Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine press: *of that* wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee: therefore, I command this thing to day.”* &c. besides, a number of other passages of the like import.

Of slaves.

“And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall surely be punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he *is* his money†.—And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish, he shall let him go free for

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* Deut. xv. 12-15.

† Exod. xxi. 20—21.

his eye's sake. And if he smite out his man-servant's tooth, or his maid-servant's tooth, he shall let him go free for his tooth's sake*.”

Before I proceed, it is necessary to inform you, that the servants here mentioned, are not Hebrew servants, (called purchased servants) but slaves, bought from among the Gentiles, or captives taken in war; as also of those strangers that sojourned among them; agreeable to the following command, “Both thy bond-men and thy bond-maids, which thou shalt have, *shall be* of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bond-men and bond maids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy†,” &c. which when bought became their proper goods, and continued with them as their lands did; for an inheritance to them and their children after them‡. And it is of these latter, that the law is thus tender; for the former, were

* Ibid. 26—27.

† Levit. xxv. 44, &c.

‡ See verse 46.

not to go free for the sake of an eye or a
 or a tooth* : but if the master shall thus
 injure them, they were entitled to the
 same reparation as the other Hebrews.
 And, now Sir, if you please to review
 all the laws of the ancient nations, I am
 confident, you will not be able to find
 any thing in them, that can equal the hu-
 manity and tender care of the law of Mo-
 ses, not only for the poor, the widow and
 the orphan, but for the slave also : for al-
 most all the ancient governments aban-
 doned, without exception, the slaves of
 both sexes to the lust and brutality of
 their masters.† If you are acquainted

* These Gentile slaves were not only to go
 free for the loss of an eye or a tooth : but likewise
 for the loss of any of the twenty four principal
 members. See Talmud. Bab. Kedushin fol. 25. 1.
 and Maim. in Hilchoth Evadim. chap. v.

† Montesquieu says, “ I do not think, that the
 policy of the Romans was good in this respect. They
 gave a loose to the incontinence of masters.” (the
 same may be said of almost all ancient nations) He
 adds, “ Slavery has for its object utility not volup-
 tuousness. The laws of decency are founded on the
 laws of nature, and must be felt by all nations.
 And if the law which protects the modesty of slaves

with history, you cannot be ignorant to what excesses* this permission gave birth, even amongst nations that are proposed to us as models of civilised and wise governments.

At Lacedemon, let slaves be treated in

is valid even in arbitrary governments, where absolute power reigns, how much more in others!" This licentiousness (observes the editor of the Jews Letters to Voltaire) was the bane of morals among ancient nations. What could unfortunate slaves do against voluptuous imperious masters, who were restrained by no laws?

* Excesses of incontinence, says the same author, which are attested by all the ancient writers. Read only Anacreon and Horace, and see to what excesses the Greeks and Romans went in this respect. Even Cato, the wise Cato, carried on a scandalous trade with his beautiful slaves, whom he prostituted. There were also excesses of cruelty without bounds. It makes one tremble to read over the Roman laws respecting slaves. They compare them to beasts of burthen, and give them up to the most cruel tortures. Did the master of a family happen to be assassinated, all those that were under the same roof, or even within the sound of the voice, were condemned to die without distinction. These laws are the work of ferocity, and the scandal of reason, and can any one prefer such government to that of the Hebrews?

the cruellest manner whatsoever, they yet could claim no protection from the laws. If any one looked above his condition, by an elegant figure, he was condemned to die and his master was fined,* in order that he might by severity prevent his other slaves from offending hereafter the eyes of the citizens by their outward accomplishments.

The Spartans, being authorized by such laws, used to fall upon the Helots, whilst they were at work in the fields, and without mercy would destroy the ablest men amongst them; and this for mere exercise, and lest these slaves should increase too much. This was the ambuscade, mentioned by *Aristotle*, as one of the institutions of *Lycurgus*.† “The thing”

* See vol. 22d. of the *Memoirs of the Academy of Belles Letters*, written by Mr. Capperonier.

† “*Aristotle* in his second and seventh Books of *Politics*, *Plato* in his first Book *de Legibus*, and *Polybius* in the sixth of his *History*,” says M. Dacier in his notes on the life of *Lycurgus* in *Plutarch*, “have reproached *Lycurgus* for that his laws were more adapted to make men valiant than to make them just.

as Plutarch says*, “ was this ; Those who had the care of the young men, dispatched from time to time some of the ablest of them into the country at random, armed only with their daggers, and taking a little necessary provision with them : these in the day-time hid themselves in the thickets and clefts, and there lay close, but in the night they issued out into the high-ways and killed all the *Ilotes* they could light upon ; sometimes they set upon them by day, as they were at work in the fields, and murdered the ablest and stoutest of them in cold blood, as *Thucydides* also, in his history of the *Peloponnesian* war, relates, where he tells us, that such of them as the *Lacedæmonians* had singled out for their valour, were crowned by proclamation, as persons enfranchised (for their good services ;) and went about to all the temples in token of freedom ; but that soon after they all disappeared on a sudden, being about the number of two thousand ; and no man neither then nor since could give

* In the life of *Lycutgus*.

an account how they came by their deaths. And *Aristotle* particularly says, that the *Ephori*, so soon as they were entered into their office, used to declare war against them, that they might be massacred with a pretence of *Law*."

And Rome still more barbarous, calmly viewed her great men slaughter their slaves, without the least cause of complaint, in order to throw their bodies into their fish ponds to make their lampreys more delicious, by such nourishment. Even under the eyes of the Magistrates, thousands of these unhappy creatures expired in the amphitheatre, for the amusement of a fierce and cruel people, and some festival days caused more human blood to flow in the empire, than many days of battle.

But the laws of Moses did not give such tyrannical power to masters: on the contrary, they tenderly watched over the lives and modesty of the slaves, as is plain from the foregoing extract from these laws: and which no doubt, was the reason that our ancestors were almost the only

ancient* people; among whom there was not any of those rebellions of the slaves, which often brought so many other nations to the brink of ruin, †

From the extracts of our laws above mentioned, you may also perceive the moderation we were enjoined to use towards our debtors ‡; and which I would recommend you to compare with the horrid law of the twelve tables, which permitted the creditors to load the debtors with chains; and after some market days, to cut them in pieces, and to share amongst them their bloody limbs, or to sell them to strangers!

This humanity, Sir, was also extended

* The Athenienses, of all others, treated their slaves with gentleness.

† Not only the Spartans, Sicilians, and Romans, experienced dangers from their rebellious slaves, as is well known, but modern nations also have been frequently exposed to the same dangers. And in this unfortunate war the melancholy proofs of the dreadful effects of such rebellion, is still before our eyes.

‡ The moderation towards debtors, will be farther treated of, when we come to speak of the sabbatical year, &c.

even to the delinquent, as is plain from the following text. "And it shall be, if the wicked *man be* worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, *and not exceed*: lest if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile in thy sight*." By this wise and humane law, so different from that of all other nations, the punishment of the culprit, was not left to the arbitrary will of the judge, who might order his *hundreds* or *thousands* of lashes; No Sir, the number was restricted to *forty stripes*: and that they might not exceed the number thus limited by the† law, or doctors ordained,

* Deut. xxv. 2-3.

† Our code is short, and clear; kings can read it and nations understand it; whilst the code of laws of some of the most refined civilized nations, after many hundred years labour, are scarcely any thing more than undigested compilations, confused heaps of foreign oppressive laws, and barbarous customs;

that no more than *thirty nine stripes* should be given*.

But this is not all, our laws every where order us to treat even the brute creation with humanity. “And *whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and her young both in one day*†. “Thou shalt not take the dam with the young†.”

they are dark labyrinths, in which the most learned counsellors lose their way, and through which the greatest lawyers can scarcely shew a path: for what is law to day, is not allowed to be law to morrow. It must farther be observed, that all the tribes in the whole nation, were governed by the same laws and statutes. Judah had the same as Reuben; and Benjamin had none others than Simeon. But in many nations and governments, “every town, every hamlet has its own laws. What is just in one village, is unjust two miles farther, and they change laws as often as they change post horses.” Our laws were uniform and unvariable. But “there is no stability in theirs. They change like the dresses of men and women. They have not any fixed laws even in criminal cases.” These are the sentiments of M. Voltaire himself. See the supplement to *le philosophe ignorant*. &c.

* See Gemara Makkoth, Perek Illu hean Ha-lockeenfol. Vol. 23. 1.

† Levit. xxii. 28.

‡ Deut. xxii. 6.

“Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the *corn**.” The law also commanded us to let the beast rest on the sabbath. From all which, it is manifest, that the more you study the laws of Moses, the more instances you will find in them of gentleness and humanity: and the more they are compared with ancient legislatures, the more a man will be convinced of their excellence.

* Deut. xxv. 4.

I am, &c.

LETTER IV.

SIR,

I shall now take notice of some of the precepts of the law, which may be properly termed a part of the Political laws of Moses. With these, several Festivals, (which are a part of the Ritual law) are closely connected: and therefore, it is proper to consider them conjointly. And for the better understanding of which, it is necessary that we go back to the call of Abraham; when we shall plainly see the propriety of the nation's being called God's *chosen people*. This will appear manifest from the purpose for which they were chosen: which was to hand down the unity, and worship of the *one* only God, the creator of heaven and earth. This purpose, by the infinite wisdom of God, hath been fully accomplished through their means, as will be perceived in the sequel.

Notwithstanding the severe and exem-

plary punishment, with which God punished the sins of the old world; and the means which we are naturally to suppose that Noah took to provide for the instruction of the new in the true worship of God: we nevertheless find, that in a very short time, mankind degenerated again, and advanced apace towards the same state of depravity, that they were in before the flood: especially in regard to false worship, God therefore, called Abraham, who wherever he went*, plainly shewed them the vanity of worshipping the creature instead of the creator; and boldly asserted his supremacy, in defiance of all opposition†. For his faith and righteousness, God made choice of him and his posterity, to hand down the knowledge of his unity, and preserve the principles of the true religion uncorrupted, amidst the Idolatrous fiction of a

* Chaldees, Canaan, and Egypt, were then the most renowned and conspicuous countries: the inhabitants of which, were all deeply versed in the idolatry of the ancient Sabians. See Maimonides in Noreh Nevuchim, part 3d. chap. xxxvii.

† Maim. Ibid. chap. xxix.

false theology. It was for this purpose that God selected the family of Abraham from among all nations, and sealed them with his covenant*, to be the repository of the sacred oracles: that they might convey them to posterity in their original purity. And that this might be fully accomplished, God promised Abraham the land of Canaan for an inheritance for his posterity: though before that time should arrive, they would be sorely afflicted in captivity; from which however, he would redeem them; and severely punish their oppressors; and thus make them fully sensible, that he alone was God; and governed the world by his particular providence. And, as Egypt might justly be considered as the very sink of false worship; the contaminated fountain, whence flowed idolatry, the arts of magic and divination; and the institutions of superstitious and obscene rites; God was pleased to make it the scene of the great display of his omnipotent power, in opposition to their false deities. Here then,

* Circumcision; and which they bear to this day.

was the *necessity* of the miracles performed by Moses : for the sole end and purpose of these miracles was, to convince all—the Israelites*, the Egyptians, and the rest of the nations, that the false deities worshipped by them, were nought but vanity, that could not profit : for that the Lord alone was the true God, and governor of the world ; and that there was none else besides.

Now the most rational method that could have been taken to reclaim all those from their errors, and induce them to embrace the truth, was to make it appear plain and evident to their understandings, that things were, in fact, otherwise than they apprehended. For the Egyptians falsely imagined that those illustrious heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars, as also the elements, were the distributors of blessings and comforts : for as they observed the course of things to be constantly regulated, and the blessings of life to be daily dispensed by the motion and a-

* Exod. vi. 7 — vii. 5. — ix. 16. — x. 25. & xv. 4. — 8.

gency of these bodies, they, consequently, were led to believe them to be the only gods that governed the world. This being the case, let us now consider how their fatal mistake was to be removed, and they set right in this point:—Was it not by convincing them that these bodies had no other powers or qualities than what they derived from their great Creator, whose instruments they were, employed by him to carry on the purposes of his providence? And what more rational method could God have made use of to form this conviction, than that of empowering his messenger to alter or suspend the qualities of these bodies, and make them operate by his bare command, in direct opposition to their ordinary course? This was appealing to their own notions, and making them sensible, in their own way, that the Lord alone was the creator and governor of the world, and that all visible beings were but so many subordinate agents, working by his power, and under his directions: and whose powers he can suspend whenever he pleases: consequently, he alone was

entitled to the worship and obedience of men, as he only could reward or punish them.

That we may place this matter in a clear light, it will be necessary to take a particular view of the progress and conduct of the whole proceeding.

In the first place then, God, by a message in his own name, required the Egyptian king to release his people*.
“ Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, let my people go that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.” By Pharaoh’s answer to this message, it is plain, that he disclaimed all knowledge of the God of Israel, and absolutely refused to yield any obedience to him: thus he sayst, “ Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go. I worship my own gods, and none other.” This was then the proper time to convince him, and all the Egyptians of their folly, or to punish them for their wickedness, if they persisted therein. But God

* Exod. v. 1.

† Ibid. 2.

foreseeing by his omniscience what the consequence would be, and being, as it were, unwilling to enter on the methods of severity, commanded his servants to go again to Pharaoh, and repeat the demand of his dismissing the Israelites. On this second application, when the king required them * to exhibit some miracle, as a proof that they were not magicians, but the messengers of God, (as Abarbanel observes) "Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent." Hereupon the magicians were called to confront him; and they having cast down every man his rod, they, in like manner, became serpents. Thus far, then, both parties exhibited equal signs of power; but the superiority of God's messengers soon appeared; for "Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods."

* Although it is not mentioned that Pharaoh did ask them for a miracle; yet, as God had instructed them how to act, when that Pharaoh should require one of them; (as well knowing that he would) and as they acted conformable thereto, it is naturally to be supposed, that he actually asked them for the miracle, before that Aaron threw down his rod. See Abarbanel on Exod. vii. 9. &c.

But this miracle making no impression on the mind of Pharaoh, God proceeded by other miracles to shew his omnipotent power, in opposition to their false deities; by afflicting them with ten plagues; and which were wrought in the four elements; as well as in the heavenly bodies: for as Abarbanal observes, some were transacted in grosser elements of earth and water; as the turning the waters into blood, and the plague of frogs: both these were in the element of water. The next three were produced from the earth: and the remainder were performed in the lighter elements of air and fire; as also by the suspension of the light and emanation of the heavenly luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars, when he covered the land of Egypt with thick darkness for three days. These miracles were admirably calculated to prove the falsity of their ideas concerning their deities; as well as to punish them for their sins, of idolatry &c. for as they highly venerated the waters of the Nile, as being the fruitful source of their choicest blessings; inasmuch that in their barbarously superstiti-

ous devotions to this river, they stained its current with human sacrifices*. And also threw the males of the children of Israel therein: the turning its water into blood, was a just and suitable punishment for such bloody rites and cruelties: by thus depriving them of its bounty, in rendering its water, which was their common drink, unfit to be drank; and destroying its fish, so that they could not eat them.

In like manner did all the other miracles tend to convince them of his omnipotent power over their false deities, and his particular providence in the government of the world, and the protection of those that serve him. This is manifest by the distinction made between the children of Israel in the land of Goshen, and the the Egyptians, during the whole progress of these plagues†. But the last of these

* The Egyptians used annually, at the ceremony of cutting down the dam of Khalij, or great canal, to sacrifice a girl, or, as others say, a boy and girl, to the Nile, as a tribute to that river for all the benefits they received from it. See Univer. Hist. Vol. Ist. p. 172.

† See Exod. viii. 18-19—ix. 4-6-26 & x. 23.

miracles, viz. the death of the first born, was such a manifest proof of his power and sovereignty, and a demonstration of his taking particular cognizance of human transactions, and sooner or later rewarding every man according to his works, as could not be denied. For, as he at first threatened,* that if they would not let his first born Israel go, and serve him, he would slay their first born: the accomplishment of that threat made so great an impression on Pharaoh and all his people, that they not only gave them leave to go, but forced them to depart.

On this destruction of the first born of the Egyptians, was instituted the ceremony of the redemption of the first born of the Hebrews†; as was also the passover, &c. in order to fix lasting traces on their minds, of the wonders which God had worked for them: to perpetuate from generation to generation the memory of these great events; and to evidence the truth of them to the whole earth, even

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* Exod. iv. 21—22.

† Ibid. xiii. 2—16.

down to our own times ; for the ceremony of the passover, and the other festivals, as well as the redemption of the first born, are all strictly observed throughout the nation, at this very day ; as proofs of the miracles performed for them at their deliverance from Egypt.

The passover, therefore, as well as the redemption of the first born, which were instituted immediately in commemoration of the redemption from Egypt, are, in themselves, a clear evidence and demonstration of that event, as related by DIVINE REVELATION ; more especially, as a great number of the other precepts contained in the Mosaical laws are founded* on the said redemption : and they are continually reminded † of their subjection in Egypt, and the degraded state of bondage, that they were there held in : it, therefore would be highly absurd to

* Exod xxix. 46. Levit. xi. 45. xix. 36. xxii 33. xxiii. 43. xxv. 38. 42. 55. and xxvi. 13. 45. Numb. xv. 41. Deut. vi. 12. xiii. 11. xvi. 3, and xxiv. 17. Besides a number of other passages.

† Ibid. &c.

conceive it possible, that three or four millions of people, could suffer themselves to be imposed on in such a barefaced manner, by being continually told of the degraded state that they had been in; and unanimously agreeing to accept of an institution said to be founded on a miraculous deliverance wrought for them, if, in fact, no such deliverance had ever taken place. A position like this, Sir, surely no deist, freethinker, or sceptic, will be hardy enough to advance. Now this institution actually took place at the very time of their departure from Egypt, and hath continued to this day: so that it is impossible to doubt the truth of it. Indeed, the miracles of Moses bear such evident marks * of truth, being perform-

* The miracles of Moses have four marks of authenticity peculiar to them, which evidently demonstrate their divine origin: in the first place, they were objects of sense: that is perceptible by the senses. Secondly, they were performed in the most public manner, in the presence of several millions of people, who were all eye witnesses of them; and some miracles continued for a great number of years, as the manna, &c. Thirdly, a great part of the ceremonial law is founded on them. Fourthly,

ed in so public a manner, and for such wise purposes; and on the notoriety of which, several festivals and other precepts were instituted, and immediately took place, and continue in full force to this hour; that it really is astonishing how any rational person can doubt their authenticity. It must farther be observed, in support of what I have advanced, that God himself when he came to give them the law, appealed to the truth of those things of which they were eye witnesses*, and in which, as I may say, parties concerned: he, therefore, does not say, *I AM THE LORD THY GOD, WHO MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH*: for of that, they were not eye witnesses; consequently, they could neither affirm, or deny the same: But he says, *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt*. Of this transaction, and the miracles performed both antecedent and subsequent to their departure from thence,

those very precepts took place from the time of their being performed, and have continued the same to this very day, without change or innovation.

* See R. Judah in Lib. Cozri.

they were all *living witnesses* : it being but fifty days since their departure, and forty three since the Egyptians were drowned in the sea, when they went over dry shod. It therefore, is not only improbable, but almost impossible to imagine, that a whole nation could be thus imposed upon. Hence, it necessarily follows, that as the precepts of the law, are founded on the redemption, and the miracles which accompanied it ; and which were performed in the presence of those to whom these precepts were given, I say, it necessarily follows that the miracles were performed by a divine power ; and that the precepts founded thereon, are divine precepts : consequently, we have here a demonstration of *divine revelation*.

There is an other proof of the divine mission of Moses, that I can by no means omit mentioning ; (though in truth it it needs not father confirmation) I mean, God's speaking to Moses face to face, in the presence of *six hundred thousand men*, besides women and children ; as menti-

oned Exod. chap. xix. 9. “ And the Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, *and believe thee for ever.*”

This, Sir, was an especial proof of the divine mission of Moses; and indeed, a greater cannot be required, as Moses himself emphatically expresses* it; “ For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and (ask) from one end of the heaven unto the other, whether there hath been (any such thing) as this great thing (is), or hath been heard like it? Did (ever) people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of fire, as thou hast heard?” And it was this, that God meant by the expression. “ And this (shall be) a sign unto thee, *that I have sent thee*; when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain †.”

For this was the essential proof of the

* Deut. iv. 32-33.

† Exod. iii. 12.

divine mission of Moses; because, they not only heard God speak to Moses, but *to themselves likewise*; and by which they were fully satisfied of the *existence of the spirit of prophecy*, as we find they expressed themselves*: “And we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk *with man*, and he liveth.”

And what is still a greater proof (if a greater can be) of his divine mission, and that the nation was fully convinced thereof, is, that they, from thenceforward, agreed to receive, as coming from God, whatever he should deliver to them; because, they were then fully satisfied of his mission. Hear their own words. “Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us. If we continue to hear the voice of the Lord our God we shall die. For who (is there) of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of fire, as we (have) and lived? go thou near, and hear all that

* Deut. v. 24

the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us *all* that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, *and we will hear* (it), *and do** (it).

And as it was by such extraordinary means that they were brought to a firm belief in the divine mission of Moses, so hath it *never* been effaced from the Jewish nation: for notwithstanding that they fell into idolatry, and other crimes; yet at no time whatever, did the nation *deny* the divine mission of Moses, or abrogate his laws. No, Sir: not the destruction of our government, and the consequent dispersion of the nation; the persecutions of Heathens and Christians, and the almost universal contempt of all nations, have ever been able to root it out of our hearts. In consequence of this, the laws of Moses have been handed down to us, through so many ages and revolutions, ever the same, and ever respectable, whilst nothing remains of so many forms of government of the most renowned nations but the names of the

* Deut v. 25—26—27. See also Exod. xx. 19.

lawgivers affixed to some fragments of their laws. But this is not all; not only the Jews, but two thirds of this habitable globe revere these laws and look upon Moses as divinely inspired. What human government ever had the like success.

Compare this, now sir, with the extraordinary method that the great Lycurgus took to render his laws immortal, and to cause them to be delivered down unchangeable to posterity. "To bring this to pass*, he called an extraordinary assembly of all the People, he told them that he now thought every thing reasonably well established, both for the public happiness, and improving the virtue of each particular; but that there was one thing still behind, and that of the greatest importance, which he thought not fit to impart until he had consulted the oracle: In the mean time his desire was, that they would punctually observe his laws without any the least alteration until his return from *Delphi*, and then he would

* Plutarch's life of Lycurgus

do as the God should direct him. They all consented readily, and prayed him to hasten his voyage; but before he departed he administered an oath to the two kings, the Senate, and then to all the commons, that they would inviolably observe his ordinances during his absence. This done, he set sail for *Delphi*: when he came to the oracle, and had sacrificed to *Apollo*, he asked him, *whether the laws he had established were sufficient to make a City virtuous and happy?* The Oracle answered, *That his laws were excellent, and that the City should continue in the highest renown while it observed the polity of Lycurgus.* He took this oracle in writing, and sent it over to *Sparta*: and then, having sacrificed the second time to *Apollo*, and taken his leave of his friends, and his son, he resolved that the *Spartans* should never be released from the Oath they had taken, but that there he would put a voluntary end to his life. He therefore made an end of himself by a total abstinence from meat." But notwithstanding all this, in about five centuries; it was all forgotten; and it most

certainly would not have continued so long; but (as M. Dacier observes*,) that the Spartans for a long time, had no wars but in Peloponnesus. But as soon as their thirst of Empire had inspired them with a design of having naval forces, and entertaining foreign Troops; and there was a necessity of foreign money to pay them; then their oath availed no more against that necessity, than if it had been a spider's web; they did not so much as remember any such had ever been taken. Then were the laws of Lycurgus violated with a vengeance, and they were no more thought of than if they had never been.

And now Sir, give me leave to ask you on what principles of philosophy, can you account for this great disparity between the duration and perpetuity of the laws of Moses, and those of Lycurgus: for, this *duration*, this *perpetuity* of our laws, with the respect and veneration with which they have been treated for so many ages, and in so many climates, cannot be the

* See his notes on Plutarch's life of Lycurgus.

effect of chance. And can you account for it by any natural means? No sir: it is impossible! The only solution is, that the one was the work of man; consequently fallible; and liable to be annulled. But the other, is the work of God, and, therefore, not subject to *abolition*; for as the Psalmist says, "Various are the imaginations in the heart of man: but it is the counsel of the Lord alone that shall stand. The counsel of the Lord shall stand for ever: (and) the purposes of his heart to all generations." Yes, Sir, we here clearly perceive the finger of God: his power and his wisdom shine forth too conspicuously to suffer the least doubt to remain.

The feast of Pentecost, and Tabernacles, also founded on their redemption: the former, in memory, of the delivery of the law on mount Sinai; which was on the fiftieth day of their departure from Egypt; and the latter, as scripture expressly asserts, to commemorate the goodness* of God, in the protection of the

* Levit. xxiii. 43.

Israelites in the wilderness. These three great festivals, viz. Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, bear evident marks of their divine institution: and strongly inculcate a divine providence: for they were called festivals of appearance; because, thereon all the males were to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem: as* it is said, “Three times in a year shall all your males appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou goest up to appear before the Lord thy God, three times in the year. Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee.”

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* Exod. xxxiv. 23-24.

† Deut. xvi. 16-17.

On this institution, I must observe, that in the first place, it strongly inculcates (as do most of the precepts, those of the land especially) a particular providence; for they were to go up to Jerusalem, to return thanks to God for their redemption from Egypt, and for the land which God had given to them, and the blessing he had bestowed on the fruits of the earth, &c. For the Passover was instituted in memory of their going out of Egypt in the month Abib*; and the feast of weeks for the offering of the first fruits of wheat harvest†; and the feast of Tabernacles is called the feast of ingathering, when they had fully got in their harvest: they, therefore, as an acknowledgement for these great benefits, were commanded to offer freewill offerings, and give to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to the blessing which the Lord their God had given them: thereby justly attributing every benefit they enjoyed to the bountiful hand of Providence.

* Exod. xxxiv. 18.

Ibid. 22.

Secondly, it clearly proves, that this law could be none other than a divine ordinance; for on these festivals *all the males* were commanded to come up from all parts to Jerusalem (as above mentioned.) Now, this is what no legislator, in his senses, ever dared attempt to do: to leave the land three times a year to the defence of *old men, women and children*; promising them at the same time that no one should take or desire it. Who ever attempted to risk the ruin of his nation in this manner? more especially when it is considered by what kind of neighbours they were surrounded; and who were almost ever hostile to them. I say, who dared do so? Who dared make such a promise, without running the risk of bringing inevitable ruin on the whole nation, but He in whose hand the hearts of kings are as rivers of waters, and who turneth them whithersoever he pleaseth*? He only, could thus promise to protect their country in their absence, against the incursions of their warlike neighbours; and

* Prov. xxi. 1.

which was actually the case during all the time of their observance of this precept: so that this may be considered as a standing miracle, and a demonstration of the divine origin of the institution of these festivals.

We shall now proceed to speak of those precepts, that are more immediately connected with the land; when the divine origin of the Mosaical laws will be farther demonstrated.

All the ancient nations looked upon the distribution of lands as a masterpiece in politics: And give me leave to ask you sir, where they were more wisely distributed than by our lawgiver? The institutions of the famous Spartan legislator, so highly extolled by the Greek writers, must in this respect, yield the palm to the Hebrew legislator: for in the distribution appointed by him, every one out of the six hundred thousand men fit for war, that entered the land of Canaan, was to have a portion of ground given to him, sufficient to maintain him and his family in decent affluence.

This inheritance, Moses informed them, was given to them by God; they held it immediately from him, and were to consider him as the only Lord of the land. Hence it was, that they were commanded to offer the first fruits to Jehovah; when they were to make confession* of his goodness to them, in giving them the promised land, and in bestowing his bountiful blessing on it.

They were also commanded to give tithes to the Levites,† &c. And, although you have been so severe against christian priests, for demanding of tithes, yet, I think, you cannot in reason, have any objection to this institution in the Mosaical law: for, in the first place, as the whole tribe of Levi had no inheritance in the land, and were moreover set apart for the service of God, it was but just that they should have wherewithal to live; God therefore ordered that the other tribes should give them tithes. And, secondly,

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* Deut. xxvi. 3, &c.

† Numb. xviii. 21, &c. Deut. xxvi. 12, &c.

though the Israelites were commanded to give tithes ; yet was it not lawful for the Priest* or Levite to come and demand it as their right : but only to ask for it as a free gift of the husbandman ; (who might give it to whatsoever priest or Levite that he chose) much less had they any power to take it by force ; or to institute a process by law against them for non-payment : No, sir, the giving of tithes was a voluntary act. God had indeed commanded them to give tithes, as an acknowledgement of their holding the land immediately from him ; (and which no doubt, every

* The priest had the great tithe, which was a fiftieth part, and was separated before the tenth part for the Levite.

Note, of the tenth which the Levite received, he was obliged to give a tenth to the priest ; See Numb. xviii. 26. &c. and which was called the tithe of tithes. Besides, there was the second tithe which the owner was obliged to eat in Jerusalem, or spend the value of it there, by redeeming it, and adding a fifth part to it. In the third year it was eaten at home, being spent upon the Levites, the poor, the fatherless and the widow : as will be shewn at large in a future publication, wherein I shall treat of *all* the precepts of the law of Moses.

good Israelite would be very willing on that account to do; more especially as they were promised an increased blessing in return) but he by no means authorised the priests or Levites, to force it from them; or in case of refusal, to harass them by law suits, &c. Hence, there was no such quarrels and contentions between the priests and people in the Jewish nation, as exists in many others; and which is a demonstration of the divine wisdom in the formation of this institution.

Another thing that was continually to remind them, that they held the land, as the immediate gift of God, was, that the lands thus given to them, were to be absolutely unalienable. "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye *are* strangers and sojourners with me." (Levit. xxv. 23.) By this means the estates of the Israelites were so unalterably fixed, that no family could ruin itself, or grow too rich and powerful: for the law ordained, that all estates sold, should return to its first owners, or their

heirs, at the year of the Jubilee. Thus, the lands passed from the fathers to the children, and were to remain forever in the same tribe* and family. This law was the effect of deep and wise policy. It perpetuated all the advantages of the first distribution; and by confining the citizen to his original spot, endeared it to him; and excited in him a love of industry and frugality. It repressed avarice, and restrained the ambitious schemes of great landholders: It prevented the oppression of the poor, and took away all cause of jealousy, discontent, faction, and all those evils which other commonwealths vainly endeavoured to remedy by their agrarian laws.

But the greatest proof of a divine providence was inculcated by the law, that ordained the observance of the Sabbatical year, and year of Jubilee. On these years, there was to be a total cessation

* Numb. xxxvi. 7—9. And by which law, an heiress was obliged to marry in her father's tribe; that the inheritance might not be removed from one tribe to another.

from all manner of agriculture. “ But* in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest, thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed:—A Jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it†, &c.” They were not only forbidden to sow, but were also prohibited from gathering the spontaneous product of the fields and fruit trees, but all was to be in common; for the poor and the beasts of the field‡, &c.

On the sabbatical year, there was also to be a *full discharge* of all money lent to the poor; “ At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release; every creditor that lendeth *ought* unto his neighbour, shall release *it*, he shall not exact

* Levit. xxv. 4.

† Levit. xxv. 11.

‡ Exod. xxiii. 11.

it of his neighbour, or his brother, because it is called the Lord's release."* This was a most humane and benevolent law, in regard to the poor debtors, not to be equalled in any legislature.

The Jubilee year was distinguished from the sabbatical year, by the following ordinances. First, it was a year of general release of purchased servants. Even such as at the end of their six years services had voluntarily refused to accept of their freedom, and in consequence had their ears bored † in token of perpetual servitude, were nevertheless set free at the Jubilee; for in the fiftieth year, they were to "proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof ‡."

Secondly, in this year, all the estates that had been sold, were to return to their former proprietors, or to the families to which they originally belonged: so that no family could be sunk and ruined, and doomed to perpetual poverty; as the

* Deut. xv. 1—2.

† Exod. xxi. 6.

‡ Levit. xxv. 10.

family estate could not be alienated for more than fifty years*. The nearer therefore, that the Jubilee was, the less was the value of the purchase of an estate.†

These laws, if viewed in a political light, cannot be sufficiently admired: for they effectually prevented the too great oppression of the poor, as well as their being liable to perpetual slavery. By this means the rich were also prevented from accumulating lands upon lands; and a kind of equality was preserved through all their families. Never was there any people‡ so effectually secured of their liberty and property, as the Israelites were; for God not only engaged so to protect these invaluable blessings by his providence, that they should not be taken away from

* This law of the Jews (says Dr. Jennings) was famous among the Heathens, some of whom copied after it. Diodorus Siculus says, it was not lawful for the Jews to sell their inheritances. Diod. Sicul. lib. 40. And Aristotle in his politics, Lib. 2. cap. 7, & lib. 6. cap. 4. says of the Locrians, that they were prohibited by their laws from selling their ancient possessions.

† Levit. xxv. 16.

‡ See Jemmings antiq. B. 3. C. 10. p. 301.

them by others; but also provided in a particular manner, by this law, that they should not be thrown away by their own folly; since the property, which every man or family had, in the original division of the land of Canaan, could not be sold, or any way alienated for above half a century, at the utmost.

It hath already been shewn, that exclusive of the humane and beneficent laws, which took place in the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, in favour of the poor, the servants, &c. they were not permitted to sow or reap, &c. The question therefore is, what were they to eat when they were thus deprived of the produce of their estates every seventh year? The wise law-giver was fully sensible of this objection, and therefore provided a full answer to it, "And if ye shall say, what shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three* years." This promise (and

* Leviticus xxv. 20, 21.

which was faithfully performed, while they on their part fulfilled the conditions on which it was promised) is an evident demonstration of the divine institution of this law; for here could be no counterfeit; no juggle: such extraordinary fruitfulness every sixth year, must plainly shew, that the promise could only be made by the Creator of all things, the supreme Lord of the whole world. No human legislator, ever durst attempt to make such a promise; and that for his own credit, the credit of his laws, and the safety of his nation, which might be greatly endangered, by having a famine brought upon the land, in case of failure of the promise; and which it was not in the power of any mortal to prevent. But in the history of the Hebrews, we have such a manifest proof of the faithful performance of this promise, that when the nation did not fulfil the conditions of it on their part, they were not only punished with famine,*

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* See 1 King. xviii. 2. 2 King. vi. 25. viii. and xxv. 3.

but they were also carried captive into a strange country, and their land lay waste for seventy years, till it had fulfilled the sabbatical years which they had not observed; agreeable to what Moses, by the command of God, had threatened and foretold so many hundred years before it came to pass: * and which is such an evident demonstration of the divine mission of Moses, as in my humble opinion cannot be controverted. Let the deep politician, the consummate statesman, and the grave philosopher that studies the human heart; who looks into the volume of nature, investigates nature's laws, and deduces effects from causes; weigh, examine, and search into the minutest detail of the laws of Moses, and he will be convinced of the divine legislature of Moses.

* Compare Levit. xxvi. 34—35. with 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. See also Jerem. xxxiv. 8—22. where you will find how exactly the denunciation of Moses, for the non-observance of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, was exactly fulfilled in every particular. Ought we then any longer to doubt of the divine mission of Moses?

And, now fir, let us confider your ridiculous affertion, that, “there is no affirmative evidence that Mofes is the author of thofe books;” * What! no affirmative evidence, you fay! In the firft place, does not Mofes himfelf tell us that he was the author of them? And Mofes wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priefts the fons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Ifrael †. And it came to pafs when Mofes had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished; ‡” Thus he affures us, that he wrote the *whole* law, till it was perfectly complete.

Secondly, as above fhewn, the precepts contained in the law, were founded on his bringing the nation out of Egypt; and which have been obferved by the whole nation to this day; from the time of Mofes to Joshua: and from him to the time of the judges; to David and to Solomon; and during the exiftence of the

* page 6.

† Deut. xxxi. 9.

‡ Deut. xxxi. 24

temple which the latter built. By all those that were carried captive to Babylon: by those that returned from thence with Ezra, as also those that staid behind in Chaldea,* Assyria, and other eastern provinces: by the Jews that have resided for time immemorial in Cochin,† and who had no intercourse with the other Jews, till the Dutch came to trade there. By the Jews of Spain, who were carried captive there, at the destruction of the first

* For but a few of them returned from Babylon, and those of the poorer sort.

† It is supposed that they were carried there at the destruction of the first temple. They certainly must have been settled a long while in the country; for it is near fifteen hundred years since the emperor *Iraway Barrimine*, granted permission to *Joseph Rabin* (the prince or governor of the Jews at Cochin) to wear the *five colours, the salutation, riding on horses or elephants, to convert any of the five nations to his religion, &c. &c.* according to the patent engraved on copper, and preserved by the Jews at Cochin; a copy of which is now before me. At that time, they were already pretty numerous there, and seemed to be in great favour; consequently, they must have been settled there some length of time before.

temple ;* as Abarbanal observes. By all those Jews that were carried captive at the destruction of the second temple, and dispersed all over the globe. By Josephus ; by the compilers of the Mishna and the Talmud ; by that great luminary Maimonides, who lived in the eleventh century, and in his comment on the Mishna, drew up the articles of faith of the Jews : they consist of thirteen articles ; three of them have respect to Moses and his law : viz. the *seventh*, which is the belief of the great degree of the prophecy of Moses : the *eighth* is “ the belief that the law is from God ; that is,” as he observes, “ we are to believe ALL the law, which we now have, is the very same law given to Moses ; and that he received it all from the mouth of God, the historical part as well as the preceptive ; and no one else knew of such historical facts, or had any such source of information ; and therefore he was called סופר a scribe ; because he acted as one that wrote from the

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* Abarbanal on the last chapter of 2 Kings.

mouth of another ; for which reason, we seldom or ever find him speaking in his own person, but as one that is copying from a book, or what another is rehearsing to him," &c. By this, you may also clearly perceive what little force there is in your pitiful objection, that "the books cannot be written by Moses, because they are written in the third person." It is, indeed, so weak, that I am surpris'd, a person of your *sagacity* should adopt it. But when I consider, that almost all your objections are taken from one infidel writer or another, my wonder is turned into contempt. The *ninth*, is "the belief of the immutability of the law." This, sir, is a part of the confession of faith of the Jews at present : and has always been so, from Moses to the present hour ; and you cannot produce any period from the time of Moses till now, that it has not been their faith : for even the *Samaritans*, (who never received but the five books of Moses) the *Sadducees*, and the *Karites*, those enemies to tradition, all held the same. And which also shews the absurdity of what you assert, that these books

were “written by some very ignorant and stupid pretenders to authorship, several hundred years after the death of Moses.” For at no time whatever, could a spurious history be imposed upon them, without some one starting up to detect it. It therefore is incumbent on you to prove at what time it could have been done: for assertions without proof, are of no weight; especially in a cause of such importance. What! ignorant pretenders to authorship write the books of Moses? If you were possessed of the least knowledge of the sacred language, you would easily be able to discern, that the purity and elegance of the diction,* gives the lie to your assertion. Let any one but compare these books (in the original) with the writings that are known to have been written some

* As to his prophetic poem in Deut. if we consider the purity of the diction, the grandeur and sublimity of the sentiments, the force and beauty of the imagery, and the harmony of the numbers; (being the true sententious style, characteristic of Hebrew poetry) we shall find, that it has never been surpassed by any of the other prophets; nor could it even be imitated by any of them.

hundred years after the death of Moses, immediately after their return from Babylon, by Ezra, &c. and they will be fully convinced of the truth of what I have advanced : and the futility of what you have asserted.

Besides, at what time could such an innovation take place ? at what time did the nation first submit to this imposition ? to be obliged to offer their first fruits, to give tithes to the *priests*, the *Levites*, the *poor*, the *fatherless*, and the *widow* ; to be compelled to leave their habitations three times in a year, and come from the most distant parts to Jerusalem, (leaving the whole country to the defence of old men, women and children) and bring free gifts with them : to let their lands lay waste every seventh, and every fiftieth year ; and thereon to remit *all debts*, let all purchased servants go free, and all estates return to their first owners ? I say, when could all this have been introduced ? for there was no time from the time of Moses to this hour, when such an imposture could have been accomplished, without being detected. Is it to be ima-

gined, that the whole body of the nation should concur in carrying on such a fraud against themselves, and that there should not be found one among them, that had either ability or honesty to discover it? Nay, that all Israel, for upwards of three thousand years, through the several periods of their commonwealth, the revolutions of empires, and the vicissitudes of time; in prosperity and adversity; during a long and dreadful exile, dispersion, poverty and persecution, such as no nation ever suffered; should yet continue to act in a manner that evinceth the strongest conviction of the divine origin of the laws of Moses; though, according to your assertion, there is not the least foundation for such a rational belief? Surely, there are none so credulous as to be capable of believing such things as these.

It is also well known that other legislators have pretended to divine inspiration, but they were scarcely believed, even during their lives, and this belief soon vanished away. But this is not the case in regard to the divine legation of Moses; No sir, Our ancestors believed it, and

their descendants do so to this day : And not only they, but the greater part of the inhabitants of this globe : Heathens*, Christians and Mahometans, who, though so opposite in their religious sentiments ; agreeing in nothing, but in their hatred and contempt of the nation ; yet, all concur in the belief of the divine mission of Moses. Whence then this difference, sir ? Is it not because imposition vanishes, but truth stands the test ?

* It must add great weight to the arguments in support of the authenticity of the Pentateuch, when it is considered, that the great and leading facts (as Dr Shaw observes in his history and philosophy of Judaism. p. 353.) in the Mosaic history seem to have been known to Pagan writers of the greatest antiquity, and are handed down in their works, with such evident resemblance in their features, as must discover the original from which they were copied, notwithstanding all the artful disguise which their pride made them use to conceal it. This analogy betwixt scripture history and Heathen mythology, learned men have traced in a great variety of instances ; Some respecting the creation ; and others the flood, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and Moses, &c. See Shaw, p. 353. Note.

And now,* Mr. Paine, and ye Deists and Infidels of every description, who have written with such acrimony, and indecent levity, against the authority of the books of Moses, what have ye to say? Will ye, with all this mass of evidence against you, and staring you in the face, still have the assurance to take up your pens, and continue to impose on the weak, the ignorant and unwary, by asserting, that the work of the inspired penman is nought but fiction, when it is as evident as demonstration can make truth appear, that it all is the word of God. What shadow of pretence have ye now to produce, for continuing the immoral and blasphemous charge? What have ye still to offer against the pure, just, moral, humane and truly benevolent religion of Moses? Is there a virtue that it does not inculcate, or a vice that it does not condemn? In short, whatever can render a man respectable in his own eyes, and dear to his fellow creatures: whatever can insure the peace and

* Alluding to Mr. Paine's abusive address to the priests. See. p. 25.

happinefs of fociety, and make man happy, both here and hereafter, is there placed in the lift of duties.

It is no wonder then to find even Moses himfelf struck with admiration at the excellence of thefe laws; and to hear him break out in transport, thus* “ And what nation *is there fo* great, that hath statutes and judgements *fo* righteous, as all this law which I fet before you this day.”

* Deut. iv. 8.

LETTER V.

SIR,

BEFORE I take leave of the Pentateuch, I shall take notice of another objection you have made to the books of Moses being the word of God, because, as you say, it is therein said, “that they (the Israelites) came by stealth upon whole nations of people, who as the history itself shews, had given them no offence; *that they put all those nations to the sword; that they spared neither age nor infancy; that they utterly destroyed men, women and children; that they left not a soul to breathe.* The bible tells us, that those assassinations were done by the *express command of God.* To believe therefore the Bible to be true, we must *unbelieve* all our belief in the moral justice of God; for wherein could crying or smil-

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ing infants offend?" This objection, as are almost all those that you have brought against the Bible, is not new; it has been urged by Voltaire, Bolingbroke, Morgan, &c. and often refuted by several writers; some in one manner; and some in another; whether what I shall advance on the subject will be more satisfactory, must be left to the opinion of the candid and judicious reader.

I have already observed,* that God called Abraham, and selected him and his family, to be the repository of the sacred oracles, and to hand down the knowledge of the true worship of God, and his unity, &c. God therefore promised Abraham to give his posterity the land of Canaan, with a design to make them a separate people, to preserve them from the infection of idolatrous principles, which were then so prevalent. Now, it is well known that the Canaanites, as well as the Egyptians, were deep sunk in idolatry; and which had so far prevailed among them, that they sacrificed their children to Moloch: "for every abomination to the

* See page 96.

Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters have they burnt in fire to their gods."* And, these abominable practices, seem in a manner, to have been authoris'd not only by custom, but by some command. "After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their ordinances."† This shews that their barbarous rites, were founded on certain laws and statutes; for this is what the word *בְּחֻקֵיהֶם* properly signifies. And, indeed, nothing less than a pretence to some direction of sacred authority, could induce them to act so contrary to all natural and moral principles. But by such pretended laws, they could allow and recommend incestuous † marriages and

* Deut. xii. 31.

† Levit. xviii. 3.

‡ The magicians allowed a man to marry, not only his sister or his daughter, but also his mother; and it went so far with that sect in the practice that in the sacerdotal tribe, he that was born of this last and worst sort of incest, was looked upon as the best qualified for the sacerdotal function: none being esteemed among them more proper for the highest

the * sacrificing of *innocent children*. For this excess of vice, we find them remarkable, as early as the time when the promise of their country was made to Abraham. † This being the case, how can we complain if God, after having beheld their abominable practices for such a space of time, and perceiving no signs of repentance and reformation among them, should at length punish them with a most awful severity: and thus, not only put an end to their abounding wickedness, but also make others, and particularly the Israelites, who were to possess their country, stand in awe and dread the danger of imitating them in their abominations; as Moses says, †
 “Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things; for in all these the nations are

stations in it, than those that were born of mothers who conceived them of their own sons. See Prideaux. Connect. Part. 1st. B. 4. p. 262, and the authors he quotes.

* Hence we may see how justly strict the law of Moses was in regard to unlawful and incestuous marriages, &c. See Lev. xviii. 6. &c.

† Gen. xv. 16. “For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”

‡ Levit. xviii. 24—25—28.

defiled which I cast out before you. And the land is defiled : therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgements, and shall not commit any of these abominations ; that the land spew not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spewed out the nations that *were* before you."

Now, if considered in this light, the extirpation of those nations, must appear to be no more than a just visitation of the divine displeasure, for their atrocious wickedness. The Israelites are therefore to be considered, in this matter, as no more than the instruments of the divine vengeance. And why might not Jehovah, the bestower, and therefore the sovereign of life, with equal justice cut off these sinful nations and their posterity, by the intervention of human agents, as destroy them by an earthquake, inundation, fire from heaven, famine, pestilence, or any similar judgment : in which case, *smiling and crying infants* must also have equally

suffered? Had God then thought proper to have destroyed them, thus we should have revered, without daring to blame, such a tremendous display of his justice and power: where then, I fain would ask, is the material difference? In either case, his conduct is equally justifiable.

But that which I would principally insist upon, is, that the Israelites were not *absolutely* commanded to extirpate the Canaanites: and for the better understanding of which, it is necessary to take notice of a part* of the military laws of the Hebrews: which is as follows. "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then shall it be *that* all the people *that is* found therein, shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against

* I do not mean to treat here of the whole of the military laws of the Jews, (as having reserved that for the future publication, already mentioned in these letters, but only of such part as serves to illustrate the question.

thee, then shalt thou besiege it: And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, *even* all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself: and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities *which are* very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations: But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance: thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perrizites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee*.” When this passage is duly considered, we shall find, that, first, they were obliged to send them an offer of peace: for this law was general, as “When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies†, &c. When thou

* Deut. xx. 10—15.

† Ibid. 1.

comest nigh unto a city to fight against." &c. There was no distinction in this case; it did not matter, whether they were far or near, in regard to the proclamation of peace: for thus is it understood by all our *Rabbins*,* who observe, that they were obliged to offer peace to the seven nations, as did Moses to Sihon: (Numb. xxi. 21.) and if they answered peace; then were they to become tributary, and be permitted to remain in the country on condition of their renouncing idolatry, and observing the seven precepts of the sons of Noah.† The real distinction therefore between these, was this, that if the nations who were far off, refused to make peace, they were to kill all the males; that is, all those

* When I mention the *Rabbins*, I wish to be understood, as speaking of the ancient Mishnical doctors, the Talmudists, &c. who flourished after the Babylonish captivity, during the time of the second temple, &c.

† These precepts are as follows: First, not to commit idolatry. Second, Not to blaspheme, but to worship the true God. Third, to appoint, and constitute just and upright judges; that justice may be impartially administered to all. Fourth, not to commit incest. Fifth, Not to commit murder.

that bore arms, for then every man was a soldier; and they were not allowed to kill any but those that opposed them, as already mentioned.* It therefore must be observed, that this is a *permission*, not an order given: they were allowed to kill those that opposed them, and none† else: and therefore the women and children were to be preserved alive. But, if any of the cities of the seven nations refused to make peace with them, then they were not to save alive any thing that breatheth: and the reason is immediately given; “that they teach you not to do after all

Sixth, Not to rob, or steal, &c. Seventh, Not to eat a member of any living creature: that is, the flesh of any beast taken from it when it was alive.

* p. 52.

† This was a proper lesson of humanity, fitted to those barbarous times, and given to our fathers, to oblige them to abstain from those shocking practices which all nations then indulged themselves in; and which, in later times, the most polished nations, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, &c. under kings, and commanders most famed for gentleness and benevolence practised; as will be shewn at large, in treating of all the precepts of the Mo-
saical law, in the future publication already mentioned.

their abominations, which they have done unto their gods, so should ye sin against the Lord your God.”*

But if they were willing to make peace Israel was obliged to make peace with either of them : whether those that were far off ; or those that were near ; all were equal in this particular. And therefore our *rabbins* say, that upon Joshua's entering the land of promise, he published three proclamations ; first, “ that those inclined to make peace, should have peace granted to them. Second, those that intended to war, should have war. And third, those that wished to depart, might freely depart.” Hence it is manifest that they were obliged to offer them peace : and which is plain, from Josh. xi. 19-20. “ There was not a city which made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon : all *other* they took in battle. For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, *and* that

* Deut. xx. 18.

they might have no favor, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses." And which, plainly implies, that if they had not been so obstinate, as to engage in a war with the Israelites, and to appear in arms against them, but had repented, and submitted their proposals, they would have been saved, instead of being put to death; consistent with the divine command concerning their excision. If therefore the Canaanites met with destruction from the victorious sword of the Israelites, they had none but themselves to blame. By complying with the reasonable terms offered to them, it was in their power to prevent it.

I am, however, aware that the case of the Gibeonites may be urged as an exception to the position here laid down: as we find the Israelites expressing themselves in the following terms to them, "Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with * you?" By which, it would appear at first view,

* Josh. ix. 7

that they could not make peace with any of those nations: but this objection will instantly vanish, when the exact meaning of the words made use of, by the Gibeonites, is clearly understood: for they did not simply ask for peace, but said, “now therefore make ye a league with* us.” That is, as the Israelites understood it, to treat them as confederates, as allies; to admit them to a league of equal right and privilege, such as one independent state enters into with another. And which the Israelites could by no means comply with; because they were so often commanded not to make a covenant with them, lest it should be a snare to them; (see Exod. xxiii. 34. xxxiv. 12—15. & Deut. vii. 2.) they therefore said, how can I make a league with you, seeing it is so strictly forbidden to make a covenant with any of these nations; although we are permitted to let them live, on their asking for peace, and, submitting to the conditions annexed thereto: viz. the renouncing all idol worship and becoming tributary.

* Josh. 6.

This is manifest from the manner in which they behaved to the Gibeonites, when they found that they were of the seven nations; for otherwise, no oath could have been binding on the Israelites, (much less one obtained by fraud) to oblige them to violate the command of God, in suffering those to live that he had doomed to die. This may also be farther proved from the lenity shewn to the inhabitants of Gezer;* to Rahab,† and to the family in Bethel:‡ from all which, it is demonstrable, that if the Canaanites had repented, and submitted to renounce all their idol worship, and become tributary, they would not have been cut off. But their abominable and atrocious wickedness was the only, and sole cause of their excision: and clearly shews the futility of your objection.

I am, &c.

* Joshua xvi.

† vi. 22.

‡ Judg. i. 26.

LETTER VI.

SIR,

YOU observe (p. 18), "I proceed to the book of Joshua, and to shew that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous, and without authority." I shall not spend my time to shew how unconnected your conclusion is with your premises, as the learned bishop of Landaff has clearly pointed out the fallacy of your argument, by shewing that a book may be *anonymous*, and yet not be without *authority*. I, therefore, do not mean to contend with you concerning Joshua's writing the book that bears his name, because I am convinced he did not write it: for it is no where said that he wrote it, as is testified of Moses (as above mentioned, page 121—122): but only after Joshua had delivered his exhor-

tation, it says*, “And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone,” &c. If then, he had written the whole book, it would also have been mentioned; I, therefore, am of opinion, with the learned Abarbanal (See his preface to Joshua), that the prophet Samuel wrote the books of Joshua (except the part which Joshua wrote himself), Judges, Ruth, and a part of the book that bears his name; and which was finished by Nathan the prophet, and Gad the seer (as mentioned 1 Chron. xxix. 29.); but all this does not deduct from their authenticity, or invalidate their authority in the least: as even on this scheme they were written by the prophets; and are very properly called the word of God, from the words above quoted; where what Joshua wrote, is said to be written in the law of God: and also because they direct us to the true worship of God, by clearly pointing out to us the merciful dealings of God towards Israel; and which is the great end

* Josh. xxiv. 26.

and purpose for which they were designed; for the principal end of the book of Joshua, is to testify that all promises which God made to our ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as recorded in the law of God, by the hands of Moses, concerning the conquest and possession of the land, were all fully accomplished; and of which Joshua himself bare witness in his public exhortation to Israel, in his old age, “And behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, *and* not one thing hath failed thereof.”* And which was a manifest proof of the divine mission of Moses; as every thing that he had predicted was fully accomplished. And which must undoubtedly have made a great impression on their minds, by convincing them of the omnipotent power of divine providence; and thus induce them strictly to adhere to the

worship of the true God; and to which the admonition of Joshua also greatly tended, by placing before them the dreadful consequence of disobedience, “Therefore it shall come to pass, *that* as all the good things are come upon you, which the Lord your God promised you; so shall the Lord bring upon you all the evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you.”* And the good effects of all this, may be easily perceived; first, in the affair of the altar raised by the children of Reuben and Gad,† &c. wherein it is shewn how tenacious they were of adhering to God’s worship; and how fearful of having any thing among them, that appeared like idolatry; and secondly, by what is recorded of them in the 31st verse of the last chapter of the book of Joshua, “And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel.”

This leads me to take notice of what

* Josh. xxiii. 15. † Ibid. xxii. 10—34.

you are merrily pleased to call, the "tale of the sun standing still upon Mount Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon,"* and which you farther say, "is one of those fables that detects itself. Such a circumstance could not have happened without being known all over the world. Whereas, there is not a nation that knows any thing about it." But how should they, when it is well known, that there is not a nation in the world whose annals reach this æra by some hundred years? And yet, my good friend, it will perhaps appear that you are mistaken as to the fact, for the same supernatural phænomenon is recorded in the ancient *Chinese* annals, to have happened and been observed there, in the reign of their 8th monarch *Yau*: though according to their fabulous manner, they say it lasted ten days. (Anc. Univ. Hist. Vol. 18. p. 107.) To this may also be added what Herodotus says, the Egyptian priests told him; viz. that the sun had four times deviated from his course, having twice risen where he

* Page 20.

uniformly goes down, and twice gone down where he uniformly rises : by which you may perceive, that the Egyptians had also a confused tradition concerning the two miracles respecting the sun, as recorded in scripture.

You say, “ as a poetical figure, the whole is well enough ; ” * but although there are some commentators who may view it in this light ; and that perhaps for the reason alledged by a certain Christian writer, who says, “ but because there seems, to my apprehension at least, no sufficient reason for such supernatural appearance in this instance : ” † But if duly considered, it will appear that it was extremely necessary, at this juncture, as being highly conducive in promoting the grand design ; I mean, the establishment of the true religion, and the extirpation of Idolatry : and in which light, we must also view the dividing of the river Jordan, and the casting of hail stones from heaven upon the Canaanites, &c. inasmuch as they all tended to fill the nations with

* Page 20. † See Wakefield's reply to the second part of the Age of Reason, p. 27—28.

astonishment,* and to imprint on their minds,† as well as those of the Israelites, the highest conceptions of the majesty and greatness of the Lord Jehovah: and thus make them sensible of the sin and folly of trusting in any other god but him: for it is well known that at this time all nations had their several tutelar deities, to whose protection they committed themselves and their country, and to whose assistance‡ they ascribed their successes in war. Now, the principal deities which the Canaanites worshipped, were the sun,§ moon, and the heavens, or air. To convince them then, that the gods in whom they trusted were entirely subject to the will of the God of Israel; and at the same time to punish them for the false worship they paid to them, “the Lord cast down great hail stones from heaven (or the air) upon them unto Azekah;” and then stopped the two great luminaries in their course. And therefore it says, “in the sight of

* Josh. v. 1. † Ibid. ix. 9.

‡ 2 Kings xvii. 26. xviii. 33. and xix. 12.

§ That Baal denoted the sun, I have shewn at large, in *Lingua Sacra*, Radix 579.

all Israel," that all Israel might receive instruction from it, and be deterred from falling into the like idolatry: and no doubt it was to this in a great measure, that they shewed their dread and detestation of it, in the affair of the Reubenites, &c. building the altar; as above mentioned. (page 150) Hence it is manifest, that this miracle is to be considered, as a link in the great chain of miracles, began by Moses, to convince and punish the nations, as well as to wean the Israelites from that idolatry, to which they were so prone.

How that the miracle was performed, it is impossible for us to explain; neither do I think it at all necessary; it is sufficient, as we have shewn, that the end it was intended for was worthy of God. And in testimony of the reality of the miracle, we find that, when the prophet Habakkuk, in his* prayer for the preservation of the nation, in this long and dreadful captivity, recounted all the miracles and wonders which God performed for Israel when he

* Habak. iii. 10—13.

brought them out of Egypt: he likewise enumerated all those performed in the conquest of Canaan. "The mountains saw thee *and* they trembled: the overflowing of waters passed away: the deep uttered its voice, *and* lifted up its hands on high. The sun *and* the moon stood still in their habitation: by the light of thine arrows they went, *and* by the brightness of thy glittering spear. In *thine* indignation didst thou march through the land; in thy wrath didst thou tread the nations. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for the salvation of thine anointed." By the mountains trembling, he meant the kings of Canaan, who trembled, and were in pangs: and thus says Moses in his song: † "All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; the overflowing of the waters denotes the streams when Jordan was divided: and the deep uttering its voice, denotes the fame of that miracle through all the land of Canaan: ‡ the lifting up of its hands

* Heb. Thresh. † Exod. xv. 15—16.

‡ Josh. v. 11 &c.

on high, denotes that the lower streams of Jordan, whose banks were then overflowed,* passed away towards the Red Sea, whilst the upper waves stood on an heap. The sun and moon standing still in *their* habitation, requires no explanation: the arrows and glittering spear, denote the instruments of destruction which God employed; the great hail stones; and which may be metaphorically called his arrows and spear; and by whose light the Israelites walked: thus did God, in wrath and indignation, on account of the great and abominable wickedness of the Canaanites, march through the land, and crushed them, as corn is by the drag; and which was, when he went forth for the salvation of his people. Thus we see the prophet describing in sublime figurative language, all the miracles performed in the conquest of Canaan; amongst which none is so plain and clear as this of the sun and moon standing still; and which is an evident proof of the truth thereof: especially,

* Josh. iii. 15.

when it is considered, that the subject of the prophet's prayer was for the preservation of the nation in this captivity, which God informed him of upwards of six hundred years before it took place.

There is also another proof of the reality of this miracle; which is the appeal that the author of the book of Joshua makes to the book of *Jasher*, as a testimony of the fact which he was then recording, "Is not this written in the book of *Jasher*?" Hence it is manifest, that the book commonly called the book of *Jasher*, existed, and was well known at the time the book of Joshua was written: and pray, sir, what book do you think this was? Why, none other than the law of Moses. I see you are surpris'd; but hold, sir, I will presently explain this to you. The word in the Hebrew (with which, I judge, you are totally unacquainted, though so highly requisite in the task you have undertaken), is *ה' שר* *Hayashar*; and which, according to the rules of Hebrew grammar, is a noun substantive common, and not a noun substantive proper; as, in the latter case, the

not *the* notificative, which denotes the article *the*, could not have obtained; (See *Lingua Sacra*, Vol. I. p. 109. &c.) for which reason, it ought properly to have been translated *the righteous*, not *Jasher*; and it would be nonsense, to say *the Jasher*. The writer, therefore, when recording the miracle, according to the idiom and phraseology of the language in which he was writing, expresses himself thus, "Is not this written in the book of the righteous? i. e. in the law of the righteous God. Has not this been predicted in that righteous book? Yes, most certainly. But, perhaps you may ask, where? Be patient, and I will tell you. When Moses was blessing Israel before his death, he told them of the happiness they were to enjoy in the land, and that they should achieve the conquest thereof by the especial miraculous assistance of the God of Israel; he expressed himself in this manner*, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon

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* Deut. xxxiii. 26.

the heaven in thy help, and his excellency is on the skies. *Which* is the habitation of the eternal God, and underneath *are* the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy before thee, and shall say destroy them." By this sublime figurative language, the prophet foretold the destruction of their enemies, in the land of Canaan; and which should be, by the power of him who rideth above the heavens: who guideth all by his omnipotent power: the mover of the heavens: who only is able to stop the heavenly luminaries in their course, "till the people had avenged themselves of their enemies.*" Agreeable to what is here written, "And shall say, destroy *them*." And the consequence of this will be, that "Israel shall then dwell in safety alone, according to the form of the blessing of Jacob, † on a land of corn and wine, also his heaven shall drop dew." 10. 10.

He then concludes, "Happy art thou O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O peo-

* Josh. x. 13.

† Alluding to Gen. xxvii. 28.

ple saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thine excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places." In the conquest of Canaan, it may well be said, that the Lord was the shield of their help, and the sword of their excellency. The Gibeonites, a part of their enemies, were found liars to them, by pretending that they came from a far country, when they dwelt in the land; and the treading on their high places, denoted the destruction of the five kings in this battle, on whose necks Joshua commanded his captains to tread, as is said,* "Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings: for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight." In this sense the Chaldee paraphrast *Onkelas*, who lived in the first century, also understands it.† I shall

* Josh. x. 24—25.

† And the Chaldee paraphrast *Jonathan*, who lived near an hundred years before the destruction

give his translation in his own words,
 כַּלֵּךְ הַחַוְתָּהוּרָהוּאֲתַעַל פְּרִיקֵי צוּאֲרֵי *And thou
 shalt tread on the joints of the necks of their
 kings.* See also Jarchi, Abarb. &c.

Thus is the reality of this miracle not only confirmed, but the prediction of Moses, is also fully verified; and the existence of the law of Moses at that time, clearly proved: as it would have been madness in the author, to have appealed in proof of his veracity, to a book that never yet had existence, or that was not well known in the nation, as an authentic book.

The end of the other three books, viz. Judges, Samuel, and Kings is also to inform us of the particular providence of God; by shewing, that in the days of the Judges, as well as those of the kings, the nation was exceedingly wicked; forsaking the true worship of God, and committing idolatry, &c. for which they were delivered into the hands of their enemies; but when they sincerely repented, and

of the second temple; likewise understood the noun *סֵפֶר* in the sense here given; for he translates it *סֵפֶר*; *סֵפֶר הַחֹרֵף* the book of the law. *לֵב*

returned to God, their enemies fell before them; and they enjoyed the greatest prosperity and happiness that possibly could be; as in the reigns of David and Solomon: all which, was a manifest proof of the superintendance of divine providence, and of the truth of what Moses had told them, concerning the reward and punishment, which they were to expect in case of obedience or disobedience: and which was fully accomplished in every particular; till that, for the great wickedness of the nation, and their kings, they were destroyed from off the goodly land, as Joshua had also told them; and as is recorded in those books: and which is a demonstrable proof of their authority.

As to the difference between the books of Kings and Chronicles, I must tell you, that they have been noticed by several Hebrew commentators, and clearly accounted for by that great luminary, the learned Abarbanal, as he has shewn, that there is nothing contradictory in the different books, but that each writer, had a different purpose in view; and which easi-

ly accounts for the omissions in one book, though related in the other: but as it would swell these letters, (which already exceed the limits I first intended) to the bulk of a large volume, I must omit entering into the explanation at present, and reserve it for my commentary on the Old Testament.

I should indeed extend these letters to a length troublesome to myself, and tiresome to the reader, were I minutely to answer every objection you have made, and to rectify the numberless errors into which you have fallen: I therefore did not intend to have said any more on the subject of these four books; but the ridicule you have made use of in a note, on the story of the angel appearing to Joshua, deserves the severest reprehensions; for that being so ignorant of sacred literature, you should thus profanely jest, with what you do not in the least understand, as I shall plainly shew.

That person, whoever he be, that attempts to criticise on scripture, ought not only to have a great knowledge of the Hebrew, but also a thorough acquaint-

ance with the *idiom* and *phraseology* of the sacred language, so different from all others: or he will certainly fail in the attempt, and render himself ridiculous in the eyes of every discerning person, and justly merit their contempt. Of the truth of this observation, there cannot be a greater, than will appear in the explanation of the subject in question. Before I proceed to the explanation, it is necessary to enquire why Joshua, who was the commander in chief, as well as the ruler of the nation, when he saw a man, for the text does not say an angel, at a distance, should go up to him himself, and ask him, *art thou for us, or for our adversaries?* as this ought to have been done by some of the troops, who ought to have gone and seized him and brought him to Joshua, and not Joshua have gone to him, as it might perhaps have been his intention, to assassinate the commander in chief; it therefore is something uncommon, that Joshua, who was ninety three years old, should thus expose himself to danger. But the solution of this is, that as the text says, "And it came to pass when Joshua was by

Jericho,"* that is, he was considering, how and by what means he should take Jericho, as it was so strongly fortified; "he lift up his eyes, and looked, and behold there stood a man over against him," by the word *וַיִּבֶן* *opposite him*, we are to understand that the man was *visible* to Joshua only†; and, therefore, he immediately knew that it was an angel, and not a human person, for which reason, he went to him in person; and seeing him with a drawn sword in his hand, the ensign of destruction, he asked him, "art thou for us, or for our adversaries? Hast thou thy sword drawn to assist us, or to afflict us in favour of the enemy? To which he answered, "Nay, but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." Think not, Joshua, that you are the captain of the Lord's host (i. e. Israel) in this business, and therefore dost challenge me, whether I am for you or

* Josh. v. 13.

† Thus Daniel says, "And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision." Dan. x. 7. See also viii. 15, & x. 16.

your enemies. No; it is not so: but I am (appointed) the captain of the host of the Lord; and for that reason am I now come. When Joshua heard this, he "fell on his face to the earth, and did obeisance" to him as his superior*, "and said unto him, what saith my lord† unto his servant?" For as you are the captain, it is my duty to pay obedience to your commands. The angel then informed him of the end and purpose for which he came; which was to inform him that Jericho was not to be taken by any human means; and therefore he said unto him, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy." That is, do not busy yourself in forming schemes for the taking of the city, because it can only be taken in a supernatural manner. And thus we find

* But not as an act of adoration, as you erroneously assert; owing to your ignorance of the sacred language: for the verb *שָׁרַד* denotes *to bow down and make obeisance*, &c. as well as to worship; numerous examples of which occur in scripture, according to the manners of the eastern nations.

† Another eastern term of honor, frequently met with in the Bible.

it said to Moses, when he turned aside to see why the bush was not consumed, "put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest," &c. Do not attempt to account for this, on the principles of nature; for it is not a natural cause, but a supernatural one; * and which was denoted by God's calling the place † holy. When, therefore, Joshua heard this of the angel, it says, "And Joshua did so." Not that he pulled his shoe off, but that he immediately desisted from attempting to reduce it by any stratagem of war; and, therefore, it says,

* For the bush was an emblem of the low degraded state of the nation in Egypt; as was its burning of their misery; but its not being consumed was to shew that their bondage, &c. was not a natural or accidental cause; but solely by God's appointment to their ancestor Abraham; and therefore, as they were under the immediate care of his providence, they could not be destroyed, although so sorely oppressed. And which has been the case with the nation to this day: as shewn at large in vol. 1st of my Dissertations on the Prophecies. page 77. &c.

† The Hebrew noun *קדש* *place*, is used figuratively to denote *contemplation, intellectual view, &c.* as in Exod. xxxiii. 21. See Maim. in Moreh Neruchim. part 1st. chap. viii.

“Now Jericho was straitly shut up, none went out, and none came in.” It was not to be taken by any human power; and, therefore, the word of God came immediately unto Joshua, to inform him, that though it could not be reduced by any human force, yet, “I have given into thy hand Jericho, and the kings thereof.” &c. Hence the cause of the appearance of the angel is manifest: for as Joshua, who was just going to engage in a war with so many nations, and finding the first city that he was going to attack so strongly fortified, he was naturally much taken up in thought, to find out the means of reducing it; as well knowing that a miscarriage in the first onset, might lead to the most dreadful consequences, even the entire destruction of the whole nation; as he himself pathetically expresses it, on the failure of their attempt against Ai*; the angel, therefore, came to inform him, that he had no occasion to employ any human force or stratagems of war to reduce Jericho,

* Joshua vii. 7—10,

but only to obey the command of God in all things; and to ascribe the glory of his conquests to the author of them, the Lord of hosts. Thus encouraging him to trust solely in God, in the arduous business he was then employed in; and which we find, was actually the case in the conquest of the land of Canaan. As to your low wit about pulling off the shoe it no doubt originated in your ignorance, as you ought to have known that this rite was an indication of reverence for the divine presence, when all human and worldly thoughts ought to be set aside: for which reason, the priests always officiated barefooted in the temple.

The two books of Ezra and Nehemiah you allow to be genuine books, as being written by the authors whose name they bear, giving an account of the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, about four hundred and fifteen years before the christian æra; but then you observe,* “Those accounts are nothing to us, nor to any other person, unless it be

* p. 35.

to the Jews, as a part of the history of their nation: and there is just as much of the word of God in those books, as there is in any of the histories of France, or Rapin's history of England." Whatever these books may be to you, or any other deist or infidel, they are of the highest importance to us as Jews; and not only to us, but likewise to all who believe the Old Testament to be the word of God; as far as the full completion of prophecy is a proof of the truth of revelation. The prophet Jeremiah said,† "For thus saith the Lord, surely when seventy years have been completed at Babylon, I will visit you, and I will perform towards you my good promise, in bringing you again to to this place." Now, the very first verse of the book of Ezra, which you allow to be a genuine book, proves the full completion of this prophecy, so contrary to all human foresight. "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jerē-

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† Jerem. xxix. 10.

Jeremiah might be fulfilled; the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus," &c. Surely you cannot say this is nothing to us; I mean to you and me: I as a true believer, you as an unbeliever; because it is perfectly decisive in the cause at issue between us; for if the book of Ezra, which you allow to be a genuine book, proves that Jeremiah was a true prophet, there is an end of all dispute between us; because here is a demonstration of the truth of divine revelation, admitted by yourself, as you allow the genuineness of the book that records the completion of the prophecy. Nay, these books not only confirm the truth of Jeremiah's prophecy, but likewise prove the authenticity of the books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, Kings, and Chronicles; all which are referred to by Ezra and Nehemiah, as containing the religion, laws and history of the Jewish nation, from Abraham to that very time.* Of this, it appears to me, you was fully sensible; and therefore wished to invalidate the testimony of those books, by giv-

* See Ezra, chap. ix. and x. and Nehem. Chap. iii—ix. and x.

ing the authors a fideblow : observing,*
 “ But even in matters of historical record,
 neither of those writers are to be depend-
 ed upon.” As a proof of which you
 tell us, that the total amount of the num-
 ber of those who returned from Babylon,
 does not agree with the several particu-
 lars. But is it to be supposed that a man
 of Ezra’s acknowledged abilities, should
 not be able to give us the sum total of
 forty-two particular sums ? Neither is it
 usual for impostors to make such glaring
 blunders, that every school boy may de-
 tect. But the truth of the matter is, as
Jarchi observes, that “ those above men-
 tioned in the particulars, were of the tribe
 of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests ;
 and the difference in the sum total, was
 made up of those of the other tribes.” †
 Thus also it is explained in Seder On-
 glam.

You seem to speak well of the book of
 Job †, but at the same time attempt to
 prove it a gentile book, by saying, “ I

* Page 35.

† See Jarchi in Loc.

‡ Page 37—38.

have seen the opinion of two Hebrew commentators, Aben Ezra and Spinoza, upon this subject; they both say that the book carries no internal evidence of being an Hebrew book; that the genius of the composition, and the drama of the piece, are not Hebrew, that it has been translated from another language into Hebrew, and that the author of the book was a gentile; that the character represented under the name of Satan (which is the first and only time this is mentioned in the Bible) does not correspond to any Hebrew idea." But where, sir, did you see all this? for in the first place, Spinoza never was admitted an Hebrew commentator; all we know of him is, that he wrote several tracts, and after different changes, at length became an atheist. As to Aben Ezra, he only says, on verse 11 of chapter second. "And our Rabbins of blessed memory say, that Moses wrote the book of Job: but I am inclined (to think) that is a translated book; and therefore it is difficult to explain, as are all translated books." But not a word does he say, of its being a gentile book; nay, in his preface to

this book, he seems to acknowledge that it was written by Moses, or at least some other prophet; for there he says, "And of the righteous Job, the prophet testifieth that he was singularly righteous in his generation; and that his sufferings were not for any evil he had committed," &c. What you observe concerning *satan*, is borrowed from your master Voltaire; who says, it is a Chaldean word, and which proves you both to be ignorant of the Hebrew:* for *שׂוֹן* is incontestably an Hebrew noun, and denotes *an adversary: an accuser*: in which sense, we find it used by Moses, Numb. xxii. 22. "And the angel of the Lord stood in the way, *לְשׂוֹן לוֹ* for *an adversary* against him." See also verse 32. Thus also 1 King. v. 4. *אֵין שׂוֹן* There was no *adversary*. The Plur. affix. occurs in Psal. cix. 20. *פְּעֹלַת שׂוֹנָיו* The reward of *mine adversaries*. The verb also occurs in the same Psalm ver. 4. *תִּהְיֶה אֲהַבְתִּי שׂוֹנָיו* For my love *they hate me*. All which,

* The Chaldean word for an adversary is not *שׂוֹן* with *sin*, but *סַמּוֹן* with *samech*.

plainly shows the fallacy of what you have advanced : and what truth there is in your assertion.

You also observe,* “ that the book ~~shows itself~~ to be the production of a mind cultivated in science,” And was not Moses, to whom this book is ascribed, a man of science? Is it not allowed on all hands, that Moses was instructed in all the learning of the Egyptians, who were well acquainted with arts and sciences, and who had addicted themselves to the study of astronomy † in the earliest ages? But you say, “ The astronomical names, Pleiades, Orion and Arcturus, are Greek, and not Hebrew names; and as it does not appear from any thing that is to be found in the Bible, that the Jews knew any thing of astronomy, or that they studied it, they had no translation for those names in their own language, but adopted the names as they found them in the Poem ‡.” Now it is manifest from the Bible, that the Jews were acquainted

* p. 38. † Anc. Univ. Hist. vol. Ist. p. 246.

‡ Page 38.

with astronomy, and studied it; See Exod. xii. 2. “This month *shall be* unto you the beginning of months: it *shall be* the first month of the year to you.” As their months were from thenceforward to be lunar months, their year of course fell short of the solar year, eleven days, some few hours and minutes, and as they were commanded to celebrate the passover in the month *Aviv*,* and which should be in the vernal equinox; they consequently were obliged to make intercalations; as otherwise, the feast would be anticipated eleven days every year; so that in the space of thirty three years, it would be carried backward through all the seasons of the year, as is the case in Turkey; it therefore is plain, that when Moses appointed this sort of year, they were obliged to study astronomy. See what your favorite Hebrew commentator, Aben Ezra, says on the subject, Exod. xii. 9. &c. See also Abarb. and R. Levi Ben Gershom, in Loc.

You assert that the names of the constellations *Pleiades*, *Orion*, and *Arcturus*,

* Exod. xxiii. 15. xxxiv. 11 & Deut. xvi. 1.

are Greek names ; but did you ever consult the original ? if you had, you would have found that the names of the constellations mentioned in Job, are as unlike the Greek names which stand in the common translation (the only one you are able to read) as possibly can be : for the word *Arcturus*, is *שׁוֹב* *Osh*, that rendered *Orion* is *כִּסְלִי* * *keesel*, and that rendered *Pleiades* is *קֵמָה* *keema*. By this, the commonest reader, and the meanest capacity may plainly see, how unfounded your objection is, and with what hesitation they ought to admit any of your statements. The preceding piece of false criticism, may be attributed to your ignorance ; but to what shall we attribute what follows ; “ We know nothing of what the ancient gentile world (as it is called) was before the time of the Jews, whose practice has been to calumniate and blacken the character of all other nati-

* In *Isaiah* xiii. 10. we meet with *וּמְסֵלֵיהֶם*
And their constellations. And some think that *כִּסְלִי*
keesel denotes *scorpion*. See *Jarchi*, *Aben Ezra*,
Kimchi, and *Abarbanal*, *Ibid.* & *Lingua Sacra*,
Radix *כִּסְלִי*.

ons ;” &c.—It appears to have been their (the heathen) custom to personify both virtue and vice, by statues and images, as is done now-a-days, both by statuary and by painting ; but it does not follow from this, that they worshipped them any more than we do.” Is not this curious apology for the heathen’s idolatry, made with a view to blacken and calumniate the character of the Jews, and their sacred books, because these books clearly shew that they did worship them ? See the different accounts given in those books of the abominable worship of the ancient *Egyptians, Babylonians, &c.* But believe not those books ; read profane authors (as they are called), and you will find that the worship of images was universal. Did not the Sabians worship images* ? Did not the Romans worship the Gods ? Did not the Grecians worship images ? Did not the Ephesians worship

* Anciently all the idolatry of the world was divided between two sects : viz. the *worshippers of images*, who were called the *Sabians*, and the *worshippers of fire*, who were called the *Magians*. See *Maim. in Moreh Nevuchim*.

the great goddess Diana? In short, there was not an ancient nation that was not guilty of idolatry, either by image worship, or that of the heavenly bodies, &c.

Of the Psalms, you say*, “that some are moral, others are very revengeful.— It is, however, an error, or an imposition to call them the psalms of David; they are a collection, as song-books are now-a-days.” But had you been in the least acquainted with the writings of the Hebrews, whose books you have attempted to criticise with such asperity, you would have known that they held that David did not compose the whole of Psalms, as some are inserted therein that were composed by *Adam, Melchisedeck, Abraham, Moses, Heaman, Jeduthun, Asaph,* and the three sons of *Korah*†, but they are called the Psalms of David, because he composed the major part of them; and they are wonderfully instructive, as being every where full of the praises of God,

* Page 40.

† This is the opinion of all the ancient Rabbins.

the remembrance of his loving kindness to himself, as also to the nation; besides moral precepts, and such sentiments as are adapted to make a man good and happy in every station of life.

But why did you not consult the Hebrew commentator *Aben Ezra* on the subject? If you had, you would have found that in his preface to Psalms, he is decidedly of opinion that the Psalms are not a *collection of songs*, as you foolishly assert; but sacred hymns; several of which are prophetic; (as I shall shew at large in my *Dissertations on the Prophecies*, the second Volume of which is just published) and that they all were written by *רוח הקדש* *the inspiration* * *of the holy spirit*: and that David was a prophet. How you, who are such a minute enquirer after truth, came to overlook this, which would have prevented your exposing yourself to ridicule, I know not; but if it was owing to your not

* Thus also says Maim. *Moreh Nevuchim*, part 2d. chap. xlv. See also *Lingua Sacra*, life of David, in *Radix* 717.

finding in the writings of your infidel masters any traces of it, I really pity you; because your own ignorance utterly precludes you from reaping any advantage from the writings of such an eminent commentator, (as his works have never been translated into our venacular tongue) especially, as you seem to have a great deference for his opinion: and which must certainly be a very great misfortune to you, as it exposes you to commit such egregious blunders, as must render you truly contemptible.

The Proverbs of Solomon, you esteem a jest book, but this is nothing extraordinary; for if the Psalms of David is esteemed by you a song book, why may not Proverbs be a jest book? However, if you had consulted *Aben Ezra* on the subject, he would have taught you better. He would have taught you, that “this part* is admonitory; and acquaints us with the exalted degree of the eternal wisdom, for by it,† the world was called

* For he divides the book into four parts; and is here speaking of the first part.

† As Solomon says, chap. iii. 19. “The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth:” &c.

into existence from nonentity : he therefore admonishes *us* to adhere to it, and to turn aside from the abominable woman ; he also instructs *us*, to destroy the foolish appetites incident to creatures formed of matter ; and thus preserve alive the immortal soul." This *fir*, is what he would have taught you ; and can you perceive any jest in all this ? But stop, hear Solomon himself, "The fear of Jehovah, is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." This, *fir*, is no jest ; but if contrary to all the rules of right reason, you should still persist in asserting it to be a jest, I should not scruple to pronounce you *in earnest* to be one of those fools that "despise wisdom and instruction." Let us proceed, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." That is, next to God, let me advise thee, my son, to reverence thy parents : and not only to hearken unto thy father when he instructs thee in the fear of God, or tells thee thou hast done amiss ; but also to let thy mother's commands be a law to

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thee. And happy would it have been for many, had they attended to this admonition; in which I am sure you can see no jest. Again, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." My son, walk not thou in the way with them: refrain thy foot from their path. For their feet run to evil and make haste to shed blood," &c. These are a few of the proverbs of Solomon, contained in the first chapter of Solomon's "jest book." I imagine they are rather too grave to cause merriment; but they may be of great service in making a person wise and virtuous. Pity you did not read this jest book through with becoming attention: if you had, it would have taught you to "Be not wise in thine own eyes: but to fear the Lord and depart from evil."

The book of *Ecclesiastes** you say, "is written as the solitary reflections of a worn out debauchee, such as Solomon

* Solomon was called קהלת, (which properly denotes an assembler; from the Radix קהל which see in *Lingua Sacra*) on account of the wisdom which was centred in him. See *Aben Ezra*, and *Jarchi*, *Eccle. i. 1.*

was, who looking back on scenes he can no longer enjoy, cries out, *All is vanity!*"* Attend now to the words of Aben Ezra, who after shewing the difference between good and bad actions, &c. and that every man finds *his own way pure in his own sight*; observes, "But the Lord God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Solomon his beloved, to explain acceptable words, and to teach us the path of rectitude," &c. And indeed, the whole work is uniform, (though there are many detached sentiments and proverbs interspersed) and confined to one subject; viz. the vanity of the world, which is exemplified by the experience of Solomon, introduced in the character of a person investigating a very difficult question; examining the arguments on both sides, and at length disengaging himself from an anxious and doubtful disputation, by observing, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole *duty* of man."†

* p. 41.

† Eccle. xii. 13.

As to Solomon's sins and debaucheries, with which you wish to blacken his writings, they are so far from derogating from the purity of his doctrine, *that all is vanity, but the fear and love of God*, that on the contrary, they strongly enforce it; by teaching us the following important truths. First, not to slight the command of God; for as we find it commanded, that the king "shall not multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away."* Solomon, by slighting this commandment, actually fell into the crime foretold as the consequence of the breach of it. Secondly, that though he was so great and wise a king, yet was he immediately severely punished for his sins, by having the kingdom rent from him, and given to Jeroboam: and which is a manifest proof of the divine superintendance of the actions of mankind, however high and exalted their station: and which ought to make us all extremely cautious of offending the most high in any degree whatever.

You say Solomon's Songs are amorous

* Deut. xvii. 17.

and foolish enough, but which wrinkled fanaticism has called divine.—I hope you do not account Aben Ezra *a wrinkled fanatic*. Now he is decidedly against you, for he says, “This poem is an entire sacred allegory. It commences at the time of Abraham, and extends to the time of the Messiah: and which describes (if I may use the expression) the conjugal union of God with the Jewish Church: which, as a peculiar people, having been selected by him from among all nations; he had (as it were) ratified his choice by a solemn covenant. This is the solemn compact, so frequently celebrated by almost all the sacred writers under the same image; and who have therefore compared the nation’s committing idolatry, to a woman being guilty of adultery towards her husband. He also says, “*Far be it, far be it* from us, to imagine that the song of songs, contains any thing amorous, but is entirely figurative.” Thus you stumble step by step, till at last, I fear you will fall, and rise no more. Excuse my freedom, but really my patience is al-

most exhausted; I am quite weary of wading through such a farrago of nonsense, ignorance, futility, and indecent levity. How must the Hebraist smile, to hear you with an air of importance, violently declaiming against the compilers of the Bible, for the placing of Solomon's song after Ecclesiastes, &c. as any little Jew school-boy, could have told you, that they are not placed thus in the Hebrew Bible. There, the arrangement is as follows, First, the Pentateuch: Second, the former Prophets, viz. Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and kings: Third, the latter prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malichi: Fourth, the Hagiography, which contains, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. Hence, you may also perceive the futility of your objection concerning the term *greater and lesser* prophets*, as termed by Chris-

* Part. I, p. 15

tians in general, (though I suppose, they only mean the size of the books) but had you ever seen an Hebrew Bible, you would have known that there is no such thing in it, as *lesser* and *greater* prophets: as they are all included in the term *latter prophets*; and are enumerated thus, *Isaiab, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve*: because they are all included in one book, by the Jews. Are you not ashamed now of your misplaced wit? Alas! What a lamentable thing is ignorance!

The book of Ruth, you call "an idle, bungling story, foolishly told about a strolling country girl creeping sily to bed to her cousin Boaz." Is this fair criticism? Is it truth? Does it appear so from history? On the contrary, we find that she was no strolling girl; and it is very base in you thus to traduce her character. She had been married ten years, and being left a widow without children, and fully bent on renouncing the idolatry of her native country, she accompanied her mother in law, back to the land of Israel: there, her mother informed her of the

right of redemption which she had, according to the law of Israel, among whom she was now incorporated. She therefore instructed her how to act, in order to break the matter to Boaz, and to claim his protection; for which reason, she laid herself down at the foot of her aged kinsman's bed, and rose up as innocent as she laid down, and with an high encomium on her virtuous * behaviour. She was afterwards married to Boaz, and acknowledged by all her neighbours, nay, by all the city, to be a strictly virtuous woman: and it is to be presumed, that they most certainly were better acquainted with her character, than you possibly can be. As to its being called the word of God, hear what *Aben Ezra* says, "Because *David* was the root of the kingdom of Israel, his genealogy was written in the sacred books."

You observe, "If Madam Esther thought it any honour to offer herself as a kept Mistress to Ahasuerus," &c, but pray Sir, where did you find that Esther

* Chap. 10-11.

† P. 37.

offered herself? Not in the history I am sure: for according to the account there, "She was taken to the king's house, to the custody of Hagai, keeper of the women*." Whence, I apprehend, it was as much against her inclination to enter the king's seraglio, as it was yours to enter the Luxembourg. And *Aben Ezra* asserts, "that she was seized by force." Thus also *Jarchi* (*Vide in Loc*). The book clearly points out the particular providence of God in the care of his peculiar people: and a manifest proof of its authenticity, is the celebration of the feast of *Purim* (in allusion to *pur* the lot) by the whole nation to this day†, in commemoration of the great and wonderful deliverance which God wrought for them, by means of *Esther* and *Mordecai*.

* *Esther*. iii. 8.

† See *Levi's Ceremonies of the Jews*, p. 127.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

SIR,

I SHALL now proceed to take notice of what you observe concerning Isaiah, and the other prophets. You say*, "Whoever will take the trouble of reading the book ascribed to Isaiah, will find it one of the most wild and disorderly compositions ever put together: it is one continued, incoherent, bombastical rant, full of extravagant metaphor, without application, and destitute of meaning; a school boy would scarcely have been excusable for writing such stuff." I really know not which most to admire, your *ignorance*, or *presumption*. "Whoever will take the trouble," &c. I sir, have taken that trouble; nay, I have commented on a great part of it; (See my *Dissertations on the prophecies* vol. I. & II.) and am allowed to have some little knowledge in the lan-

* p. 43.

guage in which it is written: but have not found it to be "such stuff," as you assert it is. On the contrary, I have found the diction pure; the sentiments grand and sublime; and the imagery strong and beautiful. You compare, "the burden of Babylon, the burden of Moab, &c. to the story of the knight of the burning mountain," &c. But if you had read the burden of Babylon with attention, and compared it with its present state, as I have done, I doubt not but it would have made as strong an impression on your mind, as it has on mine; especially, if you consider that this prophecy was delivered near two hundred years before its completion: and that the captivity of the Jews, for which the Babylonians were to be thus punished, did not fully take place till about one hundred and thirty years after the delivery of this prophecy: that the Medes, who are expressly mentioned (chap. xiii. 17.) as the principal agents in the overthrow of the Babylonish monarchy, by which the Jews were released from that captivity, were at the time of the delivery of this prophecy, an inconfi-

derable people; having been in a state of anarchy ever since the fall of the great Assyrian Empire, of which they formed a part, under Sardanapalus: and did not become a kingdom under Dejoces till about the seventeenth year of Hezekiah. The exact completion of prophecies like these, plainly shew from whom the prophet received them; from him, to whom all things are known; he therefore, challenges the false gods to come forth, and give evident demonstration of their foreknowledge and power, by foretelling future events. "Let them approach, and tell us the things that shall happen; the things that shall first happen, what they are, let them tell us; and we will consider them; and we shall know the event; or declare to us things to come hereafter. Tell us the things that will come to pass in latter times: then shall we know, that ye are gods."* In opposition to this, the true prophet of the true God, as an evident proof of the truth of what he had predicted, says, "The former predictions,

* Isaiah xli. 22.

40! they are come to pass: and new events I now declare: before they spring forth, I make them known unto you."

This, Sir, is the test of prophecy; it is this that distinguishes the burden of Babylon, the burden of Moab, &c. from those foolish tales that you ridiculously wish to compare them with. And, in truth, there cannot be a stronger or more convincing proof of the truth of prophecy, and the accomplishment of future events so foretold, than this position: for if the former prophecies were exactly fulfilled, it is an earnest of the completion of the future events so predicted. And yet, in defiance of such clear evidence, you assert, that the last verse of the forty fourth, and the beginning of the forty fifth chapters of Isaiah were written at least an hundred and fifty years after Isaiah was dead: and are* a compliment to *Cyrus*, who permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, as stated in *Ezra*." And as a proof

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* p. 44.

of this, you quote these two verses; but herein you have acted very unfairly; for you ought to have began at verse 24th. of chapter xlvth, as it is there that the prophecy commences, "Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer; even he that formed thee from the womb: *I am* the Lord who maketh all things; who stretched out the heavens alone; who spread the *firm* earth by myself: *I am He*, who frustrateth the prognostics of the impostors, and maketh the diviners mad; who reverseth the devices of the sages, and infatuateth their knowledge: who establisheth the word of his servant: and accomplisheth the counsel of his messengers: who sayeth to Jerufalem, Thou shalt be inhabited, and to the cities of Judah, ye shall be built; and her desolate places I will restore." Thus he shews the return of the nation from the Babylonian captivity, according to his prediction; in opposition to that of the prognosticators and diviners; whose wisdom and counsel God frustrateth, but establisheth the word of his servant. In the next three verses, he shews the destruction of Babylon; the

manner it is to be taken, and by whom. “Who sayeth to the deep, Be thou wasted; and I will make dry thy rivers:” By this figurative language, the prophet shews the taking of Babylon by Cyrus, who drained off the waters of the Euphrates, which ran through the city of Babylon, by means of which, he marched his troops by night along the bed of the river into the heart of the city,* and surpris’d it. The prophet then shews by whom it should be thus conquered; and for what purpose: even for the sake of Israel, God’s chosen servants; that all might know that Jehovah alone was God, and none else.— “Who sayeth to Cyrus, *who* is my shepherd? and he shall fulfil all my pleasure: by saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whom I hold fast by the right hand: that I may subdue nations before him; and ungird the loins of kings: that I may open before

* Herodot. Lib. 1. Cap. 178. 185. & Seq. & Cyropedia. Lib. 7.

him the valves ; and the gates shall not * be shut. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places strait ; the gates of brass will I break in pieces †, and the bars of iron will I cut asunder. And I will give unto thee the treasures ‡ of

* The gates of Babylon within the city, leading from the streets to the river, were providentially left open, when Cyrus's forces entered the city in the night through the channel of the river, in the general disorder occasioned by the great feast which was then celebrated : otherwise, says Herodotus (Lib. 1. 191.), the Persians would have been shut up in the river, and taken as in a net, and all destroyed. And the gates of the palace were imprudently opened by the king's orders, to enquire what was the cause of the tumult without, when the two parties under Gobryas and Gadatas rushed in, got possession of the palace, and slew the king. Xenoph. Cyroep. 7. p. 328.

† Herodotus says (1. 179.) "In the wall all round there are an hundred gates all of brass ; and so, in like manner, are the siles and lintels." The gates within the city, opening to the river from the several streets, were likewise of brass ; as were also those of the temple of Belus. Ibid. 1. 180. 181.

‡ Sardis and Babylon when taken by Cyrus, were the wealthiest cities in the world. Cræsus, celebrated beyond all the kings of that age for his riches, gave up his treasures to Cyrus, with an ex-

darkness, and the stores deep hidden in secret places: that thou mayest know that I am the Lord; *he* that calleth thee by thy name *is* the God of Israel." By this, God shewed that it was not by his own power that Cyrus atchieved all his conquests, but by the divine assistance: and which Cyrus himself acknowledged; Ezra i. 2. "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth;" &c. Not as Sennacherib, who said, "By the strength of my hand have I done it; and by my wisdom, for I am prudent*;" &c. For which the prophet de-

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act account in writing of the whole, containing the particulars with which each waggon was loaded, when they were carried away, and which were delivered to Cyrus at the palace of Babylon. Xenoph. Cyrop. lib. 7. p. 503. 515. According to Pliny's account (Nat. Hist. 33. 15.) of the wealth taken by Cyrus in Asia, the gold and silver, converted into pounds sterling, would amount to one hundred and twenty six millions, two hundred and twenty four thousand pounds. Brerewood, De Ponderibus, cap. 10.

* Isaiah x, 13.

nounced his destruction ; and which was fully accomplished. Nor yet like Nebuchadnezzar, who said, " I will ascend above the heights of the clouds ; I will be like the most high."* For which blasphemous expression, that dreadful sentence contained in the following verses was pronounced against him and his posterity : and which was likewise accomplished in every particular. But Cyrus was fully convinced, that he owed his victories to God, to whom alone he ascribed all his successes ; more especially, as he was assured, that the God of Israel, had called him by name, near two hundred years before his birth, that he might know that he was Jehovah, the God of Israel ; and that he did not make him thus successful and victorious for his sake ; but for the sake of his chosen Israel, as in ver. 4. &c. " For the sake of my servant Jacob, and of Israel, my chosen ; I have even called thee by thy name ; I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and none else ; beside me *there*

* Isaiah xiv. 14.

is no God : I have girded thee, though thou hast not known me. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that *there is* none beside me : I *am* the Lord, and none else ; *Who* formeth the light, and createth darkness ; *who* maketh peace, and createth evil : I, Jehovah, am the author of all these things." We now have a full view of the prophecy, the truth of which is proved by its full completion in every particular ; so contrary to the pretended oracles and predictions delivered by the prognosticators, diviners, &c.—The prophet, in figurative language, also shews the manner in which Babylon was to be taken ; and that, though God had called Cyrus, and led him on to victory, &c. in such an extraordinary manner, yet it was not for his merit, for he knew not the Lord : but the sole end and purpose for which he was called, and thus exalted, was for the sake of the God of Israel's chosen people ; and that he might know that the Lord alone formed all things ; contrary to the great principle of the Magian religion, which prevailed in

Persia in the time of Cyrus, and in which he probably was educated, that there are two supreme, co-eternal, and independent causes, always acting in opposition to each other; one they called Light, who was the author of all good; the other they called Darknes, the author of all evil; that when the good being Light had the ascendancy, then good and happiness prevailed among men; and when Darknes had the superiority, then evil and misery abounded. In reference, therefore, to this absurd opinion, held by the person (Cyrus) to whom this prophecy is addressed, God by his prophet, in the most significant terms, asserts his omnipotence and supremacy: "I am the Lord, and none else; *Who* formeth the light and createth darknes; *who* maketh peace and createth evil: I Jehovah am the author of all these things." Declaring that those powers, whom the Persians held to be the original authors of good and evil to mankind, representing them by light and darknes, as their proper emblems, were no other than creatures of God, the instruments which he employs

in his government of the world, ordained, or permitted by him, in order to execute his wise and just decrees; and that there is no power, either good or evil, independent of the one supreme God, infinite in power and in goodness. Now, is it possible to conceive, that a captive Jew, intending to compliment Cyrus, the greatest prince in the world, should be so stupid, so devoid of all reason and common sense, as to tell him, that the victories he had achieved, and the conquests he had obtained, were not the effect of his wisdom, prudence and valor; but were bestowed on him by the God of Israel: a God whom he did not know: and that they were not bestowed on him for his merit; because he did not worship God, as he did not know him; but for the sake of God's chosen people, that they, through his means, might be released from the captivity they were held in by the Babylonians; so that he was nothing more than a mere instrument in the hands of that God which he knew not; and who also told him, that the Gods he worshipped were no other than his creatures;

and that his religion was all a lie. This, I must confess, was a pretty way indeed to compliment a great prince, such as Cyrus; but that it should procure from him the deliverance of the captives, as a thankful acknowledgement that he owed all his power and greatness to God's infinite goodness and power, is altogether incredible: and whoever maintains such an absurdity, shews either a weak head or a bad heart.

As to what you say (p. 45.) of "the studied craft of scripture-makers, in making every part of this romantic book of school boy's eloquence, bend to the monstrous idea of a son of God begotten by a ghost on the body of a virgin," &c. I have nothing to say, as it does not concern me in the defence of Isaiah: because, I am fully convinced, that the prophet never intended any such thing; as I have shewn at large, in my Letters to Dr. Cooper, in answer to his, One great argument for the truth of Christianity from a single Prophecy.* But, as you attempt to

* See my letters to Dr. Priestly, Dr. Cooper, &c.

prove from this passage, that Ifaiah was "a lying prophet and an impostor," I shall briefly state the true intent and meaning of the prophecy; and shew that what he had predicted, was fully verified in every particular.

It must be observed, that before this confederacy of the two kings against the house of David, they each had warred separately against Judah; when Rezin first carried away a great multitude of them captive to Damascus; and afterwards the king of Israel also smote an hundred twenty thousand of them in one day: and carried away two hundred thousand of them captive; but although they were made captives, yet were they not retained in captivity; for the men of Israel being admonished by the Lord's prophet, the principal men, "rose up; and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked, among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho

the city of the palm-trees,* to their brethren, 2 Chron. xxviii. 15. But now that they formed a league together, not for the purpose of making captives, or taking of some cities; but with an intent of making an entire conquest of the kingdom of Judah, destroy the house of David, and place another family on the throne; it says, they “went up towards Jerusalem, to war against it.” For though when they came up separately against Judah, God suffered them as the instruments of his vengeance, for their manifold sins, to prevail against them: yet, when that unnatural confederacy of *Israel* with the *uncircumcised* was formed; and they planned the total destruction of the royal house of David, God would by no means suffer it: they consequently could not prevail against it. And, because the house of David was so greatly moved at this formidable confederacy; (but which was not the case, when they came up sepa-

* By this sir, you may perceive that there was some humanity amongst those Israelites, whom you, and your master, Voltaire, every where represent as a horde of barbarous brutes.

rately, and therefore is not mentioned in Chronicles) God commanded Isaiah to go forth, and encourage Ahaz, by telling him that this scheme, “shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.” And as a proof of this, the prophet gave him the following sign. “Behold the young woman hath conceived,* and beareth a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, at his knowing† to refuse the evil and chuse the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land shall be forsaken, which thou abhorrest because of both its kings.” This was fully accomplished, when the king of Assyria slew Rezin‡; and Hosea the son of Elah§ slew Pekah§. Thus was this prophecy

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* הרה Is the present tense: Is with child.

† *At his knowing, &c.* The circumstance of the child's eating butter and honey, was to denote a state of plenty; and which was to arise from their deliverance, that was to take place before the child should know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, at which time he was to eat it; and which was actually the case, as I have plainly shewn above.

‡ 2 King. xvi. 9.

§ Ibid. xv. 30.

fully verified in every particular: for the prophet declared by the command of God that the above mentioned purpose of the two kings, "shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." I now ask you, Did it stand? Did it come to pass? Did they dethrone and destroy the royal house of David? Was the son of Tabeal ever made king of Judah? No. On the contrary, the two confederate kings were both cut off, before the child that was to be born, knew to refuse the evil, and choose the good, exactly as the prophet had predicted. Hence it is manifest, that the kings not only failed in their attempt, but were themselves cut off; while Ahas continued to reign over Judah, and was peaceably succeeded by his son Hezekiah. Pray, Sir, who is now the lying prophet and impostor? I will not say you have told a lie, but you have said the thing that is not true: and, therefore, think the following words of the prophet peculiarly applicable to you: Wo unto them who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and

sweet for bitter. Wo unto them who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own conceit*.”

You charge Jeremiah with “guarding his† prognostications in such a crafty manner, as to leave himself a door to escape by,” because he had said, that though God should denounce the destruction of a nation for its wickedness; yet, if that nation should repent, and return from its evil, the Lord would repent of the evil that he thought to do unto them; and vice versa. This you call “an absurd subterfuge,‡—consistent with nothing but the stupidity of the Bible.” But in my humble opinion, it is highly instructive; for under the type of the potter’s fashioning the vessel as he pleases, is shewn, God’s absolute authority over all nations and kingdoms, to regulate and alter their condition at his own discretion; and that he rewards and punishes them according to their desert. It must therefore be considered as a warning to all nations, to be careful not to commit evil in the sight of

* Isai. v. 20--21.

† p. 47.

‡ p. 48.

the Almighty; and likewise as an encouragement to those who have sinned, to avail themselves of God's mercy, to repent and turn from their evil way; as was actually the case of the Ninevites: and as is plain from the whole tenor of the history of the Hebrews.

You next bring forward an objection, which you have borrowed from Spinoza and others, concerning the disordered state of the book: but this does not affect the authenticity, nor the genuineness of the book of Jeremiah: for although the order of time may not be every where observed; yet may it be accounted for, in supposing that Ezra, or the men of the great synagogue, having found all the prophecies of Jeremiah separately, they collected them together into one book, without attending strictly to the order of their proper places: and yet this may not have been the effect of chance, but of some cause known to the prophet and them, though unknown to us; as the learned Abarbanal has observed on the xxxvth chapter, which contains a prophecy expressly said to be delivered in the

days of *Jehoiakim*, and yet is placed after several that were delivered in the days of *Zedekiah*: but the reason of this, appears to be as follows. When Jeremiah had written the preceding prophecy, concerning their not suffering the bond-men and bond-women to go free according to the law of Moses,* and for which he denounced a severe sentence against them; he thought proper to place immediately after it, the prophecy concerning the Rechabites, who strictly obeyed their father's injunction: and when he made trial of their obedience, and offered them wine to drink, they refused it; alledging the express prohibition of their father. By which, the prophet had an opportunity of placing the disobedience of the Jews to the divine command, in a much stronger point of view; by contrasting it with the obedience that the Rechabites paid to their father's command; and as is plain from the words of the prophet, ver. 13, 14, 15. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; go and say unto the men of

* *Exod.* xxi. 2. *Levit.* xxv. 39. &c.

Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he gave in charge to his sons, not to drink wine, have been punctually performed, &c. But ye have not hearkened unto me," &c. Then follows the severe sentence which God had pronounced against them for their disobedience, contrasted with the reward he promised to bestow on the Rechabites for their obedience. In this manner, all the seeming disorder in the arrangement of the book, might probably be accounted for.

You also charge (p. 52.) the prophet, or the book, it is all the same, with contradiction, because two different accounts are given of his imprisonment: but if you had attended to the different accounts with a candid eye, in order to come at truth, you would have found, that they recorded two different imprisonments; as nothing can be more obvious than that he was twice imprisoned: * first, in the house of

* The learned Abarbanal is of the opinion that he was imprisoned several times; the first of which

Jonathan the scribe, as mentioned chap. xxxvii. 15. and from which he was liberated by *Zedekiah*, to the court of the prison, and had by his order a stated allowance of bread, until all the bread in the city was spent: and for having publicly predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, he was a second time imprisoned in the dungeon of *Malchijah* the king's son; whence he was freed by the intercession of *Ebed-melech*, as mentioned chap. 38.

The different names in the twenty-first and thirty-eighth chapters, plainly shew that they were different events; the one, giving an account of those that were sent with the message from *Zedekiah*; the other, of those that heard him declare to the people the destruction of Jerusalem: and so far from the conference breaking off abruptly, at the tenth verse of the twenty-first chapter, that it is continued to the end of the chapter: for from verse the third to verse seventh, he answers the

was in the days of *Jehoiakim*; this he has clearly and satisfactorily proved from the different texts: and which the learned reader may see in his comment on the xxxviii chapter.

king; from verse the eighth to the tenth, he speaks to the people; and from verse the eleventh to the end, to the house of the king of Judah.

You observe (p. 51) "But the instance in the last chapter (the liii.) is still more glaring;" because it contains an account of the destruction of Jerusalem, which had been already mentioned; but this objection is so futile, that I should not have taken notice of it, were it not to expose its absurdity; and to let your admirers see what a profound critic you are in sacred literature; for it is universally allowed* to have been added by some one after Jeremiah's time, probably by Ezra and the men of the great synagogue, who revised the sacred writings, and collected them into one body; as is plain from the text. *Thus far (are) the words of Jeremiah.* And which was, to distinguish the preceding prophecies from what follows: which is nearly the same word for word, as it is recorded in the second book of Kings, chap. xxiv. 18--20, and ch. xxv.

* See Abaibanal, &c.

together with some few additions. And the reason of its being placed here, was to shew, the complete and exact accomplishment of the predictions of Jeremiah concerning the Jewish nation: and the truth of the divine word of prophecy.

I now proceed to take notice of a matter of greater importance; namely, your charge against Jeremiah for his duplicity. That we may have a clear view of the force of your objection, it is necessary to observe that Jeremiah, on account of his having publicly predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, had been cast by the princes of Judah, who sought his life, into a miry dungeon, as above shewn; and where he certainly would have perished, had not Ebed-melech taken compassion on him, and spoken to the king in his favour, saying, "My lord, the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have caused to be thrown into the dungeon: and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is." On this representation, the king ordered Jeremiah to be taken out of the dungeon; and,

shortly after, sent for him privately (See verse 14.), and desired him to conceal nothing from him; at the same time binding himself by an oath, that, whatever the nature of his prophecy might be, he would not put him to death, nor deliver him into the hands of those men (the princes) that sought his life. Jeremiah then shewed him God's purpose respecting the fate of Jerusalem. When the conference was ended, the king, mindful of his oath to preserve the life of the prophet, dismissed him, saying, "Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee: then shalt thou say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house to die there. Then came all the princes to Jeremiah, and asked him, and he told them according to all these words that the king had

commanded.” On this, you observe (p. 52) “Thus, this man of God, as he is called, could tell a lie, or very strongly prevaricate,—for certainly he did not go to Zedekiah to make his supplication; neither did he make it.” But you certainly mistake, sir; it is not said that he went to make his supplication, but that he presented it. And as it is mentioned in the preceding chapter, that, in the conference with the king, he did make supplication to him, it is very probable that in this conference he renewed it: especially as we find that he continued in the court of the prison: but be this as it may, I contend that Jeremiah did not *prevaricate* nor tell a *lie* on this occasion: he acted as every honest, prudent man would have done in his situation. He knew these men were his enemies, and sought his life; he, therefore, was under no obligation to tell the whole matter to such men; he told them the truth in part, to save his life; and that was sufficient. Moreover the king had commanded him what he should say, and particularly charged him to let no man know

what had passed between them: he, therefore, as an obedient and dutiful subject, thought it his bounden duty to do as the king had commanded him: if he had not you would have accused him of betraying the king's confidence; especially as you have already affixed a suspicion on him of his being a traitor.

But your next charge is of a still more serious nature, for you accuse Jeremiah of delivering false predictions. "In the xxxivth chapter" you say, (p. 53) "is a prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah in these words," ver. 2.—"Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and will burn it with fire: and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but thou shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. *Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah, king of Judah, thus saith the Lord, thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings that*

were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee, and will lament thee, saying, Ah, lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord.'

“Now, instead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the king of Babylon, and speaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, and with the burning of odours, as at the funeral of his fathers (as Jeremiah hath declared the Lord himself had pronounced), the reverse, according to the lii. chapter, was the case: it is there said, ver. 10. ‘That the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.’—

“What then can we say of these prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?” I can say, that there is not a word of truth in all that you have advanced; for the prophecy was fulfilled in every particular, as will be seen, by comparing the words of the prophecy with the history.

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THE PROPHECY.

“ I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. And thou shalt not escape out of their hands, but shalt surely be taken and delivered into his hand. And thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth.— And thou shalt go to Babylon. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah, king of Judah : Thus saith the Lord of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword, *but* thou shalt die in peace : and with the burnings of thy fa-

THE HISTORY.

“ Came Nebuzardan, captain of the guard, into Jerusalem, and he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great *men* burnt he with fire. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho : and all his army was scattered from him. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah ; where he gave judgment upon him. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of

THE PROPHECY.

THE HISTORY.

thers, so shall they
burn odours for thee.

Zedekiah before his
eyes: Then he put
out the eyes of Ze-
dekiah; and the king
of Babylon bound
him in chains, and
carried him to Baby-
lon, and put him in
prison, till the day
of his death." Ch.
lii. 8—13. 2 King.
xxv. 5--9. See also
2 Chron. xxxvi. 19.

Hence it is manifest, that Zedekiah did see the eyes of the king of Babylon, when he slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; and spake judgments * with him: that is, he upbraided him with the perfidy of his revolt against him; as he had sworn by God to him (See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13.): for which he put out his eyes†, and carried him to Baby-

* This is the literal sense of the Hebrew.

† The prophecy of Ezekiel concerning Zedekiah, is very remarkable; (Chap. xii. 13.) "And I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the

lon, where he died in peace, as the prophet had predicted. He did not die in battle: neither was he put to a violent or shameful death: he died a natural death on his bed, though in a prison. Thus we see how the prophecy and history agree, and shew the full completion of the prophecy. And now, sir, what can we say of those who call Jeremiah a liar and impostor, but that they are base calumniators?

You also assert*, that Jeremiah joined himself afterwards to Nebuchadnezzar, and went about prophesying for him against the Egyptians; Thus much for another of these lying prophets. But where did you find this? Surely, not in the narrative that we have of these transactions: for there it is said, "And the captain of the guards took Jeremiah, and said unto him, the Lord thy God hath

Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there." How exactly was this accomplished, when the king of Babylon put out his eyes, and then brought him to Babylon! So that though he died there, yet he did not see it.

* P. 53.

denounced this calamity against this place (no small compliment to the truth of the prophet's predictions). If it seem good unto thee to come with me to Babylon, come, and I will set mine eyes upon thee." But he declined accepting this kind and friendly offer of Nebuzaradan; and with a disinterestedness, and true patriotism, (which perhaps you would have admired in any other man but a prophet) he returned to his distressed brethren, and when they were determined to go down to Egypt, he endeavoured to prevent them: telling them, according to the word of the Lord, that if they went thither, the sword of which they were afraid should overtake them there in the land of Egypt, and they should die there: because they dissembled when they sent him to enquire for them of God, "saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do. But ye have not hearkened unto the voice of the Lord your God,— Now, therefore, ye shall know assuredly

that by the sword, and by famine, and by pestilence shall ye die in the place whither ye desire to go to sojourn (Jerem. xlii. 20-22.).” But they still persisting in going to Egypt, forced Jeremiah along with them. There indeed he prophesied against the Egyptians, (as in their destruction, the Jews that were in Egypt were included;) and also against several other nations, particularly against the Babylonians, without the least regard or attention to or from Nebuchadnezzar; and which is a plain proof of the falsity of your charge against the prophet; whilst the exact accomplishment of these prophecies are an evident demonstration of the truth of Jeremiah’s prophetic spirit.

You say (p. 54.) “In the former part of the Age of Reason, I have said that the word prophet was the Bible word for poet. I am sufficiently justified in this opinion, not only because the books called the prophecies are written in poetical language, but because there is no word in the Bible except it be the word prophet, that describes what we mean by a poet.”--- I suppose then, sir, that you are perfectly

acquainted with the Hebrew, and know that there is no word for poet in that language, but נביא *Nabee*, which is always translated a prophet. Well, and what then is the word for poem in the Hebrew? It must certainly be נבואה *Ne- buah*: but נבואה denotes a *prophecy*, and not a poem. שיר *Sheer*, Sir, is the proper word for *poem* in the Hebrew: whence is derived משימר *Mesboerear*, a poet. It must also be observed, that the word נביא a *prophet*, is never applied to any but such as were sent to the people to admonish and instruct them; for נביא is properly derived from פירות שפתים *the fruit of the lips* (Isaiah lvii. 19.). And, therefore, Moses says in Deut. xviii. 15.--- “The Lord thy God will raise up unto you נביא a prophet as I am from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, unto him ye shall hearken:” and ver. 18. “I will raise them up נביא a prophet from among their brethren, as thou art, and I will put my words in his mouth,” &c. “נביא A prophet unto the nations have I constituted thee.” (Jerm. i. 5.) “And the Lord said unto me, Go, הנביא prophesy unto my

people," (Amos vii. 15.) Whence it is manifest that the word נָבִיא properly denotes *a messenger sent with a prophesy*; and which is the reason that the book of Daniel, though it contains prophecies of the utmost importance; many of which have been so exactly fulfilled; that infidels have asserted, that the facts were prior to the predictions: yet it is placed among the Hagiographical books, and not among the prophetic: as I have shewn at large in *Lingua Sacra*, Radix נָבִיא and where I have also shewn the true meaning of the words רוֹאֵה *Rozeb* and חֹזֶה *Choezeb*; both of which in English denote a *Seer*; and applied to such as *saw* a vision of God, but were not sent with any message to the people, &c. From all which it is plain, that your criticism is false and fallacious; owing to your extreme ignorance of the subject you pretend to treat of; and which must ever render you contemptible in the eyes of every discerning reader. Alas! how are the mighty fallen!

Your illiberal abuse of the prophets and prophecies, (P. 54. 55.) the former of whom you call "poetical-musical con-

uring-dreaming-strowling-gentry ;” and the latter you compare to “fortune-telling, casting nativities, predicting riches, fortunate or unfortunate marriages, conjuring for lost goods,” &c. plainly shews, that you either have mistaken their office and character, or what is worse, wilfully misrepresent them: for their office was, to deliver to the nation, the commands of God, his promises and threatenings; and to admonish them to return to their duty, as the prophet says, “And I have sent unto you all my servants, the prophets, rising up early and sending, saying, Return I pray you, every one from his evil way, and amend your doings,” &c. (Jer. xxxv. 15. besides several other passages in the same prophet of the like import.) In the execution of this duty, they were frequently persecuted; and which, these holy men had foreseen and expected as the reward of their labours; and therefore, we generally see them take this painful and weighty office on them very reluctantly, and at last accept it merely in obedience to the repeated orders of heaven. But, as soon as they had accepted

it, and the burden of the word was laid on them, they boldly issued forth before kings and people; upbraiding them for their idolatry and their crimes; and then, neither exile, nor chains, nor dungeons, could silence their noble indignation: but they sustained all with the utmost fortitude.

You next charge the prophets with being party men; and observe (p. 55.) "This party prophesying shewed itself immediately on the separation of the first two rival kings, Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The prophet that cursed, or prophesied against the altar that Jeroboam had built in Bethel, was of the party of Judah, where Rehoboam was king; and he was way laid on his return home by a prophet of the party of Israel, who said unto him, (2 King chap. xiii.) *'Art thou the man of God that came from Judah? and he said I am.'*" Then the prophet of the party of Israel said to him, *'I am a prophet also as thou art, (signifying of Judah) and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee unto thine house, that he may eat bread and*

drink water : but, says the 18th verse, he lied unto him."

“The event, however, according to the story, is, that the prophet of Judah never got back to Judah ; for he was found dead on the road, by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel, who no doubt was called a true prophet by his own party, and the prophet of Judah a lying prophet.” This charge is a most abominable falsehood, and plainly shews your depravity of heart. Was *Shemaiah* who admonished Rehoboam to desist from going to war with Jeroboam, because the thing was from God, a party prophet? And if the prophet that came from Judah was a party prophet, and not a true prophet of God, how could he so exactly foretel what *Josiah* was to do on the altar upwards of three hundred and fifty years after? And how came king Jeroboam’s hand, which he stretched out to lay hold of the man of God, to be instantly dried up, and the altar rent, according to what he had predicted? These things you have thought proper not to mention, (an evident proof of your candor.) But you say,

“the prophet of Judah was killed by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel.” Do you think then, that the prophet of the party of Israel, was a master of wild beasts, and kept lions to destroy the prophets of the party of Judah? Indeed, he must have been an admirable fellow, that could train his lions in such a manner, as that they should *slay the man* and not *kill the beast*, nor *devour the carcass* of the prophet (ver. 23.) To be serious, does not the death of the prophet, and the subsequent behaviour of the lion, teach us, that the prophet was slain by the express command of God, as it was foretold? But that which flatly contradicts your assertion is, the prophet of Israel’s fair, open, and candid acknowledgment, that the prophet of Judah (as you call him, though without the least shadow of truth, as I shall shew in my comment on scripture) was a true prophet of God, not a lying prophet, as you basely and falsely assert. Hear his charge to his sons, and take shame to yourself, for having thus vilified the true servants of God. “When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre

wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. For the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places, which *are* in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass." Compare this with 2 King. chap. xxiii. 16—19. and you will be convinced, how exactly this prophecy was fulfilled in every particular.

Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Jehoram king of Israel, and the king of Edom, being engaged in a war against the king of Moab, you observe (p. 56.), "the story says, they were in great distress for water, upon which Jehoshaphat said, *Is there not a prophet of the Lord, that we may enquire of the Lord by him?*" The story then says, that these three kings went down to Elisha (an high honour indeed for one of your conjurors), and when Elisha (who as I said, was a Judahmite prophet) saw the king of Israel, he said unto him, *What have I to do with thee, get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, I would*

not look towards thee, nor see thee. Here is all the venom and vulgarity of a party prophet." And here fir, is all the venom and vulgarity of an ignorant, impertinent, profane scoffer. What! Elisha a Judahmite prophet! Ha! ha! My good friend, you must go to school: Elisha a Judahmite! Was *Abelmaholah*, the birth place of Elisha, (1 Kings xix. 16.) in the kingdom of Judah? Was Samaria, where the prophet generally resided, (2 King. v. iii. vi. 32. &c.) in the kingdom of Judah? Was Elisha a Judahmite party prophet, when he discovered to the king of Israel the secret counsels of the king of Syria against him? Did he ever prophecy in, or concerning the kingdom of Judah? On the contrary, was he not always looked upon as the prophet of Israel? Did he not order one of the sons of the prophet to anoint Jehu king of Israel? And when Elisha lay on his death bed, it was not the king of Judah that came to him, but the king of Israel that came to see him; "And wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." (2 Kings xiii. 14.) This plainly shews that the king considered him, not only as a true prophet, but as the principal prophet in Israel.

“Now for the prophecy;” you say, p. 56. *Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches;* which was just telling them what every countryman might have told them, without either fiddle or farce, that the way to get water was to dig for it.” But this buffoonery,

———“dash’d and brew’d with lies,
 “To please the fools, and puzzle all the wise,”
 is not a true representation of the case; for the ditches were not dug to get water by digging for it, but that they might hold the water when, “without wind or rain,” it should miraculously come from another country; and “behold there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.” Thus was the prophecy fully accomplished.”

As to what you say concerning Elisha’s cursing the little children, which you have borrowed from Voltaire*, I must observe, that the Hebrew word *ד׳רען* translated children, properly denotes lads, youths, &c. and is frequently used to denote persons arrived at years of discretion: as in Gen. xxxvii. 2. xli. 12. xlv. 20. &c. 1 Sam. xxv. 5-9. &c. &c. As to the term *ד׳רען* here added, and translated

* See Philosophy of History p. 205.

little, it is also used in Hebrew to denote *low*, &c. so that the proper sense is youths of a low degree: i. e. worthless young fellows. This will more plainly appear, when it is considered that Bethel was the idolatrous city, where the priests of Baal ministred to the calves of Jeroboam; and as they had heard of the ascent of Elijah, and of Elisha's succeeding him; they sent their disciples in derision of them both, to mock Elisha; by saying, "Go up, thou bald head," &c. for as Elijah was known by the description of "an hairy man," (2 King. i. 8.) they, to deride him, said, "Go up," &c. that is, thou who art bald, why dost thou not ascend to where thy master the hairy man is gone? Seeing them thus deride both him and his master, he, as the Lord's prophet, jealous for the honour of God, and his servants, cursed them; and has he not acted justly, his curse would not have effected the destruction of the offenders; but God, who knew that they deserved death, miraculously sent the bears to destroy them, at the word of the prophet. This is the true state of the case: and plainly shews how unjust is your illiberal and scurrilous abuse of this prophet,

by calling him a conjuror, a curser, and a liar.

The books of Ezekiel and Daniel you allow to be genuine; but in order to discredit the authority of these books, you have formed a strange and monstrous hypothesis, for which there is not the least foundation in those books. You suppose (p. 58.) that the dreams and visions of Ezekiel and Daniel were not revelations from God, but a pretended, enigmatical correspondence relative to the recovery of their country from the Babylonian yoke. You also suppose (p. 59.) that for men situated as Ezekiel and Daniel were, "scarcely any thing could be more absurd than to suppose that such men should find nothing to do, but that of employing their time and their thoughts about what was to happen to other nations, a thousand or two thousand years after they should be dead." Then you suppose that men might take up the prophetic office when they pleased, as they do any other trade or calling; and then lay it down again when they pleased; but this, every reader of the Old Testament knows to be false; for those that were called to the prophetic office, had no choice; they were obliged to obey.

God's command, as above shewn. This is a manifest proof of your consummate ignorance and impudence; and indeed, these suppositions are altogether so absurd, that it is scarcely credible, that any man in his senses, who had ever so little regard to his reputation, as an impartial inquirer after truth, should adopt such an hypothesis: or that he should have so little respect for his readers as to obtrude it on the world. Surely sir, you must have considered your readers as no better than *heads of onions*, when you wrote this; no wonder then, if indignation should prompt the discerning reader to cry out,

“ It is not easy I confess,

“ To baffle such a *plate of brass* ;

“ For, in my days, I ne'er did hear,

“ So impudent a *sophister*.”

You say, p. 60. “ that Ezekiel, speaking of Egypt, chap. xxix. ver. 11. says, ‘ *No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it: neither shall it be inhabited for forty years.*’ This is what never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are.” But this did come to pass, according to the figurative language of the prophet; for the expression of the foot of man or beast passing through, denoted the

great desolation, that was to be brought on it: and that its trade, which was then carried on by caravans as it is at present, should be totally destroyed for forty years, and which was fully accomplished, as the learned Abarbanal has shewn; for from the time that Nebuchadnezzar* conquered Egypt till the ruin of the Babylonian empire, was forty years. And had you taken the pains to have looked a verse or two beyond where you quoted from, you would have seen the sequel to this prophecy, ver. 14, 15. "And they shall be there a low kingdom. It shall be the lowest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: that they rule not over the nations." This you may perhaps call an enigmatical dream, or a vision about the recovery of Ezekiel's country: or say downright, "it is a lie." But every candid, impartial person, will no doubt esteem it a wonderful prophecy; for though it is

* Berofus and Megasthenes, two heathen historians, who lived about three hundred years before the Christian æra, bear testimony to the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar; for, they say, he conquered great part of Africa, and took several captives from Egypt and carried them to Babylon: and that he transplanted and settled others in Pontus, as bishop Newton has shewn from these historians.

upwards of two thousand years since the delivery of it, yet hath it been fulfilling from that time to this; as Egypt has in general been tributary and in subjection to strangers; for it was first conquered by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar; and afterwards by the Persians under Cyrus, Cambyfes, &c. After the Persians, it became subject to the Macedonians; and afterwards to the Romans, then to the Saracens, and then to the Mamalucs: and now is a province of the Turkish empire. This is proved from Herodotus, Xenophon, &c. See Newton on the proph. Differ. 12.

Your profane jest concerning Jonah and the great fish*, scarcely deserves an answer; but, as you attempt to ridicule the prophets, and blacken their character through Jonah, it is necessary to say a few words, in order to clear Jonah's character from that foul aspersion which you have cast on it.

* You say a *whale*; I know not where you found this; not in the text I am sure: for there it says, a *great fish*; and we have but an imperfect acquaintance with the natural history of fishes. However, we know, that the white *shark* or *lamia*, is a very dreadful and voracious fish, the largest of all sharks. They have been seen of 4000wt and men have been found whole in them. Cham. Cyc. & Wil. Pis. p. 47

It is well known that Assyria, of which Nineveh was the capitol, was ordained to destroy the kingdom of Israel, and to carry the nation captive; it was therefore called the rod of God's anger; "Ho! to the Assyrian, the rod of mine anger," (Mai. x. 5.) This Jonah knew, and therefore determined within himself not to go on this mission, that the Assyrians might not escape the punishment due to their crimes, through his means, as he would then be accessory to the destruction of his own nation; this affected him greatly; and induced him to withdraw from the holy land, and attempt to suppress his mission; chusing rather to suffer death than in any wise be instrumental to the ruin of his nation, by saving the Assyrians; and which proceeded from his public * spirit, and love of the nation; and not from "the malevolent spirit of a Bible-prophet." This was the cause of his grief throughout the whole of this business (as I shall shew at large in my comment on the Old Testament); and therefore he said, "O Lord, take, I beseech

* This public spirit was conspicuous in the character of Moses, David and Jeremiah. See Exod. xxxii. 32. 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. Lamentations, &c.

thee, my life from me :” As I have now performed my mission, and find that they are to be spared to be the instruments of thy vengeance against my nation ; I beseech thee to take my life from me ; “ for it is better for me to die than to live,” and see the destruction that is to be bro’t on my people. The instruction that we receive from this story is truly great ; as it shews us the benefit of true repentance from the Ninevites ; and the frailty of all human enjoyments from Jonah’s gourd ; as will be shewn in the aforementioned comment.

Your nonsensical observation on the prayer of Jonah is

—“ light as chaff that floats before the wind.” and therefore merits not a reply. Your balderdash about the “ fatire and the moral of the fable,” is nought

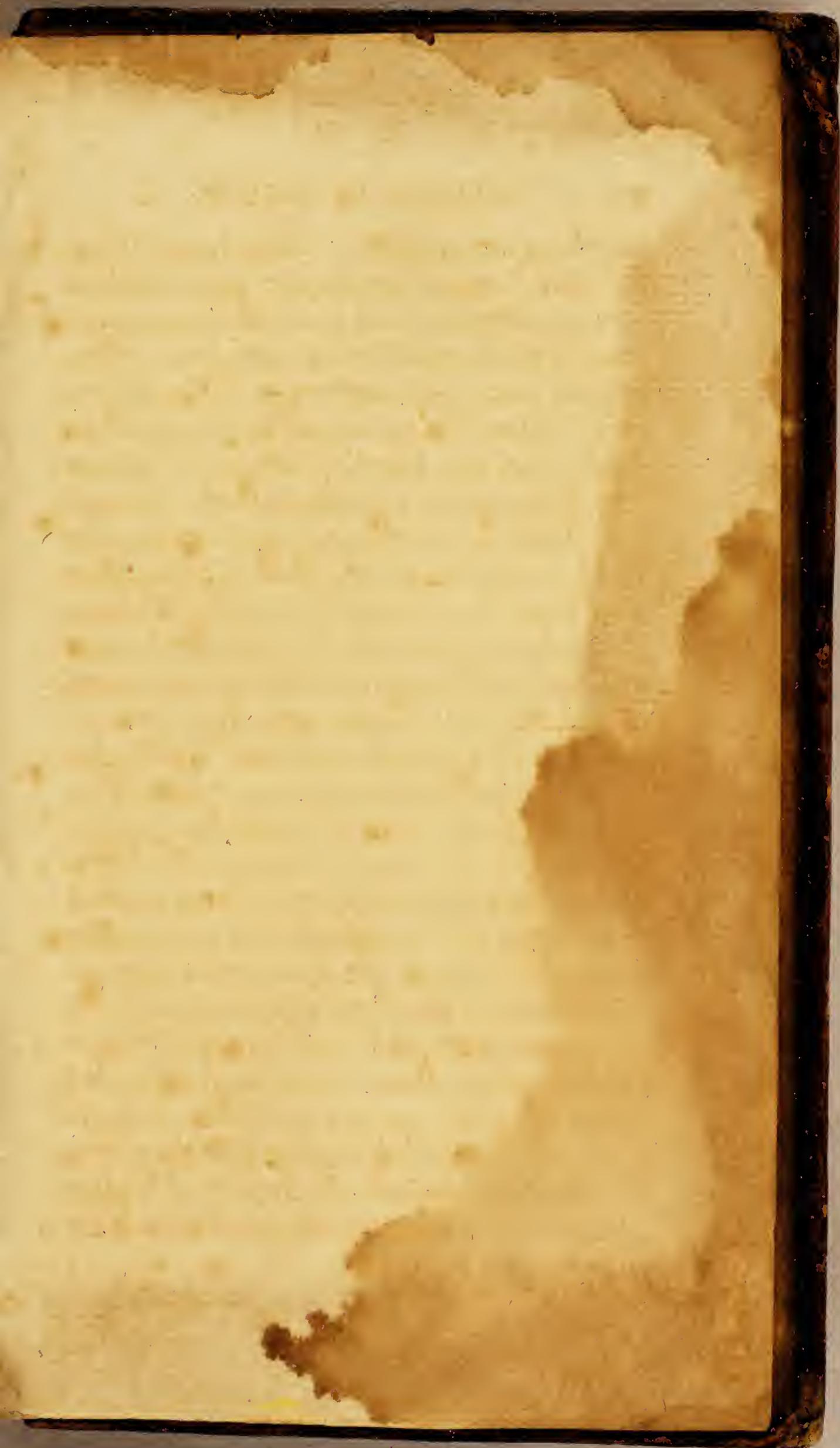
“ But the sinister application of the malicious, ignorant, and base interpreter.”

You conclude your illiberal abuse of the Old Testament in a style of the utmost self-importance, “ I have now gone thro’ the Bible (here, good Sir, you mistake the Old Testament for the Bible) as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees. Here they lie ; and the priests, if they can,

may replant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow." And do you really think so highly of your performance as to imagine that you have thereby demolished the authority of the Old Testament? Is it possible you can be so infatuated, as to suppose that you have by such a compound of ignorance, absurdity and nonsense, been able to effect what Morgan, Tindal, Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, Spinoza and other infidels, have not been able to effect, with all their wit and learning? How ridiculous! No, sir; you have not effected it. I will tell you what you have done: you have in a most unbecoming manner, ridiculed that which was held most sacred; and basely calumniated characters esteemed most venerable; you have revived the scoffs of the profane, and increased the doubts of those who wavered. This, and more you have done in going through the Old testament; but you have taken no notice of the design God had in view, in choosing a people, not for their own sakes, but that they might hand down through all ages the knowledge of his existence, his unity and particular providence. To this end, God revealed his law to all

Israel, in the presence of the whole nation. In this law he set before them in plain terms, the reward of their obedience, and the dreadful punishment they were to expect in case of disobedience. These they experienced alternately as they obeyed or disobeyed the Lord's command; till at length, for their wickedness they were cast out from off the goodly land which the Lord had given them; their whole polity and government totally destroyed; and themselves dispersed all over the face of the earth, as Moses had told them upwards of three thousand years ago. But notwithstanding this dispersion, and all the dreadful calamities which have accompanied it, yet have they been miraculously preserved, as Moses had told them; (as shewn at large in the former part of these letters) and which was corroborated by the other prophets. It is the wonderful accomplishment of these predictions, that hath established the truth and verity of these books: and caused them to be handed down to us for so many centuries, with respect and veneration; and which they ever will retain, in defiance of the utmost malice of deists and infidels, till time shall be no more. Yours, &c.

D. LEVI.





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