

THE  
UTILITY  
OF THE  
SCRIPTURES  
OF THE  
OLD TESTAMENT:

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF A SESSION OF THE  
PRESBYTERY OF BALTIMORE, HELD IN  
ALEXANDRIA, September 27, 1797.

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*One of the Members of said Presbytery.*

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A

# DISCOURSE, &c.

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Rom. xv. 4th.

*Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.*

**T**HE things, mentioned here as written aforetime, are the scriptures of the Old Testament; the only ancient writings which Jesus Christ and his Apostles committed, as having been given by divine inspiration, to the keeping of the church. Accordingly, on their authority, the books of Moses and the Prophets are received by all christians as the **WORD OF GOD**; and carefully read for their edification and comfort.

The authenticity of the books of the old Testament has been questioned by several in almost every age. Of late they have been attacked with the greatest asperity, as not only of no authority or usefulness, but as having a very pernicious tendency. It has been said, they deprave the morals and corrupt the heart; while, to call them *The word of God* has been boldly pronounced in the highest degree derogatory to the Supreme Being, an impeachment of his goodness, a satire on his wisdom, and a libel on his justice.

In this discourse, it is not my intention to touch on that train of argumentation by which it is proved, that the scriptures of the Old Testament were given

by inspiration of God. The text evidently leads me to discourse of their utility.

No man is able to believe, that the Creator of the world can be the author of a trifling, cruel, or hurtful production. Until, therefore, we are well convinced of the usefulness of the ancient Jewish writings, our belief of their divine original must necessarily be weak and fluctuating.

In discoursing from these words, *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning*, I propose, with the blessing and assistance of God, to endeavour to point out the great utility of the scriptures of the old Testament; and then direct to the practical improvement of the subject.

I. I am to endeavour to shew the great utility of the Jewish scriptures, called in our Bible *The Old Testament*.

Here a very extensive field of investigation opens. To do justice to the subject my abilities and means of information are far from sufficient. But when infidels, with foul aspersions, deride the word of God, and ignorance of its contents gives an edge to their otherwise harmless sneers, an attempt, however humble, to throw some light on the subject, will not surely be deemed unseasonable, nor can I doubt the indulgence of my reverend Fathers and Brethren, if my sense of its importance carry this discourse considerably beyond the limits of an ordinary sermon.

I shall not trespass on your patience by mentioning any of those truths taught in the Old Testament, which might have been discovered without its aid; but confine my attention solely to a few of the things which never could have been known but by divine revelation: I say, a few of the things, because it is hardly possible to particularize all the instructive lessons it contains in a volume of a smaller size. And, in order to be as plain and intelligible as possible, I have arranged what occurs in the following particulars.

1st. It is from the old Testament we have any distinct knowledge of the Creator and of Creation.

Persons, who are unacquainted with the history of knowledge among the Gentiles before the Christian æra, and have never examined their philosophy, will scarcely believe, that the people had no sort of conception of the origin of this world. To have mentioned in their hearing the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, the only true God, would have fired them with the most intemperate rage.

Even the philosophers, who talked much of Deity, and carried on lengthy debates about the formation of material things, all agreed in this maxim, "Out of nothing, nothing can be produced." However much they differed in the application of their maxim, they all agreed in this necessary consequence of it, that matter must have existed from all eternity, and that the making of the world could only mean, the disposing of self-existent materials into proper form.

Every modern snatterer in philosophy is struck with the absurdity of this conceit: and yet, in all the admired pages of Greece and Rome, there is nothing more satisfactory to be found; nothing which conveys any rational idea of creation. A pure, self-existent, eternal spirit, who, out of nothing, by the word of his power, spake every thing into existence, was an idea by far too sublime for the mind even of a Plato; and yet Plato has often by his admirers been termed divine.

Let modern Infidels glory over their Heathen brethren, and boast of the superior excellency of their reason; we know the source whence their information is drawn! Where the Bible is unknown ignorance of God and creation still prevails: but, before the cheering light of scripture, chaos, and all the other foolish conceits of philosophers vanish, like the midnight darkness before the rising Sun. *Thro' faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

This alone sufficiently accounts for the astonishing fact, that, while the most learned Gentile philosophers were confounding God with the Universe, or bewildering themselves by hypotheses which involved in the darkness of Atheism, the Jews possessed the most exact knowledge of the origin of the earth, and the heavens, and their Creator God; knowledge which entirely destroys the foundation of polytheism, and fills the mind with the most exalted conceptions of the power and wisdom, of the purity and goodness, of the infinite, eternal, almighty first Cause. He existed, self-sufficient and unchangeably happy, from everlasting; and, when it seemed good to his unsearchable wisdom, He created *the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them.*

2nd. It is from the Old Testament we learn the original state of the human race, and how it became corrupted and depraved.

The condition of man has afforded matter of speculation to the curious in every age. The more it is investigated, the more mysterious and unaccountable it seems. All the animals that live on the earth are happy, when they follow their particular instincts, and gratify every appetite and desire of their nature. Man possesses qualities, which, in many instances, evidently raise him above all the other inhabitants of our globe; but it requires no reasoning to convince, even the most licentious of our race, that the consequence of unlimited gratification is extreme wretchedness. Here then every beast of the field appears to have greatly the advantage of man.

There is also in human nature a strong sense of right and wrong. Our minds approve when we act our parts properly; but, until extremely corrupted, we cannot help loathing and abhorring ourselves, as often as we are conscious of base actions. When men, who had only the light of nature for their guide, attempted to account for these things, they felt themselves utterly at a loss. The more they examined the powers and fa-

culties, the passions, propensities, energies and desires of man, the more clearly did they perceive him to be a tissue of the most glaring inconsistencies. To suppose, that human nature was originally thus, appeared even to heathen philosophers, to impeach at once both the wisdom and goodness of the father of men. Much evil they perceived in the world; they felt it strong in themselves; they read it in every page of the history of our species; but of its production or origin they could give no account.

On these interesting subjects the scriptures of the Old Testament afford the fullest and most satisfactory information.

All existence is derived from the one, holy, and eternal God. It seemed good to him to make his rational creatures, in the strictest sense of the words, free agents. As God is absolute perfection, it was impossible for him to form any plan for the government of his creatures, but what was the result of infinite wisdom. Implicit obedience to the divine will was, therefore, required of every creature: because it is impossible to act contrary thereto, without swerving from perfection, and contradicting eternal wisdom, the unavoidable consequence of which is misery.

Of the creation of superior intelligences little is said in the Bible. Yet we know, that God made *his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire*; and some of them by disobedience became Devils. These still retained their existence. Otherwise they could not have been pronounced free: for, how can any creature be said to possess liberty, if, the moment he begins to use it, he is doomed, by the law of his creation, to sink into non-existence?

This clearly shews us the origin of evil. It is free creatures abusing their liberty, and voluntarily acting in opposition to infinite wisdom, and the unchangeable fitness of things. It would perhaps be too rash in us, short-sighted as we are, to affirm, that God could not

e prevented this: but as far as appears, either from reason or scripture, the only possible way of preventing evil was, to have made no creature a free agent; which certainly would have defeated a great part of the plan of creation.

It evidently appears from scripture to be the law of the Universe, that the creatures of God have access to each other; and may exercise the inherent force of their nature in controuling, and their intellectual advantages in persuading or seducing, one another. This is a further proof, that intelligent beings are perfectly free, being only restrained by the measure of their abilities, the enlargement and contraction of their sphere of action, or the interest they have in each others conduct.

As far as we know, all superior intelligent beings received an individual existence, and are incapable of producing their like. Besides these individuals who, no doubt, differ in abilities and power, it pleased God to make MAN a rational, intelligent creature, to be the principal inhabitant of the earth. Man is a compound being, consisting of a body, formed of the dust of the ground, and a spirit which came immediately from God. He is so constituted, that he can produce his likeness; the human species, therefore, is all derived from one single pair. †

God made man upright; after his own image. He placed them in the most delightful situation, and furnished every ingredient of happiness. He made them fully sensible of right and wrong; and that the condition of their existence was, perfect obedience to his will. As their life depended on eating; and as the due govern-

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† Many cavils have been raised against this doctrine of scripture, both by learned and unlearned Infidels. These, I think, are all refuted, in a masterly manner, by the Rev. Dr. Smith, President of the College of New Jersey, in his elegant essay on "The causes of the variety of complexion and figure of the human species."

ment of bodily appetites is essential to human happiness, to remind them constantly of this truth, and of the condition on which they held their existence, amidst the rich variety provided for their nourishment, they were forbidden the use of one tree, faithfully warned of the consequences of eating of its fruit; and thus left to the absolute freedom of their own will.

Not only had innocent beings access to this pair; but they were also exposed to the visits of creatures who had depraved themselves. One of these guilty spirits, exerting all the powers of his nature, endeavoured to make them swerve, like himself, from their natural allegiance to the Monarch of the Universe.

As the most likely means of accomplishing his wicked design, he endeavoured to inspire them with high sentiments of themselves. He insinuated, that they ought to be complete masters of their own actions; that any restraint laid upon them proceeded from envy, and was unduly limiting the happiness of which they were capable.

Gratitude for the unmixed bliss they enjoyed, and the threatening of death pronounced on transgression, promised fair to keep from defection the parents of our race. But having found his flattery well received, the tempter became more bold and pointed in his attack. As ye cannot live without eating, no harm can follow your chusing the most desirable food. Ye shall not surely die, the Serpent exclaims. What! die for preferring fruit, so extremely pleasant to the eye, such delicious food, and which moreover will make you wise! This cannot be: ye must have misunderstood the mandate of your Lord. Overcome by these insinuations, Eve ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, *and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.*

By this act, they plainly avowed a persuasion, that the plan of conduct marked out for them by God was not the result of infinite wisdom; but that they could improve upon it, and therefore would no longer yield implicit obedience to his will. This unhappy belief debauched all the powers of their mind.



From the sequel of the story it would appear, that the fruit they had eaten possessed a quality which wonderfully disturbed the constitution of the body. Nor will this seem strange to those who know, that, in the neighbourhood of Eden, vegetables are still found, which inflame lust with a fury bordering on madness, and often urge to the gratification of desire till death ensue: while others, operating as a kind of poison, kill not immediately, but drag the unhappy victim by a lingering torture to the grave. Thus this fruit destroyed man's natural immortality, introduced pain and numberless diseases, which caused his days to pass away in sorrow, until he mingled with the dust of which he was made.

Immediately on their eating of the forbidden tree, the first pair felt an astonishing revolution in their whole frame. Depravity entered: sensual appetites and desires became ungovernable; and, instead of that pleasing confidence with which they looked up to the Supreme, they now vainly sought to hide themselves from his presence.

As, by the law of their creation, the human pair were to produce their like, who are also endowed through endless generations with the same faculty, it was impossible for the parents to beget any other nature than their own. Thus the depravity and ruin of the first parents necessarily affected all their offspring; who are conceived in sin; who are shapen in iniquity; and *born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.* Nor, as far as we know, could this have been prevented, otherwise than by not endowing any free creature with the faculty of reproduction, which would have banished from the universe such a species as the human race.

3d. The Old Testament contains satisfying discoveries of God's purposes of grace to sinners; it gives full assurance of the remission of sins, and begins the development of that plan, by which free agents, without trenching on their liberty, are recovered from guilt, and gradually restored to happiness.

One would imagine the following to be a maxim which all, who understand the terms, would receive as self-evident: *viz.*

“ That, when a free agent has voluntarily deviated  
 “ from the law of his creation, thereby breaking the  
 “ compact which must be supposed to exist between the  
 “ Creator and the thing created, it depends entirely on  
 “ the good pleasure of the Creator, whether he will ever  
 “ reinstate such a being in the privileges of innocence:  
 “ and that the creature must be entirely ignorant of  
 “ this, until after he has become a sinner, it shall be  
 “ revealed unto him.”

This maxim, however, is so far from being received as self-evident, that the very reverse is taken for granted by every unbeliever. Not a book has ever been written against revelation in which the author does not uniformly declare, that he knows to a tittle how God must treat his fallen creatures; and that he is a competent judge of the whole procedure of the Almighty with regard to man. Without this presumption, it would behove the sceptic who sets aside revelation to acknowledge, that, while he talks of the divine clemency, he writes on a subject of which he knows nothing, and argues from suppositions which are incapable of proof.

Here then the scriptures and unbelievers at once are at issue. This is the hinge on which the dispute with them entirely turns. From scripture, as well as reason, we are warranted to conclude, that innocent creatures have no need of any such discovery as we call divine revelation. The principle of rectitude is their sufficient guide; and they know, that while they act agreeably thereto, they will be happy. But guilt puts man, with respect to his Creator, in a new situation. Hence the necessity of divine revelation; else he could never know that sin shall be forgiven: and hence the usefulness of the scriptures of the Old Testament; because they not only ascertain this fact, the remission of sins; but also clearly discover how depraved creatures may be restored

to rectitude; and the possession of all that happiness which the loss of innocence had forfeited.

But little of the plan of grace was at first revealed. To believe that little required as real faith as is necessary at present. It required a full conviction, that God was its Author, and a sincere disposition to receive the whole of the discovery which he was pleased to make. This necessarily brought down every high thought, and every imagination, to the obedience of faith: for, as man was first ruined, by refusing to yield implicit obedience to the divine will, and following his own inventions; so, if he is ever reconciled to God, in every thing respecting salvation, he must rest satisfied with *Thus saith the Lord*; and yield himself, in the most full and unreserved manner, entirely to divine direction.

To know this much was of the greatest importance. It was sufficient, with the divine blessing, to conduct Old Testament believers to eternal glory. They had strongly impressed on their minds the belief of this truth, that God was ever with them. They were commanded, *To walk before God and be perfect*. This had the most happy influence on all their conduct: for as no person can do an infamous thing in the presence of one whom he greatly esteems; so these ancient believers, *seeing him who is invisible, and setting the Lord always before them*, did not offend against him.

They felt themselves transgressors; and they were plainly taught, that, *Without shedding of blood, there is no remission*. It is far from probable that they had any clear conception of *the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world*. His manifestation was reserved for new testament times. Yet their sacrifices, oblations and other rites, gave them lively conceptions of the dreadful nature of sin, and of its destructive consequences; begetting in them an abhorrence of all iniquity, and the sincerest purposes of conforming to the holy law of God in all things.—This leads me to observe:

4th. In the Old Testament, the effect of God's discoveries of mercy, of the application of grace, and the exercise of faith, is beautifully elucidated; together with the frightful consequences of transgression, when it remains unsubdued.

Sin may be considered as the disease of human nature. It is the introduction of active, deleterious, principles, which incessantly tend to the destruction of the system.

Every one acquainted in the least with the healing art knows, that the most useful and solid instruction in Nosology is derived from the history of particular cases. Where the origin and progress of diseases, with the application of medicines, and their effects, are distinctly narrated and well understood, the physician becomes skilful. Equally useful information is derived from the cases which terminate favourably and unfavourably.

There is scarcely a supposable character which is not drawn in the Old Testament. So many particulars are mentioned as to leave no character equivocal. The means, by which persons of every description have been brought to a state of reconciliation with God are clearly set forth; and there is not an avenue that leads to destruction, which has not at least one beacon placed upon it to warn us of our danger.

The incidents of the lives of the particular persons might have been written by themselves, or by anyone of their intimate acquaintances. But these incidents are only the bare statement of the cases. The means by which they were brought to faith and repentance; when, how, and for what purpose, God interfered, could only be known to the searcher of hearts, and the persons to whom he was pleased to reveal it. This is the very essence of the instruction meant to be conveyed: and it is matter of pure revelation. When we, therefore, are struck with the minute mention every where made of the divine agency in the biographical part of scripture; we ought to remember, that all the incidents were written to elu-

cidate the effect of faith, and to explain, in the most satisfactory manner, the operation of divine grace on believers, together with the unhappy arts, by which the wicked rejected the counsel of God against their own souls, and sunk into perdition.

The professed philosopher, whose vain science, the spawn of presumption and folly, leads him to exclude the MAKER from the government of his own works, may attempt to ridicule, as trifling anecdotes, this part of the Bible. His self-illumin'd mind, which can scan creation through, and dares to prescribe rules to nature's God, is too wise to receive instruction from on high: But we know, that the persons, whose lives the scripture contains, are set forth for our ensamples: and we feel, that it is impossible to read their histories, with a firm belief that the narration is true, without being reprov'd, correct'd and instructed in righteousness: for these anecdotes, properly speaking, are the history of the operation of the grace of God on the human race.

5th. From the Old Testament we learn, how God governs this world.

As it pleas'd the most High to suffer the human race, after their fall, to multiply till the earth was replenish'd, it was impossible to prevent the commision of crimes. With almost every generation wickedness must increase. Man, being a creature capable of doing the greatest mischief, it is necessary he should be kept under severe restraint.

A plan of government, suited to innocent creatures, was altogether insufficient where guilt greatly prevail'd. How far the King eternal altered the plan of his providence, with respect to man, we are no where distinctly inform'd. Many things occur, in the course of the affairs of the world to lead a superficial observer to think, that God has forsaken the earth, and left man entirely to the suggestions of his own heart. It is of great importance to be set right in an affair of such consequence.

That system of philosophy, which has for its author the celebrated Newton, leads to astonishing discoveries of the laws by which this material world is governed. Renouncing all hypothetical theories, the true philosopher, from accurate observations, and an almost infinite variety of experiments arrives at a few ultimate facts. These are called laws of nature; because they are found sufficient to explain most of its operations. As these laws were established by the great Creator, it is in this way that he comes to know how God governs the universe.

In order to understand God's plan of governing moral Agents, who have corrupted themselves, the believer of scripture pursues nearly the same course. Man is subject to divine government as an individual; but he is always found existing in society and societies are equally amenable to the laws of God.

In the Old Testament, we have the history of a great variety of individuals, of nations, of cities and societies of people. It is very remarkable, that, in all these histories, the interference of God is the thing chiefly attended to, and most distinctly narrated. The end he proposed, and the means by which it was accomplished, are mentioned with the most satisfactory minuteness. These histories are, to the student of scripture, what experiments are to the investigator of nature: and it is very observable, that the most humble believer, who is well versant in his Bible, displays a knowledge of God's moral government, which leaves the professed infidel, though a man of science, far behind.

By perusing the scriptures, with the eye of faith, we are led, like the inquirer into nature, to a few ultimate facts, which sufficiently explain almost every thing that occurs in the moral world, and afford great consolation to the faithful amidst the ills of life. It is with great diffidence I mention in this place any of these facts or laws: but deeming it an indispensable part of the plan of the discourse, I have ventured to name the following

**TEN**, adding a few thoughts to each for its illustration.

I. The moral laws of God, like nature's other laws, have full force to execute themselves : and it requires his interposition to alter or stop their operation; so that, instead of any immediate divine agency being required to punish the wicked, this proceeds according to the settled course of moral law.

What philosophers call the laws of nature respect material objects, and regulate every thing concerning them. The moral laws respect only such intelligent beings as are free agents. The laws of nature are calculated to affect matter, and all its qualities, in every possible situation: so, in like manner, the moral laws never cease to operate on rational beings, but they affect them in a way exactly suitable to their intellectual powers and faculties.

All action in intelligent creatures proceeds from volition. In order to be free, it is not necessary that they act at random, without any regard to motives; but only that they possess the consciousness of not being influenced in their choice by any thing from without or independent of themselves; and that they have the full power of resolving and acting, in every case, from their own unbiassed view of circumstances.

When, either from an insufficient examination, or from erroneous views of the circumstances, rational creatures make a wrong choice, and act upon it, this is necessarily followed with anguish, shame, self-disapprobation and remorse; together with the corroding consciousness of meriting the divine displeasure, and the scorn and contempt of all virtuous intelligent beings. In proportion to the importance of the action, the bitterness of the reflection is increased. On the other hand, when they chuse right and act accordingly, self-approbation, with the delightful consciousness that God is well pleased with them, and that they have the esteem of every good being, is the certain consequence.



This, I think, may be called the operation of moral laws: for they as invariably produce this effect on all rational beings, as gravitation or any other law of nature operates on matter.

Reiterated acts of obedience to the law produce a habit of well-doing, which, when persevered in for a considerable time, becomes fixed and permanent. This never fails to be accompanied with very exquisite self-complacency, and the most tranquil state of the affections. But repeated violations of the law, producing first self-disapprobation and anguish, soon end in a fixed opposition to what is good, in fruitless attempts to palliate enormities, and a malicious hatred of the source of perfection and existence. Then the affections degenerate into violent passions, and headstrong lusts. These keep their unhappy victim in a state of continued hurry and turmoil; and frequently, by urging at once the most irreconcilable claims, make him a terror to himself, and a dreadful spectacle of wretchedness and horror. Thus the psalmist, describing the miserable state of the Israelites, when they were sold to iniquity, represents God as saying, *I gave them up unto their own heart's lust: and they walked in their own counsels.*

In man, who is a compound being, the effects of volition are not confined to the intellectual part. Transgression has a fatal influence on the body, producing in it pain, and an almost innumerable tribe of diseases. We cannot trace up every particular sickness and pain to its proper cause: but the many diseases, which are inseparably annexed to certain vices, enable us to do this in a sufficient number of instances to give us an idea of the manner in which the moral laws execute themselves.

Of necessity man must have great connection with his fellows. A wild man, who lives altogether without society, is no where found. Several lusts and passions cannot be gratified without invading the rights of



others. This invasion produces feuds, animosities, and strife, which so embitter the social intercourse, that, in every possible situation, the greatest foe to the happiness of man is man. Ask all the unhappy, what renders this life a vale of sorrow, or a scene of the most irksome wretchedness, with one voice they answer, the injustice, the violence, the deceit, or the lust, of their fellow mortals.

Now all this proceeds necessarily from the invariable operation of moral law. The minute history of the means by which so many of our race have brought upon themselves utter destruction proves, beyond doubt, this position. It is true in the old testament the punishment of the wicked is ascribed to God; but so is likewise the sending of rain, the motion of the heavenly bodies, and every other operation of nature. And as God is the author of all the laws of the universe, both natural and moral, every thing may ultimately be referred to him. It is also certain, that every element and being in nature is used as the instrument of God's moral government; yet from hence it does not follow, that, in every particular case, there is an immediate interference, but only that the general laws he has established are continued in full operation.

On the other hand, the history of all those of our race, who have been rescued from perdition, proves that their salvation was through the plan of grace as revealed and conducted by God; and that, until they were led to acquiesce in this scheme, they were daily growing more meet fuel for unquenchable fire.

More satisfactory evidence cannot possibly be required to prove, that the interference of God is necessary to alter or stop the operation of the moral laws; and that he never does so but in exact conformity to the revelation of mercy, begun at the fall of man, and gradually brightening, as our race became more corrupt, till *the Sun of righteousness arose.*

In like manner, that the punishment of the wicked, who are left of God, must become daily more and more intense, just as the velocity of a falling body continually increases, is the necessary consequence of the steady uniform operation of moral law. Could man alter this at pleasure, he would be as much above law, as one who could command the sun to stand still. As infinite wisdom never can be taken at unawares, or surprised by any new incident, so we see, that God has laid the plan of his government in such absolute perfection and unalterable equity, that his kingdom is an everlasting dominion, whose immutable laws shall continue unrepealed as long as creatures exist.

What an effectual check would the firm belief of this truth prove to the boldness of transgressors? Does it not render their complaints against providence ridiculous, nay impious and absurd? Should any man insist on walking across a river, alledging it was quite inconsistent with the goodness of God to suffer him to drown, and that he must either make the water strong enough to bear him, or divide a passage therein that he may walk on dry ground, his friends would immediately have him confined. Equally irrational is his conduct, who persists in transgression, who refuses to acquiesce in the scheme of grace; and yet dares to charge God foolishly; because he will not end his sufferings by miraculously stopping the regular operation of moral law. Hence, in scripture, every impenitent transgressor is termed a FOOL.

II. All the redeemed of our race are as *a brand plucked out of the fire*: and though they shall be finally happy, yet they are often, in this life, left to feel all the bad effects of their infraction of the law; and even of their acting with indiscretion.

The history of every old testament believer elucidates and confirms this truth. A total change of heart, principles and disposition was effected. They ceased to do evil, they learned to do well: and, from

the uniform operation of the law, it must, after this renovation, affect them according to their character.

All this may be and yet the effects of old transgressions remain, and prove very distressing. This is confirmed by particular instances, such as David, from whose house the sword never departed, because of Uriah the Hittite. It is also evinced by the several complaints of pious men, who all felt the tollies of their youth, and went down to the grave bitterly lamenting the particular indiscretions of which they had been guilty.

Our conduct has great influence on our condition in life. There is scarce any suffering we endure, which cannot be traced to some sin or folly. Now although the eternal effects of the transgression may be done away, there is nothing in scripture which warrants us to expect any interposition to prevent the temporal consequences of our fault. Thus when a man, by any particular offensive or scandalous conduct, has forfeited the good opinion of mankind and sunk into obloquy or contempt, God who tries the heart, finding his repentance sincere, may receive him graciously; and yet he may never regain among men the estimation in which he was formerly held. He may be shunned, as a dangerous person, by the worthy part of society. All his plans may misgive from the distrust and suspicion his former conduct has raised: and thus, thwarted in every attempt to better his condition in life, he may go down to the grave, suspected of hypocrisy, afflicted, tormented and despised.

In like manner when any person has, by intemperance or other vicious courses, brought upon himself infirmities and disease; he may be a true penitent and obtain forgiveness from God: but his infirmities, and the painful recollection of his folly, shall cleave to him till the clay tabernacle be dissolved. Lesser indiscretions are not followed with the same remarkably fatal effects; still all have their consequences, which often

prove very distressful: for as *dead flies* cause the ointment of the Apothecary to send forth a stinking favour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.

The firm belief of this truth will keep pious persons from complaining of the hardness of their lot. A man, who has had the misfortune to fall into a fire, where unless he had been snatched from the flames he must have been consumed, complains not that he is hardly treated; because he must endure the smart of his burns, until in the ordinary course of medicine they are cured. Gratitude for having escaped with his life inspires him with fortitude to bear his pain, and to submit to all the necessary operations and dressings. So when believers reflect, that their sufferings proceed from the breach of the holy law of God, they will bear them with patience. The more painful they are, the more thankful will they be for having escaped consuming fire: and their sufferings will be a perpetual memento to them, to walk circumspectly;—to transgress no more.

III. God makes use of all the elements and beings in nature, and likewise of the passions and powers of men and other animals, as instruments of his moral government.

The destruction of the old world by the waters of a flood; the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone from heaven, the plagues of the Egyptians; and the history of all the wars and sufferings of the Jews, put this truth beyond the possibility of doubt.

The first fact or law I mentioned, led us to view the moral government of God, not as occasional shifts, or temporary projects; but as a steady uniform system, the result of unerring wisdom, which no created force can controul, or cunning evade. This leads us to retain God always in our view; and to remember, that, however perfect the system either of natural or moral government may be, he still sits Supreme and directs the operation of every law.

The infidel philosopher traces every thing to natural or moral causes, and supposes these acting of themselves, or under the government of what he calls chance: the believer, who admires their operation as much as the other, is certain, that all natural and moral causes are sufficient to produce their corresponding effects; but yet, that they are under the immediate controul of God, and accomplish his every purpose.

The fact under consideration leads us to contemplate this other important truth, which is matter of pure revelation; that the moral laws, of themselves, are not sufficient to restrain or punish the wickedness of man while living in society on earth; and that God, whose purposes cannot be defeated, will employ the most effectual means to accomplish them. This accounts for wars, famines, pestilential diseases, and all the long train of calamities which so often afflict our race.

In reading the history of the wars recorded in the old testament, an unbeliever, who rejects what is there said of the divine agency, ascribes them wholly to the ambitious passions or furious lusts of men. He sees the stupid madness of kings, the pride of nobles, or the headstrong fury of an enraged populace, drawing out the sword from the scabbard, and soaking the earth with human blood. Faith lifts the veil to let us see beyond these second causes, and discovers the Monarch of the universe governing those lusts which breed wars, controuling the most mighty conquerors, and sending armies to repress crimes, to bring down the pride of man; and to punish the wickedness of societies become otherwise incorrigible.

We are also informed of God's sending lightnings, hail, drought, devouring insects, noisome diseases, earthquakes, wild-beasts, &c. to punish the impiety and wickedness of ungodly men. No doubt many of the operations of nature proceed according to its ordinary course and are no signs of the displeasure of God. Because they are sometimes instruments of his govern-

ment, this is no reason why we should always regard them as such. The scriptures guard us against this, by shewing that they are only employed on special occasions, and to accomplish some very particular purpose.

Now this affords the greatest consolation to the whole race of the upright. We can say the Lord reigneth : let the earth be glad. We hear of wars and rumours of wars, infectious diseases afflict our cities, devouring insects have threatened to cut off the staff of life. Were these under no government, or subject to what infidels call chance, our lives would hang in perpetual fear. But when we learn, that they are instruments of God's government, the mind feels at ease. Knowing assuredly, that they are all directed by infinite wisdom, we are encouraged, on every emergency to pray unto God ; and to flee for shelter under covert of his wings.

IV. Man, collected in society, being the subject of God's moral government, there is no perceptible difference made, in his visitations, between the righteous and the wicked.

In all the calamities which befel the Israelites, and the several cities and nations whose history is contained in the bible, every person, without distinction of character, seems to have fared alike : and this is the foundation of the position I illustrate.

When we speak of righteous persons, we ought to remember, that none strictly such are found. Every individual is a sinner before God : and it is impossible to live in any society, without being, in some measure, assimilated to its manners, and partaking of its crimes.

Those who fear God make it their constant study to escape, as much as possible, all the pollutions that are in the world through lust. Their souls may be grieved with the filthy communication of the wicked. But when we consider their family relations, their connections by dealings, their neighbourly and other friendly intercourse, we will see, that it is impossible, without a

continued series of miracles, to make a discrimination of persons, in those calamities by which wicked societies are punished. These calamities are war, famine, epidemic and highly infectious diseases, earthquakes, &c. in all which the society must equally share. But then to the righteous these are far from being overwhelming evils. The portion of the upright is above; and even in the wreck of worlds, their inheritance remains untouched and secure.

Although this fact lays down the law so plain that no individual has any right to expect an exemption from the general calamities of the community; yet it is by no means hence to be inferred, that God does not, in the evil day, often deliver a deserving individual or a worthy family. The saving of Noah, Lot, and Ebed-melech seem to be memorable instances of this.

It may perhaps be proper to remark, that, at the flood, and the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, the whole society was utterly destroyed, which makes these visitations differ essentially from such as are only intended for correction. Besides, had not Noah and his family been saved, the human race would have become extinct. And with respect to Lot, himself and two daughters had their lives spared; but he was very severely punished for going to sojourn at Sodom. He lost his wife and the greatest part of his family; and from the history it would seem, that he had the mortification to see his whole substance consumed, and himself and two daughters turned out destitute on the world.

The preservation of Ebed-melech, at the taking of Jerusalem, is an instance applicable to the occurrences of our own times; and it certainly holds out the greatest encouragement to the pious to put their trust in the Lord.

Observing however, that, by the uniform course of divine procedure, all the individuals of a society fare alike, the righteous will, if possible, leave places which



become notorious for wickedness. By coming out from among the wicked, they escape sharing in their plagues. But when the love of gain, or worldly attachments keep them among the ungodly, they imitate the very reprehensible conduct of Lot, who preferred a situation, where he was likely to grow rich, in the midst of the most abandoned of men, to one which held out fewer prospects of wealth; but where, secluded from the filthy conversation of the wicked, he might have served his God without distraction of mind, and have saved his rising family from the corrupting example of an unprincipled race.

V. The great end, for which the generations of men must go on, and the earth remain and be governed, is, that the scheme of grace may be completed in it.

Why disorder, confusion and suffering should prevail in any province of the kingdom of God is, at first sight, a great mystery. We are too apt to think, that almighty power could easily have prevented evil, by rendering it impossible for any of his creatures ever to be unhappy; by making them impeccable, and thus continuing them always in a state of happiness and joy. It is from scripture we learn, that this was not within the sphere of possibility. A thing can as easily be and not be, at the same time, as that a creature can be free, and subject to any external constraint whatever. Free Agents must be left to act entirely from themselves; and all their actions be followed by their natural consequences. Since, therefore, man was not, indeed could not be, rendered immutable, evil became possible the moment he was created: and, after transgression, all the sufferings annexed to it must be endured.

Should it be asked, why guilty creatures were not allowed immediately to fall into non-existence, the answer is contained in the observation I now illustrate. Vast numbers of them are voluntarily to return to their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign; to become again



lily and happy : and, for their sakes, that the method of salvation by grace may have full effect, God bears long with guilty offenders, and continues the duration of the earth.

Had no intelligent creature ever swerved from the line of rectitude, it might have been doubted, whether any real liberty existed in the universe. It might have been supposed, that creatures obeyed, not from a persuasion that the line of conduct marked out for them was the result of infinite wisdom, but from an awe of God's dreadful majesty, and the terror of his irresistible power. But now that transgression has entered, and offenders are suffered to live, and to exert all their original energies, as well as the habits and principles which depravity has introduced, it cannot possibly be doubted, that real and substantial liberty exists under the dominion of God : and that those beings, who stand confirmed in goodness, do so from free choice, and a full persuasion of its excellence, which no temptation is ever able to shake.

The source of wisdom can do nothing but for some valuable end, worthy of the means by which it is accomplished. To bring free Agents, who have swerved from rectitude, voluntarily to return to their duty, is one of the greatest displays of the manifold wisdom of God. When, after having tried all the variety of transgression, and tasted every gratification which the most unbounded licentiousness can afford, they willingly return to their duty, it furnishes an example that cannot fail to make a lively impression on all their associates and fellows. It is the most convincing proof which can be given, that, on mature deliberation and full experience, they are convinced, the moral law is nothing else but the holiness of God expressed in words ; that his government is the scheme of felicity ; and that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

The plan of grace and mercy, revealed in the scriptures, is the means by which vast multitudes of our race are reconciled unto God. Without any constraint being put upon them, that would destroy moral agency, they are led to hate every evil way; and to love God and holiness with the most ardent, lively and steadfast affection. In order to compleat this wonderful scheme, the appointed generations of men must be suffered to go on. Now that this is the reason of the earth's being continued is exceedingly evident from the New Testament; but, if I mistake not, is also very fairly deduced from the Old.

It is impossible to be much versant in these scriptures without seeing, that the providence of God was constantly employed in preparing the earth for the coming of Messiah. The connection, which many considerable events in antiquity had with his advent, is clearly and of set purpose pointed out. But if the earth was continued that he might appear, *to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness*; there could be no doubt even in the mind of a Jew, that it would be further preserved and governed, until he reaped the full fruit of his *making his soul an offering for sin*; especially when it is added, *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*.

There is always something transacting on the great Theatre of the world to agitate and amuse the human mind. God puts down one and raises another up. Empires are established; empires are overthrown. New inventions and important discoveries call forth the activity, and rouse the genius of man. One set of opinions after another leads captive great part of the human race. But, amidst all these, the restoring of sinners to the love of goodness, the reconciling them to God, is still going on. This escapes the notice of the politician and the Sage: for *the kingdom of God cometh not with observation*. But, when his servants shall be

displayed at the great day of final retribution, they will form a glorious and an innumerable company. Then it will be seen, that *these hidden ones, the seed of Christ, are the salt of the earth*; who have not only preserved it from general corruption, but have kept it from being long ago utterly destroyed.

The world, as well as the Devil and the flesh, is in constant unwearied opposition to the progress of grace. Communities, often become so abandoned, that the still voice of revelation cannot be heard. It would be just in the great Ruler of the Universe to withdraw from the earth, and leave it to become the seat of infernal wretchedness, as well as, the cynque of hellish crimes. This is not consistent with the plan of reconciling sinners to himself. And as none that are given unto Christ shall be lost, we know that the earth will be kept under the needful salutary discipline and government, till the final restitution of all things; so that, instead of complaining of divine visitations, the earth ought to rejoice; because it is visited in mercy, and punished only to produce the greatest possible good.

VI. As in the earth *the vessels of wrath* are also fitted to destruction, much wickedness will always prevail; which renders it a proper place for the trial of Believers, that they may be trained up to glory, and honour, and immortality.

In many places of the Old Testament, this doctrine is plainly inculcated, that every man shall die for his own transgression. The first fatal lapse introduced guilt into our nature; so that no individual escapes the evil contagion. The scriptures no where fully satisfy our curiosity respecting God's method of treating that great proportion of the human family which dies in infancy. But all who become capable of moral action must reject the counsel of God against themselves, and by a habit of disobedience fall into condemnation. In order to this, the providence, or government, of God, leaves all men full liberty of acting agreeably to their own views,

Short sighted men are apt to think, it would have been easy for the wise Ruler of the Universe to have removed from man every occasion of offending. According to them, there should have been nothing on earth to tempt avarice, to inflame lust, to excite ambition, to provoke unnatural appetites, to gratify inordinate desires, or to rouse the angry passions. Fact and experience prove that we are placed in a very different situation; that we are always surrounded with temptations; that we have every where the means of transgression; and may even take away our own life or the life of others. Revelation points out the reason of all this. The wicked must be allowed to act agreeably to their own views and belief, fully to establish their character: and we are even informed of many sinners who were spared a while; because their iniquity was not yet full.

It is difficult at first for those, who are not bred in unprincipled societies, to get over the restraints of conscience. From a little experience in transgression they soon find, either that they must wholly abstain from gross immoralities, or entirely discard this troublesome monitor. After conscience is fairly overcome, the persons, progress in iniquity becomes unavoidable: Habits of ill-doing are confirmed: a set of opinions is formed which justifies his conduct to himself, and represents vice as the indication of a bold and dauntless spirit, or the indispensable ingredient of felicity. Then the miserable wretch is brought to such a situation, that it would be easier for the Leopard to change his spots than for him to repent and do well; when, in the language of the Bible, he becomes a *vessel of wrath fitted to destruction*.

It is impossible for them who fear God, to see many of their fellows rushing on known destruction, without making every effort in their power to save them. The danger of such as are related by blood, or connected by other tender ties, awakens every sensibility within them. Whatever can be done, in the way of persuasion, for our

relatives or others, is laudable. Restraints are necessary in childhood and youth; but all coercive measures after manhood will most certainly fail of success. They are an unwarrantable encroachment on the liberty of free Agents, which may make the outside smooth, but will never warm the heart with the love of God.

I am not ignorant, that many respectable societies, as well as individuals, are strenuous advocates for penal laws, not only against certain vices, but even against every amusement which, in their opinion, has any tendency, however remote, to relax the virtuous principle. Being *the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*, Government ought certainly, by law, to restrain all trespasses, frauds and crimes, either against individuals or the society: and when explicit laws are enacted, and faithfully executed on every offender, they promote the happiness of the community, and even facilitate the progress of grace. To suppose, that human laws ought to go further, and intermeddle between the individual and his omniscient judge, argues, I apprehend, very erroneous notions of divine revelation. Such kind of restrictive laws proceed on the supposition, that the earth is appropriated to the good, and that they have a right to controul: whereas the scriptures clearly teach, that it is a place, where the whole human race are allowed to act in such a manner, as that, at the day of final retribution it shall manifestly appear, that every individual receives the doom which he himself has freely chosen.

There are other important ends to be served by this liberty of acting. An uninterrupted series of temptations and trials, accompanied with much suffering, is necessary to prepare a sinner for a state of innocence. If believers formed a distinct separate society, although there would be some heart-burnings and jealousies among them; yet their common sense of God's presence and subjection to his authority would prevent them from meeting with as much affliction as is necessary to

correct their folly and prepare them for celestial enjoyments. Their intermingling with the wicked renders the trial of their faith, and patience, and other Christian graces, unavoidable. Their elevated devotion; their constant reverential awe of God's presence; their inflexible integrity; their open-fronted candour; their strict veracity; their unfeigned humility; their diffusive benevolence; their gentleness and meekness; their unspotted chastity and rigid temperance, expose them to many inconveniencies in their dealings with those of an opposite description. A little duplicity and cunning, and what the world calls more yielding virtue, seem often to hold out many advantages. These the faithful reject with disdain as quite unworthy their dignified character.

They know, that what proceeds not from faith and love can never stand the test of the judgement of God. They willingly, they cheerfully, obey the law in its greatest purity and utmost extent. How much, therefore, is the wisdom and efficacy of the method of salvation by grace displayed; when sinners, notwithstanding the inherent corruption of their nature, give their hearts to God? When, amidst all the temptations of a wicked world; the gaiety, dissipation, voluptuousness, and other vices, of a licentious city, they retain their integrity, and study only to be pure as God is pure?

It must eternally silence all the enemies of the divine government, when it shall be made evidently to appear, that the whole race of the upright have voluntarily submitted to the direction of unsearchable wisdom; that they have preserved their conscience pure amidst innumerable temptations and trials seemingly to flesh and blood irresistible; and that they were drawn to reconciliation with God only with the *bands of love*, the winning charms of probity, and the captivating *beauty of holiness*.

When strong restraints are, by penal laws, laid upon any particular community, and the magistrates are ac-

tive in enforcing them, the exterior morals of the society will be free of glaring vice and gross enormities. Without these all the enemies of God slide silently down to perdition; and some of the most severe disciplinarians may inwardly hate the purity of the divine law, and offend as often as privacy affords an inviting opportunity. On the other hand, when no more than scripture restraint is laid on the liberty of acting, it is more easy to distinguish characters; and they who are really reconciled to God will be more steadfast in the ways of well-doing, and rise to much higher degrees of perfection in holiness.

VII. When any nation, city, or society of people, becomes irreligious and profane, an universal dissoluteness of morals ensues; all kinds of fraud, wickedness and oppression prevail: and they become ripe for severe judgments, and shall not escape them; because they are in that state, or verging to it, which renders the Earth unfit for carrying on the purposes of God.

That morals may exist pure, without religion, is a favourite maxim among many. Without having recourse to scripture, I apprehend, every page of history, as well as the occurrences of our own times, proves this maxim to be not only false, but pernicious. Ambition, Lust, and Avarice are the three grand pests of human society. When these are kept under the salutary influence of the fear of God, they injure not the community. Civil laws can impose upon them no effectual restraint; for though their cravings are incessant, their movements are so subtle as, in most cases, to escape the cognisance of human judicatories. When freed from every other check, is it not therefore natural to expect, that they will become bold, overbearing, and impetuous?

It is readily granted, that, when public opinion is in favour of virtue, the individuals of a society will be kept within decent bounds. No man can long stand being the object of the contempt or abhorrence of those



among whom he lives: when, therefore, he knows, that any glaring violation of chastity, of justice, or of humanity, will expose him to infamy, unless goaded on by most violent passions, he will be effectually restrained. But it is alledged, that, without religion, at least among a considerable number of the society, public opinion is never on the side of virtue. On the contrary, when the society has in general lost due regard for God, and the sacred institutions of his worship; especially when men become so daring as to boast of their irreligion and impiety, all restraint is removed from the corrupt affections of the heart. Then lust will rage, ambition grows outrageous, and the means of gratifying these must, at any rate, be procured. Others' rights will be invaded; a regular system of dishonesty and fraud will become prevalent; and the earth be filled with crimes. Of this, it is supposed, the Bible history affords most convincing proof.

From the short hints recorded of the history of the Antedeluvian world we are warranted to conclude, that they had lost all sense of God and regard for his worship. No striking or visible judgment had, since children were born unto them, followed the transgression of the first pair. The infidels of Noah's days probably derided, as idle tales, the eating of the forbidden fruit, the expulsion from paradise, and the curse entailed on the ground for man's sake. They concluded, that they were exactly in the state wherein man was formed; and that the gratification of every desire and appetite was, not only their inherent right, but the sure means of happiness. *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.* As this state of



society made the progress of the plan of grace impossible, they were swept away with the waters of a flood.

When Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire and brimstone from heaven, we are certainly informed, there were not ten godly or righteous persons in these cities. This total want of religious principle produced an universal dissoluteness of manners. They were guilty of enormities which are held in abhorrence of almost all men : and there being no hope that they could be reclaimed, God *condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly.*

When Abraham sojourned among the Canaanites, they had a considerable degree of knowledge of God, and reverence for his name. They regarded an oath ; they had the greatest abhorrence of unlawful lusts ; and were not guilty of violence and fraud. After Abraham's days, upwards of four hundred years elapsed before their wickedness had arrived at such a pitch as to render them ripe for extirpation. The enormities, mentioned by Moses in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus, are too shocking to be named. It is added, *In all these the nations are 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.* All this proceeded from their losing sight of the important truth, that God governs the sons of men, and that their own iniquity shall find out the transgressors.

It is vain to expect, that children born in such wicked societies can escape the general corruption. With their infant breath they draw in the impious contagion ; before they have learnt to speak distinctly, they lisp out cursing and profaneness ; and, having nothing to counteract the influence of the bad example daily set them, *they rise up in their fathers' stead, an increase of sinful men.* This satisfactorily accounts for the extirpation of whole nations ; and for the scattering the resi-

due of others, whose country is destroyed, over the face of the earth, like chaff driven by the wind. God, the righteous governor of the universe, who only continues the earth that it may be the nursing place of his kingdom, from time to time, rids it of those nuisances who are so depraved as to be beyond the reach of salvation by the method of mercy and grace.

With these, and many other awful examples before their eyes, can any grossly wicked city or people expect to pass unpunished? Men may think it a light matter, to scoff at religion, and attempt to propagate impiety. In doing so, as far as their influence goes, they debauch, with deleterious opinions, the minds of youth, and eradicate from their hearts all virtuous principle. Thus they fight against God. They endeavour to counteract the purposes of his mercy, to obstruct the progress of salvation; and so cannot fail to bring upon themselves, and those among whom they live, *Such evil, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.*

VIII. God reserves the severest of his judgments for those people who are favoured with the revelation of his mercy and grace, when they neglect or despise it; but more especially when they forsake the plain truth and corrupt it by inventions of their own.

The account given of the various defections of the Israelites, and the punishments these brought upon them, clearly proves this point. Their history amply confirms the preceding Law; but, as it seems more apposite to the illustration of this, I reserved the particular mention of it till now.

We read in the Bible of many heavy calamities befalling the Gentile nations, bordering on Canaan. For their pride and other wickedness, they were sometimes brought very low. All the judgments, sent on any of the neighbouring nations, were light when compared with the punishment of the Israelites. These were frequently driven to the greatest distress in their

own land, exhibiting scenes of the most pitiable wretchedness. At last the ten tribes were scattered among distant nations, and never returned to their inheritance; and the Jews were carried into a foreign land, where they endured all the hardships of a seventy years captivity.

When we read the account of their sojourning in the wilderness, and pursue their story, through the government of their Judges, and the reign of their Kings, we find, that, while they hearkened to the voice of the Lord, and walked in his statutes, it always went well with them. The land had rest; and they were prosperous and happy. But when they forsook the Lord, and worshipped Baalim, or other gods, they immediately began to suffer. The seasons seemed to forsake their accustomed course. The spirit of some one of the neighbouring nations was stirred up against them; into whose hands they were sold, stripped of great part of their property, and slain, in vast numbers, with the sword. In proportion to the greatness of their apostacy was the severity of the punishment they endured.

Idolatry was a sin to which they were strangely prone; and idolatry always drew down upon them the heaviest calamities. The reason of this appears obvious. By falsifying divine revelation, and corrupting the true worship, the source of spiritual life, is affected. Then what is learnt at public worship, and the information derived from the ministers of religion, proves only *the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.*

The Israelites were separated from other nations, and made a peculiar people, only that they might be the keepers of the Oracles of God; that they might preserve his knowledge and his worship pure; and that there might be, throughout all generations, a holy seed to serve him: therefore, in every age, the sin of idolatry, as whoredom against God, and tending

wholly to defeat his purpose, was most severely punished.

From time to time, the Lord raised up prophets among the children of Israel. With one voice these most zealously opposed the worship of false gods. They shewed their countrymen, that all their distresses proceeded from this sin. as the source of criminality; and that, as soon as they put away their strange gods and returned to the service of the Lord, prosperity never failed to bless their land. They also denounced many terrible threatnings against idolaters, which the stiff necked obstinacy of the Jews caused to be fully accomplished. Thus the prophet Daniel, who lived during the Babylonish captivity, and shared in the calamities of his country, testifies, *Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. And he hath confirmed his words which he spoke against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.*

Now as the earth is continued and governed only that the plan of grace may be compleated in it, this revelation must in all ages be preserved pure. It is reasonable, that the providence of God should watch over it with peculiar care; and punish any attempt to obscure its divine light with most awful severity. Other sins affect only the individuals who are guilty of them; but when the source of divine knowledge is tainted, the most unhappy consequences follow. The rising generation not only receive wrong impressions; but have strong prejudices formed in their minds against purity and holiness. They become almost immoveably attached to the corrupt system in which from their infancy they have been bred: and nothing tends more to obstruct the progress of grace.

With all the severe judgements inflicted on the Israelites before our eyes, let us, my brethren, take warning: let us contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, guarding against the bewitching influence of that science, falsely so called, which would lead us away from the simplicity of the gospel: let us unite in the most anxious endeavours to transmit the knowledge of God's truth and ways, pure and unmixed, to the generation about to succeed us.

IX. When the judgements of God lie heavy on any people, their only safe course is, to put away violence, lewdness and fraud; and to become humble, just, merciful and pious.

The beautiful story of the effect which Jonah's preaching produced upon the Ninevites illustrates and confirms this position. *Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.—So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their*

*works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.*

Many passages of scripture contain directions to wicked persons, and ungodly people, when smarting under the divine rod. They all inculcate the same thing, To wash their hands from violence, to leave off fraud, and deal justly every man with his neighbour; to fear God and to obey his voice. Then the end is obtained for which judgements are sent on the children of men; and when the end is obtained the means will of course be withdrawn.

X. Although the judgements of God prevent the earth from becoming too corrupt for a nursing place to the kingdom of heaven; yet they are seldom the means of reconciling sinners to himself: this being usually done by the still voice of the covenant of peace.

From a careful perusal of the scriptures, we are led to receive, with considerable limitation, the maxim, "That punishment is only meant to reform." It is perhaps true when applied to the society at large, which becomes more pure from having a number of its most profligate members destroyed; but when applied to the individuals who suffer, it is in general most glaringly false. These, for the most part, die as they lived, haters of God; and are cut off as being nuisances to the earth.

When we read the account of the many judgements which befel the children of Israel, we find that, in time of war, the people were too much occupied with alarm, and with consulting personal or family safety, to mind eternal things. Famines, pestilential diseases, &c. from the quickness with which people died, and other distressful circumstances, seem to have brought on a hardened kind of stupidity, very unfavourable to repentance and turning to the Lord. Their afflictions usually continued till they returned to the true worship of Jehovah. But certainly it is no fanciful thing, to

distinguish between returning to the national worship, and being reconciled to God so as ever after to walk before him and be perfect. This supposes a change of heart which mere suffering is by no means calculated to produce.

Great numbers of the wicked were usually swept away in the divine visitation: but when the severity of the judgement was over, and the hurry of men's spirits had somewhat subsided, the residue had leisure, and not unfrequently disposition, to listen to the voice of peace. When they discovered God's gracious revelation and purposes of mercy, feeling their hearts drawn *with cords of a man, with bands of love*; many of them were melted into submission. Then the proud spirit, which before was stubborn, and seemed to brave the rod, most willingly yielded to the sweet sound of mercy and grace.

In this way we come to know, how the judgements, which God sends on ourselves or others, advance his kingdom of righteousness and peace. They remove out of the way those obstacles which hinder its progress; especially they rouse from that spirit of slumber, lukewarmness, and indifference, which long continued peace and ease engender, but which prove the most fatal obstruction to true piety and genuine holiness.

I have now finished my observations on the TEN ultimate facts or Laws, which go a great way in explaining, How God governs moral Agents, who have lost their integrity and corrupted themselves, but who are favoured with the revelation of mercy and grace. The careful student of Scripture will observe, that I have, as much as possible, confined my observations to general things: And they certainly evince, even if nothing else could be said, the great utility of the Old Testament Scriptures. But I go on, in pursuance of the plan of the discourse, to observe;



6th. The Old Testament shews us, How God prepar- ed the moral and political state of the world for com- pleting the plan of redemption by the coming of the great Deliverer.

Soon after the flood a dark cloud overspread the earth. That great calamity, no doubt, left awful impressions on the minds of Noah's family. It seems to have cured them of the wild conceit, that man is independent of God. It produced so strong a conviction that *the hea- vens do rule*, that they never shewed any propensity to run into the Atheism and profaneness of the old world. But the devotional principle taking a wrong bias; and men, conceiving themselves to be wise, and refusing to follow the simple worship which alone befits a pure spi- rit, soon made to themselves a great many representations of Deity; and these, by a too easy transition, came in proccs of time to be reckoned so many distinct gods.

The knowledge of the most High, and of his graci- ous dispensations to man, being thus greatly obscured; and polytheism becoming generally prevalent, to keep up the knowledge of himself as the One living and true God, and to preserve the purity of his worship, He was pleased to call Abraham out of the idolatrous darkness of his father's house.

To Abraham God gave fuller and more distinct views of the covenant of grace than he had heretofore done. He instituted circumcision to be *a seal of the righteousness of Faith*: he told him, that of his seed the Redeemer should spring; and chose his offspring, descended from Sarah, as his peculiar people, whom he made the repo- sitory of his revelation.

Fresh discoveries were made to Isaac, and to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, and to whose seed the promises were exclusively confined. By a very ex- traordinary combination of circumstances, Israel was induced to move down, with his whole family, into Egypt. Here they grew into a nation, but were, by the policy of Pharaoh's court, reduced to a state of the



most abject slavery; so that, to all human appearance, the fair prospects of Abraham's posterity were entirely blasted. Instead of the large inheritance which their forefathers had taught them to expect, their strength was consumed with labour, and their souls with bitter anguish.

The bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, when they must have amounted to considerably more than a million, is an event which stands unparalleled in the history of the world. The address of Moses to the Israelites may also be made to us. *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 the one side of 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 the fire, as thou hast heard and live? Or hath God assayed to go, and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?*

The forty years sojourning in the wilderness, where so great a multitude had bread sufficient for them daily rained down from heaven; and the settlement of the twelve tribes in the promised land, are events which clearly bespeak their Author God. The various conquests, sufferings and deliverances of this people, all had an aspect to Messiah, and were intended to prepare his way. Indeed their whole history shews that they were gradually prepared for this grand event. Many prophets were raised up, from time to time, to recal them from their wandrings and back-slidings, and gradually to open to their minds the true design of Messiah's advent.

At last, when all these means had proved ineffectual to cure their strange propensity to idol-worship, the ar-

mies of Nebuchadnezzar overran their whole country, took by storm the city Jerusalem, and burnt the famous temple, which had long been their glory and their pride; but which had not escaped the pollution of their idolatrous worship. The flower of the nation were now carried away to Babylon, and during this long and severe captivity the greatest detestation of idolatry was instilled into their minds.

When full seventy years had elapsed they were permitted to return to the promised land; their temple was rebuilt; and though they enjoyed a kind of sovereignty, they were, ever after the resettlement in their own land, dependant on one or other of the great monarchies, which successively ruled the civilized part of the earth. In this situation we find them at the birth of Christ.

We are too apt to think, when the Israelites were constituted the peculiar people of God, the rest of the world was neglected. A knowledge of scripture corrects this mistake; and shews us, that God in no age left himself without a witness, but extended his regards to the whole family of Adam.

There can be no doubt, that all Noah's children were equally well instructed, by that venerable patriarch, in divine revelation as far as he himself knew it; and he, no doubt, was fully acquainted with the whole that had been given. By the descendants of Noah the whole earth was peopled. Wherever these families were scattered abroad, they carefully preserved the traditions received from their fathers: and, altho' many inventions of their own beclouded their divine knowledge; yet, from the account given in scripture of many ancient nations, we find, that amidst all their idolatry much of the original revelation remained.

Many of these nations were prevented, by a succession of wise men, or by admirable civil and religious institutions, from degenerating into the savage state. Tribes, which had sunk into the lowest degree of ignorance, barbarism, and cruelty, were led, by Heroes and States-

men providentially raised up among them, to enter into the social compact, and to submit to well regulated forms of government. By living together, and enjoying the sweets of social intercourse, their rude manners were gradually polished, their savage fierceness tamed. They learned to relish the pleasures of civilized life, and had their minds open to receive instruction: for savages must first become men in order to qualify them for the reception of divine truths.

The several arts and sciences, cultivated with so much success among the Heathen, were productive of the greatest good. They extended their views, enlarged their capacities, and greatly increased their knowledge. Many sublime truths are found in the verses of their poets; and the writings and disputations of their philosophers produced an acuteness of genius, that enabled them to canvass the most abstruse subjects, and to elucidate the most important branches of knowledge. Their continued wranglings and warm debates suggested most excellent rules of reasoning, which made them fully competent to weigh evidence, and to estimate truth. By thus giving human nature free scope, and genius full leisure and opportunity to exert itself, every thing was done that the prowess of man could effect: and *After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

Many signal interpositions of God among the Gentile nations are distinctly narrated in scripture. All these had the promoting of their temporal happiness, as well as the advancing of the plan of grace, in view. The four great Monarchies, which successively united almost all the nations of the known world under one Head, tended much to prepare the earth for Messiah's reign. While the different states and kingdoms continued independent, intercourse was difficult and travelling unsafe. The enmities and jealousies, mutually entertained, occasioned almost constant hostilities against each

other; and led them to view every stranger as an enemy or a spy. Thus it would have been impossible for the members of any particular state to become the instructors of the rest. But, by being for so long a series of years under the same government, the civilized nations had almost grown into one people. All countries, and cities retained their peculiar customs and modes of worship; yet they were familiarized to all others. They had learned to receive strangers with kindness, to treat them with civility, and in some measure to regard them as brethren. Thus, altho' the grossest idolatry universally prevailed, and great dissoluteness of morals every where disgraced philosophy and even the nature of man; yet the urbanity and politeness, bred and cherished by their living under one government, rendered communication safe, easy, and frequent, raised a spirit of inquiry and investigation, and so disposed all nations for the reception of the gospel.

In this manner we see, that, altho' God governed the Jews with peculiar care, yet his providence extended over all the earth, gradually brought in *the fulness of time*, and prepared the world for the coming of *The Son of Man*, that there might be given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

7th. The Old Testament gives such a full description of *Messiah*, and of the time and circumstances of his appearance, that he could not fail to be known when he came.

Had only a few dark, general, or doubtful, predictions been given, specifying no certain and precise particulars, as all the enemies of revelation pretend, it would have been impossible to ascertain the person of the promised Saviour. Many imposters might then have abused the credulity of mankind, or it might have been doubted, whether it could be rationally expected, that

such a personage should ever appear. Against all this the providence of God guarded with sufficient attention and care. Such lengthy and minute descriptions of Messiah and his reign are given, so many circumstances of his mission are foretold; so many particulars, seemingly of little importance are related, that it is impossible to entertain any doubts, respecting his birth, person, character, situation in life, treatment from the world, or business on the earth. For the proof of this we have only to search the scriptures, and we shall find, that Moses; *Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.*

Moses says † “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.” Moses was commissioned and sent by God to make very considerable and striking alterations in the religious institutions which had been prescribed to the Patriarchs. He was the minister or mediator of a distinct covenant and a new dispensation. He ordained so many statutes, judgements, and laws; he prescribed so many new rites, ceremonies, and services, that the Church assumed quite another form in the wilderness.

Now, in order to be like the ancient Lawgiver, it would naturally be expected of this Prophet, that he should alter so much the mode of worship, and all the ordinances of divine service, as to form an entire new dispensation; a Church essentially distinct and different from the Jewish. Moses very much enlarged divine revelation. He did not repeal or set aside what went before; but added to it, by establishing a covenant on

† Deut. XVIII. 15.

It may not be amiss to notice, that the scriptures, which illustrate this particular were not read, at the delivery of the discourse; and that I have printed the observations, omitted for fear of rendering the discourse insupportably tedious.

very different promises. To be like him, it was necessary that this Prophet should receive very ample communications from God for the instruction of his people; that he should come in his name, and establish a new system, uniform, consistent in all its parts, complete, wanting nothing.

The manner of his birth and his parentage are distinctly pointed out, clearly proving to the Jews, that Messiah is of their brethren. Thus Isaiah says \* “Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” And again, † “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice, from henceforth even for ever.” Now that this most extraordinary child should spring of the seed of David, and be born in the town of David is also distinctly foretold. It is written in the Psalms ‡ “Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the Sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah. †† Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Bethlehem-Judah, whose name was Jesse.” And we find the prophet Micah saying; § “But thou Bethlehem-Ephrathah, tho’ thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” In the above scripture he is stiled the Seed, or Son of

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\* Is. vii 14.      † Is. ix. 6, 7.      † Ps. lxxxix. 35, 36.  
37.      †† 1 Sam. xvii. 12.      § Mic. . . 2.

David; but David in the book of Psalms † says of him;  
 “ The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right  
 “ hand, until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool.”

The time of his appearing is foretold with the most  
 minute exactness, † “ Seventy weeks are determined  
 “ upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the  
 “ transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make  
 “ reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlast-  
 “ ing righteousness, and to seal up the vision and pro-  
 “ phesy, and to anoint the most holy. Know there-  
 “ fore and understand, that, from the going forth of  
 “ the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem,  
 “ unto the Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks, and  
 “ threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built  
 “ again, and the wall even in troublous times. And  
 “ after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut  
 “ off, but not for himself: and the people of the Prince  
 “ that shall come shall destroy the city, and the sanctua-  
 “ ry, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto  
 “ the end of the war desolations are determined; (And  
 “ he shall confirm the covenant with many for one  
 “ week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sa-  
 “ crifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspread-  
 “ ing of abominations, he shall make it desolate;) even  
 “ until the consummation, and that determined, shall  
 “ be poured upon the desolate.” By allowing the  
 scripture to interpret itself, we learn how to estimate  
 these weeks. Ezekiel assures us, that the word of the  
 Lord explained to him the prophetic stie thus; \* “ I  
 “ have appointed thee each day for a year.” Reckon-  
 ing according to this rule, we are brought so exactly to  
 the days of Christ, that infidels cannot account for the  
 prophecy in any other way than by supposing, the book  
 of Daniel was written after the days of Christ. Now  
 this shews us to what poor shifts these are obliged to

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† Ps. cx. 1.

‡ Dan. ix 24, 25, 26, 27.

\* Ezek. iv. 6.



have recourse, who shut their eyes, lest they should see, be converted, and be saved. For how can it ever be supposed, that the Jews would foist into their Bible a prophecy which either incontestibly proves, that Jesus is the Messiah, or cuts off all hope of his ever making his appearance?

Notwithstanding the dignity of his royal Ancestors, and the wonderful and divine glory of his person, this Child was to appear in the most abject, penurious, and humiliating, circumstances. Thus in the book of Psalms\* he is represented as saying, “I am a worm  
“ and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of  
“ the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn.” The prophet Isaiah teaches the same thing; † “He  
“ hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see  
“ him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.  
“ He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sor-  
“ rows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it  
“ were our faces from him; he was despised, and we  
“ esteemed him not.”

A Forerunner, of a very singular appearance and extraordinary character, was to be sent to usher in the public ministry of this Prophet. † “Behold I will  
“ send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way be-  
“ fore me.” And again, § “Behold, I will send you  
“ Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great  
“ and dreadful day of the Lord.” Isaiah describes this messenger as †† “The voice of him that crieth in the  
“ wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make  
“ straight in the desert a high-way for our God. Every  
“ valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill  
“ shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made  
“ straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory  
“ of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see

\* xxii. 6. 7. † Is. liii. 2, 3. † Mal. iii. 1.  
§ Mal. iv. 5. †† Is. xl. 3, 4, 5.

“ it together : for the mouth of the Lord had spoken  
 “ it.”

It is clearly foretold, that Messiah should come while the second Temple, built by the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity, was standing. Haggai, who was sent on purpose to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, and Joshua the high priest, and the residue of the people, to encourage them to work in the house of the Lord of hosts their God, thus addressed them +

“ Who is left among you that saw this house in her first  
 “ glory ? and how do ye see it now ? is it not in your  
 “ eyes, in comparison of it, as nothing ? Yet now be  
 “ strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord ; and be strong,  
 “ O Joshua, son of Josedek the high priest ; and be  
 “ strong all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and  
 “ work : for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts ;  
 “ According to the word that I covenanted with you,  
 “ when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth  
 “ among you : fear ye not. For thus saith the Lord  
 “ of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will  
 “ shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and  
 “ the dry land : And I will shake all nations, and THE  
 “ DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS shall come ; and I will  
 “ fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.”

The prophet Malachi in like manner says. § “ The Lord,  
 “ whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple,  
 “ even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye de-  
 “ light in : behold he shall come saith the Lord of  
 “ hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming ?  
 “ and who shall stand when he appeareth ? for he is  
 “ like refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap. And he  
 “ shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver : and he  
 “ shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold  
 “ and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an  
 “ offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of

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† Hag. II, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.      § Mal. III, 1, 2, 3, 4.

“ Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as  
 “ in the days of old, and as in former years.”

His ministry was to be of the most condescending, useful, and beneficent, nature\*. “ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” He is introduced by Isaiah as saying†, “ The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of Joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. † Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. § Behold, my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles. He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgement unto truth. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgement in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law. Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh

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\* Zech. ix, 9.

† Is. lxi, 1, 2, 3.

† Is. lxxxiii: 4.

‡ Is. xlii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

“ out of it ; he that giveth breath unto the people  
 “ upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein : I the  
 “ Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold  
 “ thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a  
 “ covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles ;  
 “ To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners  
 “ from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of  
 “ the prison house.”

This prophet was raised up of his brethren the Jews :  
 he came unto his own, but his own received him not.  
 This is distinctly foretold. \* “ Therefore thus saith  
 “ the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion, for a foun-  
 “ dation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-  
 “ stone, a sure foundation : he that believeth shall not  
 “ make haste. † And he shall be for a sanctuary, but  
 “ for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence  
 “ to both the houses of Israel, for a gin, and for a  
 “ snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many  
 “ among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken,  
 “ and be snared. and be taken.” Altho’ the generali-  
 ty of his countrymen were to treat him with every  
 mark of contumely and scorn, as is fully expressed in  
 several of the forecited scriptures ; yet some of the  
 Jews were to receive him ; and the end of his mission  
 was to be fully accomplished. Thus it is written,  
 “ †† Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very  
 “ small remnant, we should have been as Sodom and  
 “ we should have been like unto Gomorrah.” And in  
 the book of Psalms § “ The stone which the builders  
 “ refused is become the head stone of the corner.  
 This is the Lord’s doing, it is marvellous in our eyes.”

From the days of Jacob, the Abrahamic covenant,  
 and the promises of God, were exclusively confined to  
 his children. Thus the sons of Adam were cast into

\* Is. xxviii, 16.  
 § Ps. cxviii. 22, 23.

† Is. viii, 14, 15.

†† Is. i, 9.

two grand divisions, whereof the one became God's peculiar people, while the other were "*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise.*" This distinction, established for wise purposes, Messiah was entirely to destroy, and to "*be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.*" He is introduced as saying, § "*And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*" And in the book of Psalms, \* "*I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*"

As his ancient people were very generally to reject Messiah, and to be set forth an awful example to the whole world of the just severity of God on them for their unbelief; so the Gentiles were as generally to receive his law, and to become ever after the subjects of his spiritual kingdom. They were to give their glory and their power unto him, and to dedicate their wealth to his service. † "*He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him: and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall*

§ II: XIIII. 5, 6.

\* Ps. II. 7, 8.

† Psalm. lxxii. 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17.

“ serve him.—And he shall live, and to him shall be  
 “ given of the gold of Sheba ; prayer also shall be  
 “ made for him continually, and daily shall he be  
 “ praised.—His name shall endure for ever : his name  
 “ shall be continued as long as the Sun ; and men shall  
 “ be blessed in him : all nations shall call him blessed.”

One of the chief ends of Messiah's coming into the world was, *to make his soul an offering for sin*. This rendered it necessary that he should be clothed with the character of a priest. Accordingly we find in the book of Psalms † *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek*. The doctrine of propitiatory sacrifices is one of the most difficult to be understood by rational creatures. It can have no place in a state of innocency. Its necessity arises solely from guilt ; therefore nothing analogous to it can be found in our natural conceptions : but it must be a matter of pure revelation communicated to man after he became an offender. This consideration represses the petulance of a vain philosophy, and teaches us, that, in order to understand this important doctrine, revelation alone must be consulted. Here the humble believer, who gladly receives truth on the simple testimony of the Spirit of inspiration, obtains the most ample and satisfactory instruction.

Sacrifices prevailed from the fall of man, forming part of the public worship of all that feared God. Abraham seems to have been led to a very distinct knowledge of them, when he was commanded to offer up his only son Isaac. The Angel, speaking from heaven, commanded him not to slay his son ; \* *And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns : and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering, in the stead of his son*. This transaction no

† cx. 4.

\* Gen. xxii, 13.

doubt made a lively impression on Isaac, and was faithfully taught by him to all his descendants.

The Aaronical priest-hood, and all the services of the tabernacle, their sacrifices, offerings, sprinklings and purifyings were types of Christ, and prefigured the great salvation procured by his death. The most luminous instruction, on this subject, is conveyed by the services appointed for the great anniversary day of atonement.\* “ And Aaron shall bring the bullock of  
 “ the sin-offering, which is for himself, and shall make  
 “ an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall  
 “ kill the bullock of the sin-offering, which is for  
 “ himself. And he shall take a censer full of burning  
 “ coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and  
 “ his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and  
 “ bring it within the vail. And he shall put the in-  
 “ cense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of  
 “ the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon  
 “ the testimony, that he die not. And he shall take of  
 “ the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his fin-  
 “ ger upon the mercy-seat, east-ward: and before the  
 “ mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his  
 “ finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of  
 “ the sin-offering that is for the people, and bring his  
 “ blood within the vail, and do with that blood, as  
 “ he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle  
 “ it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat.  
 “ And he shall make an atonement for the holy place,  
 “ because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel,  
 “ and because of their transgressions in all their sins :  
 “ ---And when he hath made an end of reconciling the  
 “ holy place, and the tabernacle of the Congregation,  
 “ and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. And  
 “ Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the

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\* Lev. xvi. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16,—20, 21, 23,—29, 30, 31,—34.



“ live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of  
 “ the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in  
 “ all their sins, putting them upon the head of the  
 “ goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit  
 “ man unto the wilderness. And the goat shall bear  
 “ upon him all their iniquities, unto a land not inha-  
 “ bited : and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.  
 “ ---And this shall be a statute for ever unto you ;  
 “ that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the  
 “ month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at  
 “ all, whether it be one of your own country, or a  
 “ stranger that sojourneth among you. For on that  
 “ day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to  
 “ cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your  
 “ sins before the Lord. It shall be a sabbath of rest  
 “ unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls by a statute  
 “ for ever.---And this shall be an everlasting statute  
 “ unto you, to make an atonement for the children of  
 “ Israel, for all their sins, once a year.” Thus were  
 the Israelites gradually prepared to understand what is  
 prophesied of the Messiah • *He was wounded for our  
 transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the  
 chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his  
 stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone  
 astray : we have turned every one to his own way, and  
 the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.---It  
 pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief :  
 when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall  
 see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of  
 the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the  
 travail of his soul and be satisfied : by his knowledge shall  
 my righteous servant justify many ; for he shall bear their  
 iniquities.*

Many things seemingly of little importance, which  
 happened during his last sufferings, and at his death,  
 are distinctly foretold. † “ My God, my God, why

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• Is. LIII 5, 6-10, 11. † Ps. XXII. 1.-7.-14.-16.-18.

“ hast thou forsaken me?—All that see me, laugh me  
 “ to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head,  
 “ —All my bones are out of joint:—They pierced my  
 “ hands and my feet —They part my garments among  
 “ them, and cast lots upon my vesture. \* “ In my thirst  
 “ they gave me vinegar to drink.” He was to be bu-  
 ried, but could not be held under the power of death,  
 “ † He made his grave with the wicked, and with the  
 “ rich in his death. † “ Thou wilt not leave my soul in  
 “ hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see  
 “ corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life.”

No man, except Jesus of Nazareth, ever laid claim to  
 this character in all its variety and extent. He declar-  
 ed himself the Messiah promised to the fathers; and  
 every one acquainted with the New Testament must ac-  
 knowledge, that he fulfilled all that was written, and  
 that every particular predicted of him applied to his  
 person and character with the most minute exactness.  
 Now this lays so strong and deep a foundation for our  
 holy Faith, as all the wit and sophistry of men, and all  
 the power and malice of hell, shall never be able to  
 shake. I ought.

*Lastly,* To mention the instructions contained in the  
 devotional, moral, and other didactic parts of the Old  
 Testament.

To make an epitome of these is impossible. To be  
 known they must be carefully perused. The lively sen-  
 timents of devotion they contain will warm the heart,  
 and give a new spring to the affections. The excellent  
 lessons of moral wisdom, with which they abound, will  
 inform the judgement, and prove a sure guide in all the  
 various and trying circumstances of human life. The  
 doctrines give full employment to the genius of the  
 most learned and acute; while, at the same time, they  
 will make the simple wise. These instructions are so va-

\* PS. LXIX. 21

† IS. LIII. 9.

‡ PS. XVI. 10, 11.

rious and so important, that they alone are sufficient to evince the great Utility of the scriptures of the Old Testament. But when we consider, that hence we derive our knowledge of the Creator and of creation: that here we learn the original state of the human race, and how it became corrupted and depraved: that the Old Testament contains satisfying discoveries of God's purposes of grace to sinners, and begins the developement of that plan by which free agents, without trenching on their liberty, are recovered from guilt and gradually restored to happiness: that here the effect of God's discoveries of mercy, of the application of grace, and the exercise of faith is beautifully elucidated; together with the frightful consequences of transgression when it remains unsubdued: that we here learn how God governs this world: That we are taught, how God prepared the moral and political state of the world for compleating the plan of redemption by the coming of the great Deliverer: and that such a description of Messiah is given, and of the time and circumstances of his appearance as that he could not fail to be known when he came: I say, when we consider all this, we cannot doubt, that *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning.* I come now,

II. To direct to the practical improvement of this subject: but as I have already trespassed so far on your patience, I shall do little more than barely name the particulars which I once intended pretty fully to illustrate.

1st. Divine revelation, as we now have it, was not intended for innocent creatures; but is the discovery of God's purposes of grace and mercy to guilty miserable offenders: and proves the means of rescuing every one from perdition who cordially receives it.

That it is effectual to answer all the purposes for which it was given, no man, I think, can doubt who carefully peruses the lives of the Old Testament saints. The greater the crimes of which they were guilty, the

more clearly the efficacy of the system, by which they were brought to repentance, is evinced. Considering the dimness of their light, it is surprising to see to what heights of sanctity, to what stedfast virtue many of them attained. If any of you then, my dear hearers, feel yourselves the seats of guilt, and the victims of wretchedness, to you these words of peace are sent: and I obtest you as you, value your own souls, as you pant after ease, as you desire eternal happiness and dread everlasting misery, to open your ears that you may receive the instructions of wisdom. They will prove your life: for you may rest assured, that whosoever believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned.

2d. The Old Testament, being the opening of the plan of redemption, is to the New Testament what the foundation is to the superstructure.

3d. From what has been delivered, we learn the true use of reason in matters of faith.

It is that faculty by which we ascertain that God speaks, and comprehend the meaning of what he reveals, but must implicitly receive every thing that he communicates. It may be thus illustrated, a servant must never dispute the propriety of his master's orders, but he must be sure that his master speaks, that he hears distinctly all that he says, and fully understands his meaning.

4th. We see the great importance of perusing with diligence and care the Old Testament scriptures.

They shew us the nature of the divine government under which we live: they lead us clearly to understand, why the judgements of God are sent on the earth, and what our behaviour under them ought to be. God afflicts not willingly; but when the wickedness of men, the daring boldness of a vain philosophy, producing an evil heart of unbelief, or a general disregard of divine ordinances, obstructs the progress of the plan of grace, then he will visit the iniquity of his people upon them, till they are humbled under his mighty hand. The Old Testament places before us a vast variety of the

most lively examples; *that we thro' patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.* On these sacred pages, therefore, the believer will pore by day, and ruminate by night: he will esteem them above his necessary food.

5th. These scriptures are a dead letter, unless perused with a lively active faith.

No wonder Infidels call many passages of scripture silly, uninstrucive anecdotes. That part of it which respects God and his government they utterly reject as of no authority: nor can they, without faith, act otherwise. Now it is of no consequence to know the particulars of any man's life; but to be clearly informed, how these become the means of his eternal happiness or misery, is of the utmost importance to us in the conduct of our lives. This is knowledge that makes us truly wise; but it can only be attained by reading the scriptures with faith unfeigned.

6th. We see the reason why all Infidels agree in representing the Old Testament in a mutilated and travestied state.

It is undeniably the oldest book in the world, and contains historical information of the most curious and interesting nature. Considered as a book of law, and a spiritual physician, it was necessary to touch every case incident to man. It contains nothing like indelicate wantonness or immodesty. Every candid person sees, that such a book would have been defective, if it had not fully handled every subject it contains; and tho' this made some expressions proper, which without sufficient reason will not be used; yet it was utterly impossible to treat of these necessary subjects in a more decent, delicate, and edifying manner.

But it tells us plainly we are sinners, and points out the only method of recovery from guilt. This makes unbelievers mad. They call themselves perfect; they want no forgiveness; they boast of being above the sneaking meanness of acknowledging God for their go-

vernor, and deny that he has any right either to punish or pardon. Sensible that common sense disclaims such impious conceits, they try to drown her voice by the number and respectability of their party. Thus they incessantly decry the scriptures; and, by making them seem ridiculous, they blind the eyes of silly, thoughtless, inconsiderate youths; so that they will not peruse them, lest they should be convinced, believe and be saved. In this manner, a vile disingenuous stratagem promotes the designs of those of our race, who, themselves irrecoverably depraved, have, like the Devil, made seduction their trade.

*Lastly*, Allow me, my much respected Fathers and Brethren, to conclude by saying, Let us diligently search the scriptures; that, bringing out of these inexhaustible treasures things new and old, our discourses may be full of the wisdom that is from above, and prove to our people, *A word fitly spoken, which the wise man assures us, is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.* AMEN,