

*The Use and Intent of PROPHECY, in  
the several Ages of the World.*

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I N S I X  
D I S C O U R S E S,

Delivered at the

TEMPLE CHURCH

In APRIL and MAY, 1724.

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*Published at the Desire of the MASTERS of the  
BENCH of the Two Honourable SOCIETIES.*

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To which are added,

Four D I S S E R T A T I O N S,  
and an A P P E N D I X.

- I. *The Authority of the Second Epistle of St. PETER.*
- II. *The Sense of the Ancients, before CHRIST, upon the  
Circumstances and Consequences of the FALL.*  
*An APPENDIX to the Second Dissertation, being a farther  
Enquiry into the Mosaick Account of the FALL.*
- III. *The Blessing of JUDAH, Gen. xlix.*
- IV. *CHRIST'S Entry into Jerusalem.*

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The SIXTH EDITION, Corrected and Enlarged.

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Now Lord Bishop of LONDON.*

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To the WORSHIPFUL the

MASTERS of the *Bench*

Of the TWO HONOURABLE

*Societies of the Temple,*

THESE

DISCOURSES

*(Published at their Desire)*

Are INSCRIBED, by

*Their most Obedient*

*Humble Servant,*

THO. SHERLOCK.

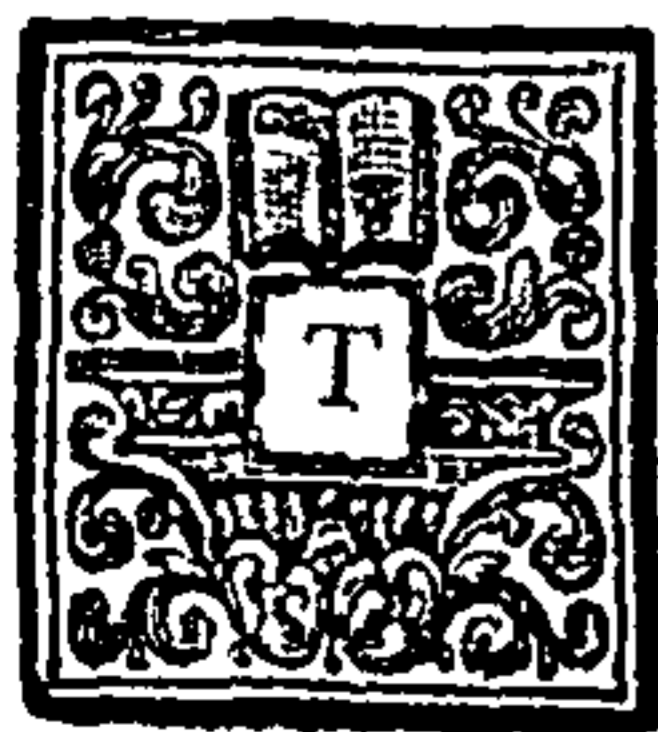


# DISCOURSE I.

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2 PETER i. 19.

*We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy; whercunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in your Hearts.*



HERE being evidently a Comparison in the Text between the *Word of Prophecy*, and something before mentioned or intended, 'tis necessary to look back to see how the Relation stands, and what the Thing is to which the

B

*Word*

## 2 DISCOURSE I.

*Word of Prophecy* is compar'd and preferr'd. At the 16th Verse the Apostle says, *We have not followed cunningly devised Fables when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And after thus disclaiming all Art and Deceit, in setting forth the Promises and Expectations of the Gospel, he proceeds to declare upon what Evidence and Authority he had rais'd such Expectations in them: *But (we) were Eye-witnesses of his Majesty, for he received from God the Father Honour and Glory, when there came such a Voice to him from the excellent Glory; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this Voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with him in the Holy Mount.* Immediately follow the Words of the Text, *We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy.*

You see upon what Foundation their Inference stands, who assert, That the Evidence which Christians have from Prophecy for the Certainty of their Hopes and Expectations, compar'd with the Evidence they have from the Preaching of the Apostles, who were Eye-witnesses and Ear-witnesses of what they report concerning the Majesty of Christ, is the greater and surer Evidence; or, in the

Words

## DISCOURSE I. 3

Words of a late Author, That “ \* Prophecy  
 “ is a stronger Argument than a Miracle;  
 “ which depends upon external Evidence  
 “ and Testimony.” This Author has taken  
 great Pains to shew, that the Argument from  
 Prophecy for the Truths of Christianity, as  
 managed and applied by the Writers of the  
 New Testament, is absurd and ridiculous;  
 and that we may not flatter ourselves with  
 Hopes of Assistance from other Arguments,  
 he gives us this Text of *St. Peter*, to shew,  
 by the Authority of our own Scriptures, that  
 Prophecy, as bad an Argument as it is, is  
 nevertheless the very best that our Cause af-  
 fords: But his Views be to himself; what  
 Truth there is in his Exposition and Appli-  
 cation of this Part of Scripture, we shall soon  
 see.

Interpreters differ very much in expound-  
 ing this Passage; but all, as far as I see, a-  
 gree in rejecting this Sense which gives a Su-  
 periority to the Evidence of Prophecy above  
 all other Evidence, by which the Truth of  
 the Gospel is confirmed; and indeed the Text  
 expounded to this Meaning, contradicts not  
 only the general Sense of Mankind upon this

\* *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, printed 1724. p. 27.

## 4 DISCOURSE I.

Subject, but will be found likewise inconsistent with itself, and many other Places of Scripture. For first, let any Man consider, and say upon what Proof and Evidence the Authority of Prophecy itself depends: Can any Prophet give greater Proof of his Divine Mission, than the Power of working Miracles? And if this be the last, and the greatest Proof he can give of his being sent by God, can the Evidence of Prophecy ever rise higher than the Evidence of Miracles, upon which it ultimately depends for all its Authority? When *Gideon* was called to the Deliverance of *Israel*, the Angel of the Lord came and said unto him, *The Lord is with thee, thou mighty Man of Valour;— go in this thy Might, and thou shalt save Israel from the Hand of the Midianites; have not I sent thee?* Here now was a Prophecy delivered by the Angel of the Lord to encourage his Undertaking. What says *Gideon* to this? He desires a Sign; *If now I have found Favour in thy Sight, then shew me a Sign that thou talkest with me.* A Sign is given him, a miraculous Sign; he is satisfied, and undertakes the Work appointed; to which he is again encouraged by two Miracles wrought at his Request, *Judges vii.* What think you now?

The

## DISCOURSE I. 5

The Prophecy delivered by the Angel was as much a Prophecy before, as it was after Miracles wrought in Confirmation of it: But was the Word of Prophecy more sure before the Miracles than after? If so, why was a Sign desired? and, when desired, why was it granted? Does God work Miracles to humour Men in their Folly? or is it to confirm their Faith? If it be to confirm their Faith, then our Faith in the Prophets depends upon the Authority of Miracles; and since the Stream can never rise above the Spring-Head, the Evidence of Prophecy cannot be greater than the Evidence of Miracles. But let us take an higher Instance; *Moses* was the first, and the greatest Prophet of the Law, to whom God spoke *Face to Face*: He was called by God to deliver the Children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and commissioned to assure them of God's immediate Protection. This I suppose was sufficient to make him a Prophet to *Israel*: But what says *Moses*? *Behold they will not believe me, nor hearken to my Voice; or they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee.* Was this a foolish Complaint in *Moses*? If it was, how came God to listen to it, and to furnish him with an Answer above all Exception, by giving him imme-

## 6 DISCOURSE I.

diately a Power to work Miracles in Confirmation of his Prophecy? Does not this Method of God's Proceeding plainly shew, that Miracles are the Prophet's greatest Authority and Confirmation? What is that superior Evidence of Prophecy, then, which is said so much to exceed the Evidence of Miracles? But to go on: The Comparison in the Text, with respect to *St. Peter* himself, is between the *Word of Prophecy*, and the *immediate Word of God*: And according to this Exposition of the Text, *St. Peter*, who declares that he heard the Voice of God *himself* in the Mount, is made in his OWN Person to say; (for the Words are, *We have a more sure Word of Prophecy*) That the dark Prophecies of the Old Testament were a surer and more certain Evidence, than this immediate Voice of God which he heard with his own Ears. Now what is Prophecy, that it should be more surely and certainly to be depended on than the immediate Voice of God? Is it possible to think that *St. Peter*, or any Man in his Wits, could make such a Comparison?

But further; let us consider what Account *St. Peter* himself gives of this *Word of Prophecy*; which, we are told, is beyond Comparison



parison the best and the surest Evidence we have for our Faith: He compares it to *a Light shining in a dark Place*; and distinguishes it from *Day-light*, and that Brightness which is usher'd in by the *Day-Star*. This *Word of Prophecy* then is here compar'd by *St. Peter* to the glimmering Light of a Candle seen at a Distance in a dark Night; which tho' it gives some Direction, yet is *nothing*, compared to clear Day-light. Is not this now a choice Account of the Evidence of the Gospel; nay, of the *very best* Evidence which we have of the Gospel? Are we still surrounded on all Sides with Darkness, assisted by one only distant glimmering Light? Was it thus that *Christ* came to be *a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the Glory of Israel*? *St. Peter* in his first Epistle tells all Christians, that they *are called out of Darkness into God's marvellous Light*; how comes he then in this second Epistle to tell them, that they are still in Darkness, and have nothing but a Light glimmering in the Darkness to direct them? Can the same Writer possibly be supposed to give such different Accounts of our Gospel-State? Ask *St. Paul*, what State Christians are in, he will tell you, *That the Light of the glorious*

## 8 DISCOURSE I.

*Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, has shewn unto them, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Ask the Evangelists, they will tell you, The Day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give Light to them that sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death. Ask any, or all of the Apostles, they will tell you their Commission is, To open the Eyes of the People, and to turn them from Darkness to Light; Acts xxvi. 16. agreeable to what our Lord told his Disciples, Ye are the Light of the World, Matth. v. 14. How different is this Account from that which St. Peter is supposed to give of the best Light we have under the Gospel, in contradiction to himself, and almost every Writer of the New Testament!*

But let us go one Step further, and we shall find, that St. Peter in the Text is so far from speaking of the *Word of Prophecy*, as of the best Light or Evidence to be had for the Point in question, whatever it was, that he manifestly speaks of it as *not the best, but as a Light to be attended to only until a better comes*: Hear his Words; *We have also a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, UNTIL the Day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in your Hearts.*

This

This Light, you see, is to be attended to only till the Day-light comes; so far is it from being itself the *best* Light, that it must give way to a *better*. What the true Import and Meaning of this is, we shall see hereafter. But surely St. *Peter* would not have limited any Time for their attending to the Word of Prophecy, had he been considering it as the best Support of Christian Faith; for in that Sense it ought ever to be attended to, and to be the constant Employment of a Christian's Meditation, so long as Life and Thought remain with him.

These Reasons, I suppose, prevailed with Interpreters to quit the apparent Sense of this Text, which seems to prefer the Authority of Prophecy to the Authority of all other Evidence, whereby the Doctrine of the Gospel is confirmed; and to seek for some other, more conformable to Truth and Reason. But however they are agreed in rejecting *this* Sense, they are far from being agreed in establishing any *other*.

The *Greek* Expositors suppose the Sense here to be, the Prophecy is *now to Christians*, a more sure and convincing Evidence than ever it was, having been verified and established by the Events. This Interpretation

tion preserves the *Force* of the *Comparison*; but then it places the *Comparison* where *St. Peter* has not placed it. He manifestly compares the Evidence of Prophecy to the Evidence arising from the Glorification of *Christ*, attested by those who delivered what they had heard and seen with their own Eyes and Ears: But of the Evidence and Weight of Prophecy *before* and *after* the Completion he says nothing. *Grotius* thought this Sense the most convenient, and has adopted it in his Commentary on the Place.

Others \* suppose that the Comparative is used in this Text, in the Sense of the Positive, to express the great Certainty of the Evidence mentioned. According to them, the Meaning is, "That we have a very sure Evidence in the Words of Prophecy:" This Exposition introduces a new Use of Language into the Text, for which having no sufficient Authority to produce, it can claim no Authority itself. The Instances given to support this Construction, as far as I have seen, are not pertinently alledged.

Others, preserving the natural Signification of the Words, and therefore admitting the Comparison, will not however allow the

\*Erasmus, Junius and Tremellius.

Comparison to be *absolute*, but only *relative*; relative to the Opinions and Prejudices of the *Jews*, to whom this Epistle was directed. According to this Interpretation, the Apostle does not assert, That Prophecy is *in itself* a better Argument than the Evangelical Evidence, but only that it is better *to Jews*; who being educated in an Esteem and Reverence for the Prophets from their Childhood, and being but new and tender Converts to the Gospel, had a much greater Regard to the Authority of their own Prophets, than to the Testimony of the Apostles. But as to this Exposition; in the first Place, there is nothing in the Text to countenance it: In the next place; had this been St. *Peter's* Meaning, he never would have spoken in the first Person, and joined himself in the same Opinion with his Country-men: *WE have*, says he, *a more sure Word of Prophecy* — Now whatever the *Jews* thought, St. *Peter* could not think that the ancient obscure Prophecies, and which he compares immediately to *a Light shining in a dark Place*, were a stronger Evidence than the Miracles of *Jesus*, and the Attestation of God himself to the Truth of his Mission. This therefore could not be St. *Peter's* Meaning.

These

These are the most considerable Expositions, which have been given of this Passage. 'Tis evident that all Interpreters have been sensible of the Absurdity of setting up Prophecy as a superior Evidence to all other Gospel Evidence; and that to avoid this Difficulty, they have been driven to seek out other Meanings. And yet, without all Question, the Words of the Text, according to their most natural Sense, do import, that the Evidence of Prophecy is a *surer* Evidence than that before mentioned; which was the Apostle's own Testimony of the Glory of *Christ*, which he had seen with his Eyes; and of the Voice of God declaring *Christ* to be his beloved Son; of which the Apostle was an Ear-witness in the Mount. But as natural as this Sense is, yet they who conclude from hence, that Prophecy is a better Evidence of the *Mission of Christ*, and the *Truth of the Gospel*, than any other Evidence, draw a Conclusion which the Text will not justify. For look back and see what is the Thing to be proved by this *more sure* Word of Prophecy; Is it the *Mission of Christ*? St. Peter says nothing of it. Is it the *Truth of the Gospel*? nothing less. The Apostle tells us, in the 16th Verse, That God  
 declared

declared *Christ* by a Voice from the excellent Glory, to *be his beloved Son*: But this is not the Thing he would prove, for he brings this Declaration to prove something else: And this Declaration is considered as one of the Proofs to which he compares the Word of Prophecy.

To clear this Matter, let us consider what it is that *St. Peter* intended to prove; for without knowing this, 'tis impossible to judge of the Comparison in the Text; for in some Cases *Prophecy* is no Proof, in others it may be our very best Evidence, notwithstanding that it is a glimmering Light, faintly shining through the Dark.

The second Epistle of *St. Peter* was written to support and maintain the Hopes and Expectations which he had raised in his first; as will be evident upon a Comparison of the two together. To the first Epistle, therefore, we must go, to see the Foundation and Rise of the Matter to which this controverted Text in the second relates.

The Christians, to whom the first Epistle was directed, were in a State of severe Trial and Persecution; They were *for a Season in Heaviness, through manifold Temptations*, i. 6. *They were spoken against as evil Doers*, ii. 12.  
iii. 16.

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iii. 16. iv. 4. They *suffered for Righteousness sake*, iii. 14. They were *reproached for the Name of Christ*, iv. 14. and were *made Partakers of his Sufferings*, ver. 13. This being the Case, the Apostle administers suitable Advice to them: He calls upon them to *arm themselves with the same Mind* which was in *Christ, who suffered for us in the Flesh*, iv. 1. he bids them account it their Happiness that *they were reproached for the Name of Christ*, iv. 14. and *rejoice that they were Partakers of his Sufferings*, ver. 13. He reminds them that his *fiery Trial* was no *strange* or *surprizing Event*; but what had been foretold, and what they had Reason to expect, iv. 12. And that *the same Afflictions were accomplished in their Brethren in the World*, v. 9. That the Time was come (foretold before) That *Judgment must begin at the House of God*, iv. 17.

Together with these Admonitions he gives them Assurance of a certain Deliverance near at Hand. He tells them they were kept by *the Power of God, through Faith, unto Salvation, ready to be revealed*, i. 5. That their Trial would yield *Honour and Glory at the Appearing of Jesus Christ*, ver. 7. He bids them have perfect *Hope* and *Confidence in*  
2
the



*the Grace, or Deliverance, to be brought at the Revelation of Christ Jesus, ver. 13. in the Day of Visitation, ii. 12. For the Certainty of this Deliverance, and Salvation now ready (or prepared) to be revealed, and of the Share they should have in it, he appeals to the ancient Prophets, and the Spirit of Christ in them, testifying before-hand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory which should follow, i. 11. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things now reported unto you, ver. 12. The first Scene, the Sufferings of Christ, being over, iv. 1. his Glory was ready to be revealed, which would bring them exceeding Joy, iv. 13. and be to the Destruction of their Persecutors, the Ungodly, and the Sinners, ver. 18.*

All these Hopes were founded in this, That Christ himself had *already* received *Glory and Power*, and would return in his *Glory and Power* to save true Believers. Our Trust in God is by *St. Peter* built upon this, that God *raised him (Christ) from the Dead, and gave him Glory*, 1 Pet. i. 21. And it is at the *Revelation* of this *Glory*, that Christians are taught to expect *exceeding Joy*, iv. 13. You see now how much Weight is laid by *St. Peter* in his first Epistle upon the

Expec-

Expectation of Christ's *Coming* in the *Power* and *Glory* of God.

It is very probable that the distressed Christians conceived at first great Hopes from these Assurances given them by an Apostle of Christ, and expected (as it is natural for Men in Affliction to do) that every Day would bring their *Deliverance* with it. But when one Year after another passed, and no *Deliverance* came, when the *Scoffers* began to ridicule their Hopes, and asked in Mockery, *Where is the Promise of his Coming?* 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. their Hearts grew sick; and their Hopes deferred, instead of being any Comfort or Support to them, became an Addition of Grief, and filled them with Fears and Suspicions, lest they had believed in vain. Many of them, worn out with Distress and Persecution, began to give way, and willingly listened to the corrupt Teachers, who instructed them to keep fair with the World, and to keep their Faith to themselves; by means of which wicked Doctrine they were *led away, and fell from their Steadfastness*, 2 Ep. chap. iii. ver. 17. and to avoid suffering, *denied the Lord that bought them*, ch. iii. ver. 1.

In

## DISCOURSE I. 17

In this State of Things, and at the Distance of five or six Years from the writing of the first Epistle, the Apostle sends his second Letter: and it answers in every Point to this Account. In the first Chapter the Apostle endeavours to re-establish and confirm the Hopes of *Believers*; but he does it with the Air of one who had been *reproached* for his Doctrine; *We have not, says he, followed cunningly devised Fables, when we made known to you the POWER and COMING of the Lord Jesus, chap. i. ver. 16.* You see here again the true Point upon which St. Peter placed the Hopes and Expectations of true Believers. In the second Chapter he takes notice of the *false Teachers who brought in damnable Heresies, denying the Lord that bought them*; these he threatens with *swift Destruction, ver. 1.* and tells them, That, however they might conceive of the *Promise of Christ's speedy Coming, yet they would assuredly find, that their own Judgment did not linger, nor their own Damnation slumber, ver. 3.* that it would *have been better for them not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the holy Commandment delivered to them, ver. 21.* In the third and last Chapter he considers the *Scoffers, and their irreligious Insult,*

C

*Where*

## 18 DISCOURSE I.

*Where is the Promise of his Coming? ver. 4.* He enters into their Argument, and shews them, from what had already happened in the World, how perversely they reasoned about future Things. He concludes the whole with proper Cautions to Christians, when they consider and endeavour to understand the Times and Seasons of God's Judgments; and guards not only his own, but *St. Paul's* Doctrine upon this Article, the Coming of Christ, (so much was his Mind bent to clear this one Point) against the *perverse* Use of the *Unlearned* and *Unstable*, ver. 15, 16.

You see now what is the main, the only great Point, in this second Epistle; it is the *Coming of Christ* in Power and Glory, to deliver the Faithful, and to take Vengeance of the Ungodly and Unbelievers, as foretold by the Prophets under both Testaments. But this *Coming* of Christ was *future*, and at a Distance; and depended entirely (as to any Knowledge that could be had of it) upon the Authority of *Prophecy*: For which Reason *St. Peter* refers, in his first Epistle, to the ancient Prophets, and to the inspired Preachers of the Gospel, to justify the Hopes he raised; *of which Salvation, or Deliverance, says he, the Prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that should*  
*come*

*come unto you, chap. i. 10. which Things are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, ver. 12. And for the same Reason in this second Epistle he refers again to Prophecy, as being of all others (and in Things of Futurity it needs must be) the most sure Evidence.*

This Account of St. Peter's Epistles is indeed not mine, but his own: For he tells us expressly, that his Intention in *both* his Epistles was, to make them to whom they were sent, *mindful of the Words which were spoken before of the holy Prophets*; he adds, *and of the Commandments of us the Apostles of the Lord and Saviour*: 2 Ep. iii. 1, 2. That this latter Part relates to the same Subject as the former, will appear by comparing it with the Passage just before quoted, 1 Ep. i. 12. where St Peter considers the Apostles, as Prophets, or Expounders of the Prophets, under the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, preaching those very Things which the antient Prophets had *testified beforehand*.

Take this Key along with you, and see how it will open *this* so much perplexed Passage of Scripture now under Consideration: The Apostle's Reasoning to the faithful Believers is this, *We have not followed cunningly devised*

## 20 DISCOURSE I.

*Fables, when we made known unto you the POWER and COMING of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were Eye-witnesses of his MAJESTY. For he received from God the Father HONOUR and GLORY, when there came such a Voice to him from the excellent Glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And this Voice which came from Heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy Mount. We have also a MORE SURE Word of Prophecy, 2. Ep. i. 16, &c.*

It is evident that the POWER and COMING of our Lord Jesus Christ is the only Point here in question; not a Word is there relating to any other Fact or Doctrine of the Gospel. To prove *this Point*, the Apostle tells them he had been an *Eye-Witness* of his MAJESTY or GLORY. Whilst our Saviour lived on Earth, his Condition was mean, and his Fortune low; this was a great Prejudice against him in the Opinion of the *Jews*, who expected greater Things from their Redeemer, and could not easily hope to see him return in *Glory and Power*, who lived and died so *meanly* and so *miserably*. 'Tis a sufficient Answer to all such Prejudices, to prove, that, mean as he appeared, he had a *real Majesty*, and was actually invested with *Honour and Glory* from God the Father.

But

But this Evidence manifestly extends but to one part of the Point in question, to shew that Christ had *himself* been glorified; what is there then to shew that he will ever *return again* in this *Glory and Power*? For allow all this to be true, might an Objector say; yet how does it prove the Hopes you would raise of his *speedy Return in Power and Glory to deliver* his Servants, and to take *Vengeance* of his Foes? For what is *past* we willingly take your Word; you are a competent Witness of what your *Eyes beheld*, and of what your *Ears heard*: But will your seeing him in Glory on the Mount *some Years ago*, necessarily infer, that he shall come again in Glory *some Years hence*; and that too, to execute the very Purposes you declare? Can any Certainty, as to *future Events*, be collected from *past Events*? Or, can any thing we see *this Year*, assure us what will happen to us the *next*?

'Tis true, (we may suppose the Apostle to answer) all *future Events* are in the Hands of God; to him only are they known, and from him only can they certainly be learned. All other Arguments in this Case can amount only to Probabilities and Presumptions; and a great Presumption it is that Christ shall come in *Glory*, that we have already seen him *glorified*; and it is a further Evidence of his

*Power* to deliver his Servants, since God has openly declared him to be his *well-beloved Son*: But to assure us, that he will indeed *so come*, and *so use* his Power, *We have a more sure Word of Prophecy*: i. e. we have the very Word of God, (speaking by his Prophets) to whom all *Futurity* is *known*, to assure us of the Certainty of this *future* Event.

This Interpretation, as it is easy and natural in itself, and renders to every Expression in the Text its proper and usual Signification; so it is necessary, I conceive, to the Apostle's Argument, and plainly enforced by the Context, and stands clear of all Difficulties. Here is no Pretence to say, that *Prophecy* is a better Argument for the *Truth* of the *Gospel*, than all the *Miracles* of Christ and his *Apostles*; for the *Truth* of the *Gospel* is not the Point here in question. St. *Peter* speaks only of the *Coming of Christ in Power*, and of a *Salvation ready to be revealed*; which being *yet to come*, admitted of no *surer* Evidence than the *Word of Prophecy*; which yet he tells us, was only as *a Light shining in a dark Place*: But the *Gospel* was not a Thing *ready to be revealed*, it had long since been revealed, the *Gospel* was not *a Light shining in a dark Place*, but, as he himself expressly calls it, *a marvellous Light*, into which they had been called out of *Darkness*, 1 Ep. ii. 9. One



## DISCOURSE I. 23

One Word more, and I have done with this Subject: The *more sure Word of Prophecy* here mention'd is not to be understood merely of the Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, for it may refer to the Prophecies of the *New*; and probably does, as appears by *St. Peter's* appealing not only to the antient Prophets, but also to the Preachers of the Gospel. How unhappily then was this Text made choice of, to set up antient Prophecy in Opposition to the Gospel Evidence, since the Prophecy here intended is probably itself a *Gospel Evidence*, and so far from being superior to *all the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles*, that it owes all its Authority to them.

The giving Light to this Passage will furnish us with an Answer to one Objection rais'd against the Authority of this second Epistle of *St. Peter*. The learned *Grotius* judg'd from some Characters which he observed in it, that this second Epistle was penn'd after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; before which *St. Peter* was dead. But 'tis very evident that the Author of this second Epistle speaks of *Christ's Coming in Power and Glory*, in the very manner which *St. Peter* speaks of it in the first Epistle; and indeed with no other View than that of justifying what was deliver'd in the first Epistle. If by the *Sal-*


*vation ready to be revealed, and the Day of Visitation, and Appearing of Jesus Christ, in the first Epistle, we are to understand the Apostle as referring to the Destruction of Jerusalem then near at hand, we must necessarily in the second Epistle understand the same Thing by the Power and Coming of our Lord Jesus. Which Power and Coming was, at the Time of writing the second Epistle, so far from being over, that it is treated as a Thing to come; and for the Certainty of which St. Peter had no better Evidence than the Word of Prophecy: Or, if any other Coming of Christ is to be understood in this second Epistle, the same must be understood in the first; for the second is but a Vindication of the Doctrine of the first. And no Notion common to both Epistles can be an Objection against the second, since the first was never doubted of in the Church. And indeed, whoever reads the two Epistles, and compares them carefully, will see such a Concern in the second to support the Sentiments of the first, that he will be inclin'd to think, that the second Epistle could come from no other Hand but that which penn'd the first.*

DISCOURSE



## DISCOURSE II.




 ET us proceed to consider the Character which St. *Peter* gives of *Prophecy*, and the *Degree* of Evidence which we may reasonably expect from it. *Prophecy is a Light shining in a dark Place, and we do well to give heed to it until the Day dawn.* St. *Peter's* Meaning is this, “The Time will  
 “ come when the ‘Things ye hope for shall be  
 “ placed in a clear Light, when you shall see  
 “ all your Expectations fully justify’d in the  
 “ Accomplishment; in the mean while ye  
 “ do well to attend to Prophecy, tho’ but a  
 “ small glimmering Light, and shining at a  
 “ Distance in a dark Place, yet the best  
 “ you have, or can have at present.” Metaphorical Expressions and Similitudes ought not to be rigidly and strictly canvassed; ’tis  
 sufficient

## 26 DISCOURSE II.

sufficient to see the general Import and Meaning of them; which in the present Case is very clear, and amounts to this, That the Knowledge God gives us of Things future by the Means of Prophecy, is but an imperfect obscure Knowledge, nothing to be compared to the clear Knowledge, that will attend upon the Manifestation of the Things themselves.

I shall endeavour to confirm this Proposition by the Authority of Scripture; and to suggest some Observations which may be of use, when we are called upon to judge of the Nature of Prophecy, and the Evidence arising from it.

Whether Prophecy be a clear Evidence before the Completion, or no, is no Matter of Controversy; so far from it, that they who tell us Prophecy is the *best* Argument even for Christianity, do not yet think it a clear one. But without Regard to any Man's Opinion, it will be proper to see what Notion the inspired Writers themselves had of the Word of Prophecy.

If we look into the first Epistle of St. *Peter*, we shall find that the *antient Prophecies*, of which he speaks in the Text, and which he styles the *more sure Word of Prophecy*, were not apprehended or clearly understood by

those inspired Persons who delivered them ; for there he represents them *searching what or what manner of Time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow, i. 11.* To the same Purpose our Saviour speaks, *Matt. xiii. 17. Many Prophets and righteous Men have desired to see those Things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those Things which ye hear, and have not heard them.* St. Paul gives the like Account of the Gift of Prophecy under the Gospel Dispensation: *We know in part, and we prophecy in part : but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now we see thro' a Glass darkly ; but then Face to Face : Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, 12.* Now if the Prophets and righteous Men of old, to whom the Word of God came, did not clearly understand the Things which they foretold ; but employed themselves in searching and examining the prophetic Testimonies, of the Spirit which was in them ; if the Prophets of the New Testament knew only in part, and prophesied only in part, seeing but darkly as through a Glass ; 'tis most evident that

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others, in all Appearance less qualified than they to understand the determinate Sense of the Prophecies, could have but a confused and indistinct Notion of the Things foretold.

The Prophet *Daniel* after a very extraordinary Vision, which he reports in his last Chapter, immediately adds, *I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the End of these Things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the Words are closed up and sealed till the Time of the End.* The Answer here given to *Daniel*, is very like the Answer which our Saviour gave the Apostles, upon a like Enquiry made by them: They ask, *Lord, wilt thou at this Time restore again the Kingdom to Israel? and he said unto them, It is not for you to know the Times or Seasons which the Father hath put in his own Power,* Acts i. 6, 7. It did belong to them undoubtedly, and to every believing Jew, to give heed to the Word of Prophecy, according to St. Peter's Exhortation in the Text; and since it did not belong to them to know the Times and Seasons, 'tis evident the Word of Prophecy was not intended to give a clear and distinct Light in this Case.

These last Passages relate to such Prophecies especially, as seem to design the Times  
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and Seasons of God's Working : And these Predictions being oftentimes delayed in the Accomplishment much beyond the Expectation of those to whom they were delivered, it brought the Prophets and their Predictions frequently into Contempt ; and gave the People Occasion to harden themselves against the Fears and Apprehensions of the Evils threatened. Hence came the Reproach upon the Prophets taken notice of by *Ezekiel*, *The Vision that he seeth is for many Days to come ; and he prophesieth of the Times that are far off*, xii. 27. Which Speech grew up into a Proverb : *What is that Proverb that ye have in the Land of Israel, saying, The Days are prolonged, and every Vision faileth? &c* 22. The Case is very much the same in regard to other Prophecies. Whoever looks into the prophetical Writings, will find that they are generally penned in a very exalted Style, full of bold Figures describing the Judgment or the Mercies of God ; representing spiritual Blessings under the Images of temporal Prosperity, and oftentimes such Images as cannot possibly admit of a literal Interpretation. In which Case, tho' we may see the general Intent and Meaning, and find sufficient Ground for Hope and Fear from the Scope of the Prophecy,

phesy, yet we can with no Certainty fix the precise and determinate Manner in which the Words are to be fulfilled.

Prophecy is, by the Author of Prophecy, thus described: *I have multiplied Visions, and used Similitudes, by the Ministry of the Prophets*; Hosea xii. 10. Which Similitudes are elsewhere spoken of as *dark Speeches* delivered to the Prophets in *Visions* and in *Dreams*, Numb. xii. 6, 8. For this Reason the *Jews*, when they spoke with Contempt of their Prophets, were used to say, *Doth he not speak Parables?* Ezek. xx. 49. Our Saviour seems to speak of the antient Prophecies under the same Character: *Know ye not*, says he to his Disciples, *this Parable? and how then will ye know all Parables?* Mark iv. 13. That is, if ye understand not this plain Parable of the Sower, how will ye understand all the antient Prophecies relating to the Gospel, which are much harder *Parables?*

These Passages are sufficient to prove that Prophecy was never intended to be a very distinct Evidence; and to shew St. Peter's Meaning in comparing the Word of Prophecy to a Light shining in a dark Place, and in making this Evidence so much inferior to the Evidence we are to receive, when the Fulness  
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of Time comes for the Manifestation of God's Promises.

But allowing this to be the Case of Prophecy at the Time of Delivery, are we not however to expect to find the Prophecy clear and distinct, and exactly corresponding to the Event, whenever the Event comes into Existence? and consequently, is it not absurd, after an Event is come to pass, to apply any ancient Prophecies to it, that do not manifestly, to the Eyes of Common Sense, appear to belong to it? These Questions being admitted, another will be asked: How comes it to pass, that many of the Prophecies, applied by the Writers of the Gospel to our Saviour and his Actions, are still dark and obscure; and so far from belonging evidently to him, and him only, that it requires much Learning and Sagacity to shew even now the Connection between some Prophecies and the Events?

In answer to these Questions we must observe, That the Obscurity of Prophecy does not arise from hence, that it is a Relation or Description of something *future*; for 'tis as easy to speak of Things future plainly and intelligibly, as it is of Things past or present. The same Language serves in both Cases with  
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little Variation. He who says the River will overflow its Banks next Year, speaks as plainly as he who says, it did overflow its Banks last Year. It is not therefore of the Nature of Prophecy to be obscure, for it may easily be made, when he who gives it thinks fit, as plain as History.

On the other Side, a figurative and dark Description of a future Event will be figurative and dark still when the Event happens; and consequently, will have all the Obscurity of a figurative dark Description as well after as before the Event. The Prophet *Isaiab* describes the Peace of *Christ's* Kingdom in the following manner: *The Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lye down with the Kid, and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a little Child shall lead them, xi. 6.* No body, I suppose, (some modern *Jews* excepted) ever understood this literally; nor can it now be literally applied to the State of the Gospel. It was, and is capable of different Interpretations: it may mean temporal Peace, and that, either publick of Kingdoms and Nations, or private among the Professors of the Gospel: it may prefigure an internal and spiritual Peace, the Tranquillity of Mind which sets a Man at  
Peace

DISCOURSE II. 33

Peace with God, himself, and the World. But whatever the true Meaning is, this Prophecy, expounded by the Rules of Language only, does no more obtrude one determinate Sense upon the Mind since the Coming of *Christ*, than it did before. But then we say, the State of the Gospel was very properly prefigured in this Description, and is as properly prefigured by an hundred more of the like kind; and since they all agree in a fair Application to the State of the Gospel, we strongly conclude, that the Gospel State was the Thing foretold under these and many other like Expressions. So that the Argument from Prophecy for the Truth of the Gospel does not rest upon this, that the Event has necessarily limited and ascertained the particular Sense and Meaning of every Prophecy; but in this, that every Prophecy has in a *proper* Sense been compleated by the coming of *Christ*. 'Tis absurd therefore to expect clear and evident Conviction from every single Prophecy applied to *Christ*, the Evidence must arise from a View and Comparison of all together.

Prophecies are not all of one Kind, or of equal Clearness: The most literal Prophecies relating to *Christ* were not always at the Time

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of the Delivery the plainest; for many of these relating to the most surprizing and wonderful Events under the Gospel, wanted not the Veil or Cover of figurative Language; for being plainly foretold, they could hardly, for the seeming Incredibility of the Things themselves, be received and admitted in their true literal Meaning. *A Virgin shall conceive a Son*, was a Proposition which seemed to want some other Interpretation than a literal one, which was inconsistent with all Experience of the World: And therefore probably this Prophecy was not understood by the antient *Jews*, as importing a miraculous Conception. The Event has not made this Prophecy clearer than it was before; the Language of it was as well understood in the Prophets Time as now; but common Sense led every Man to understand it in a Sense agreeable to Nature and Experience: But the Event has shewed us, that the plain literal Sense, however inconsistent with the Experience of Nature, is the true Sense. In like manner the Prophecies from which the Resurrection of *Christ* is inferred, were obscure and dark, from a seeming Inconsistency between the several Parts of them. It is foretold, that *Christ* should be *despised and rejected of Men*, a *Man of Sorrow*  
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and *Affliction*; that his *Affliction* should pursue him even to the *Grave*; and 'tis also foretold, that notwithstanding these Sufferings, and a wretched Death, he should *prolong his Days*, and have an *everlasting Kingdom*; and see the *Work of the Lord prosper in his Hands*. These Prophecies are not at all plainer now than they were in the Beginning: But the plain Sense appeared at that Time loaded with Contradictions; here was one born to *Misery and Affliction*, and yet he was the Heir of an *everlasting Kingdom*: He was *condemned, executed, laid in the Grave*, and *after all this* he was to *prolong his Days*, and see the *Work of the Lord prosper in his Hands*. The Resurrection of *Christ* reconciled all these Difficulties and seeming Inconsistencies; and we now readily admit these Prophecies in their plain literal Sense; which was a very plain Sense before, tho' a very hard one to be imagined or believed.

You may observe, then, that the most literal Prophecies have received the greatest Confirmation, and the most Light from the Event. For the Difficulty in this Case not lying in the Darkness or Obscurity of the Expression, but in the seeming Impossibility of the Thing foretold, such seeming Impossibi-

## 36 DISCOURSE II.

lity the Event fully cleared : But no Event can make a figurative or metaphorical Expression to be a plain or a literal one; or restrain the Language of any Prophecy to one determinate Sense only, which was originally capable of many.

I have said thus much to shew what sort of Clearness and Evidence we ought to expect from Prophecies after their Accomplishment. 'Tis a great Prejudice against this Argument, when Men come to it expecting more from it than it will yield. This they are led to by hearing it often said, That Prophecy, however dark and obscure at first, grows wonderfully plain upon the Accomplishment : Which in some Cases, as I have shewn, is in Fact true; but is not, cannot be so in all Cases.

You may think it perhaps strange, that I should be here pleading, as it were, for the Obscurity of antient Prophecies; whereas, you may very well conceive, it would be more to the Purpose of a Christian Divine to maintain their Clearness, Now as *Moses* in another Case said, *I would to God all the Lord's People were Prophets*; so say I in this Case, I would to God all the Prophecies of the Lord were manifest to all his People. But it matters little  
what

what we wish for, or think best ; we must be content with such Light and Direction as God has thought proper to bestow on us : And to enquire why the antient Prophecies are not clearer, is like enquiring why God has not given us more Reason, or made us as wise as Angels: He has given us in both Cases so much Light, as he thought proper, and enough to serve the Ends he intended.

It is, doubtless, a Mistake to conceive Prophecy to be intended solely or chiefly for their Sakes in whose Time the Events predicted are to happen. What great Occasion is there to lay in so long beforehand the Evidences of Prophecy to convince Men of Things that are to happen in their own Times ; the Truth of which they may, if they please, learn from their own Senses? How low an Idea does it give of the Administration of Providence, in sending Prophets one after another in every Age from *Adam* to *Christ*, to imagine, that all this *Apparatus* was for their Sakes who lived in and after the Times of *Christ*, with little regard to the Ages to whom the Prophecies were delivered? As I think the Prophecies of the New Testament are chiefly for our Sake, *who live by Faith and not by Sight*; so I imagine the antient Prophecies had the like Use, and were chiefly intended

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to support the Faith and Religion of the old World. Had it been otherwise, a Set of Prophecies given some few Years before the Birth of Christ, would have served our Purpose as well as a Series of Prophecies given from the very Beginning, and running thro' every Age.

Let us then consider the Use of Prophecy, and this will help us to conceive the Degree of Clearness which ought to attend it. Some People are apt to talk, as if they thought the Truth of some Facts, recorded in the Gospel, depended upon the Clearness of the Prophecies relating to them. They speak, for Instance, as if they imagin'd the Certainty and Reality of our Saviour's Resurrection were much concerned in the Clearness of the Prophecies relating to that great and wonderful Event; and seem to think that they are confuting the Belief of his Resurrection, when they are trying to confound the Prophecies relating to it. But can any thing be more absurd? For what Ground or Pretence is there to enquire, whether the Prophecies, foreshewing that the *Messiah* should die and rise again, do truly belong to *Jesus*, unless we are first satisfied, that *Jesus* died and rose again? We must be in Possession of the Fact, before we can form any Argument  
from



rom Prophecy : And therefore the Truth of the Resurrection, considered as a Fact, is quite independent of the Evidence or Authority of Prophecy.

The Part which Unbelievers ought to take in this Question, should be to shew from the Prophets, that *Jesus* was necessarily to rise from the Dead ; and then to prove, that in Fact *Jesus* never did rise : Here would be a plain Consequence. But if they do not like this Method, they ought to let the Prophecies alone ; for if *Jesus* did not rise, there is no Harm done if the Prophets have not foretold it : and if they allow the Resurrection of *Jesus*, what do they gain by discrediting the Prophecies ? The Event will be what it is, let the Prophecies be what they will.

There are many Prophecies in the old Testament relating to the *Babylonish* Captivity, and very distinct they are, describing the Ruin of the holy City, the Destruction of the Temple, the carrying the Tribes into a distant Country, and the Continuance of the Captivity for Seventy Years. Can you suppose these Prophecies intended to convince the People of the Reality of these Events when they should happen ? Was there any Danger

they should imagine themselves safe in their own Country, when they were Captives at *Babylon*, unless they had the Evidence of Prophecy for their Captivity? Or, that they should think their Temple standing in all its Glory, when it was ruined before their Eyes? If the Supposition be absurd in this Case, it is so in every Case; for the Argument from Prophecy is in all Instances the same. 'Tis plain then, that Matters related in the Gospel do not depend for their Reality upon the Evidence of Prophecy; they may be true, though never foretold, or very obscurely foretold; nay they must be admitted as true, before we can so much as enquire whether any Prophecy belongs to them.

But if this be the Case, that we must admit all the Facts of the Gospel to be true before we can come at the Evidence of Prophecy, what Occasion have we, you'll say, to enquire after Prophecy at all? Are not the many Miracles of *Christ*, his Resurrection from the Dead, his Ascension to Heaven, the pouring forth the Gifts of the Spirit upon the Apostles, their speaking with Tongues, and doing many Wonders in the Name of *Christ*, sufficient Evidence to us of the Truth of the Gospel, without troubling ourselves to

I know,

## DISCOURSE II. 41

know, whether these Things were foretold, or in what Manner they were foretold? To answer this Question plainly, I think such Facts, once admitted to be true, are a compleat Evidence of the divine Authority of a Revelation: And had we known no more of *Christ*, than that he claimed to be attended to as a Person sent and commissioned by God, he needed no other Credentials than these already mentioned; and it would have been impertinent to demand what Prophet foretold his Coming. For in a like Case, who foretold the Coming of *Moses* to be a Law-giver to *Israel*? God had promised *Abraham* to give his Posterity the Land of *Canaan*; but that he would give it by *Moses* he had not promised; that he would talk with him *Face to Face*, and deliver his Law to him, and by him to the People, he had not foretold: The Authority therefore of *Moses*, as a divine Law-giver, stands upon the miraculous Works performed by him, and the wonderful Attestations given to him by the Presence of God in the Mount, in the Eyes of all the People; but upon Prophecy it does not stand, for of him there were no Prophecies: This shews that Prophecy is not an Evidence essential

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tial to the Proof of a divine Revelation ; for it may be spared in one as well as another.

But the Case of the Gospel differs from that of the Law ; for though the Law was not prophesied of, the Gospel was ; he who delivered the Law was one of the first who prophesied of the Gospel, and told the People so long beforehand, *That God would raise a Prophet like unto him, whom they must hear in all Things* : By which Prediction he guarded the People against the Prejudice which his own Authority was like to create against a new Lawgiver ; telling them beforehand that when the great Prophet came, their Obedience ought to be transferred to him. The succeeding Prophets speak more fully of the Office, Character, Sufferings, and Glory of the *Saviour of Israel*, and the *Desire of all Nations*. Now one of the Characters, which our Saviour constantly assumes and claims in the Gospel, is this, That he is the Person spoken of by *Moses* and the Prophets. Whether he is this Person or no, must be tried by the Words of Prophecy ; and this makes the Argument from Prophecy so far necessary to establish the Claim of the Gospel ; and it has been very *justly*, as well as *acutely* observed, that the Proof of this Point must rely entirely

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## DISCOURSE II. 43.

on the Evidence of Prophecy. Miracles in this Case can afford no Help; if the Prophets have not spoken of *Christ*, all the Miracles in the World will not prove that they have spoken of him \*.

These Considerations shew how far the Gospel is necessarily concerned in prophetic Evidence. *Christ* has done the Works which no Man ever did, and given the fullest Evidence of a Divine Commission; but he claims to be the Person foretold in the Law and the Prophets: and as Truth must ever be consistent with itself, this Claim must be true, or it destroys all others. This is the Point then to be tried on the Evidence of Prophecy: Is *Christ* that Person described and foretold under the Old Testament, or no? Whether all the Prophecies relating to him be plain, or not plain: Whether all the Ways used by the *Jews* of arguing from the Old Testament, be convincing to us, or no, it matters little: The single Question is, Is there enough plain to shew us that *Christ* is the Person foretold under the Old Testament? If there is, we are at an End of our Enquiry, and want no further Help from Prophecy; especially since we, to use St. *Peter's* Expression, *have*, in this

\* *Grounds and Reasons*, p. 31.

Case,

## 44 DISCOURSE II.

Case, seen the Day dawn, and enjoyed the marvellous Light of the Gospel of God.

I am not now speaking of the great *Advantage* that may be made of prophetic Evidence for convincing Unbelievers of the Truth of the Gospel; but am considering how far the Truth of the Gospel *necessarily* depends upon this kind of Evidence. These are two very different Enquiries. It is *necessary* for us to shew that *Christ* is the Person promised to be a Saviour to *Israel*; and when we have shewed this, no Opposer of the Gospel has more to demand. But we may carry our Enquiries much further; we may contemplate all the Steps of Providence relating to the Salvation and Redemption of Mankind in the several Ages of the World, and by a Comparison of all the Parts, may discern that *Christ* was indeed the *End* of the *Law*, and of all Promises made to the Fathers: That all the Deliverances given by God to his People were but Shadows, and as it were an Earnest of the great Deliverance he intended to give by his Son: That all the Ceremonials of the Law were Representations of the Substance of the Gospel: That the *Aaronical* Sacrifices and Priesthood were Figures of better Things to come. But these Enquiries do not stand in  
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## DISCOURSE II. 45

the Rank of Things to be *necessarily* proved to every Believer ; they do not enter into the *Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* expressly tells us ; but belong to those *who go on to Perfection* : Which Distinction given by the Apostle in the Fifth and Sixth Chapters to the *Hebrews*, is well worth considering, as being a Key to open the true Use of all typical and allegorical Applications of Scripture.



DISCOURSE

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*The Use and Intent of PROPHECY, in  
the several Ages of the World.*

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I N S I X  
D I S C O U R S E S,

Delivered at the

TEMPLE CHURCH

In APRIL and MAY, 1724.

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Four D I S S E R T A T I O N S,  
and an A P P E N D I X.

- I. *The Authority of the Second Epistle of St. PETER.*
- II. *The Sense of the Ancients, before CHRIST, upon the  
Circumstances and Consequences of the FALL.*  
*An APPENDIX to the Second Dissertation, being a farther  
Enquiry into the Mosaick Account of the FALL.*
- III. *The Blessing of JUDAH, Gen. xlix.*
- IV. *CHRIST'S Entry into Jerusalem.*

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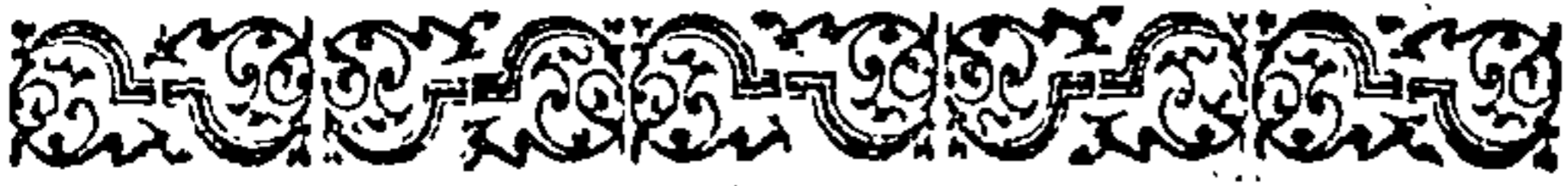
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By THO. SHERLOCK, D. D. *R*  
*Late Master of the TEMPLE,  
Now Lord Bishop of LONDON.*

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L O N D O N,  
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## DISCOURSE III.



T is necessary to take this Matter higher, to look back to the Rise and Progress of divine Prophecy, and to observe what Ends the Wisdom of

God intended to serve by Means of it. 'Tis no *Commendation* of Prophecy to say that it is very dark and obscure; nor yet can it be a *Reproach*, provided it answers all the Ends designed by Providence. To enable ourselves therefore to judge of Prophecy, we must enquire to what End Prophecy was given; and this is the Subject I now propose to your Consideration.

It will not be said, because it cannot be maintained, that we have any *Right* to the  
 Knowledge

## 48 DISCOURSE III.

Knowledge of Things future. God is not obliged either in Wisdom or Goodness, and much less in Justice, to declare to us the Things which shall be hereafter. In regard therefore to the Knowledge of Futurity, whether it be little, or much, or nothing that God thinks fit to communicate to us, we can have no Reason to complain; for having no *Right*, we can pretend no *Injury*. Since therefore we have no Demand on God for this sort of Knowledge in *any* degree *whatever*, 'tis evident that whenever we have it, we must ascribe our having it to some *special Reasons* of Providence: which Reasons alone can limit the Degree of Light and Knowledge which ought to attend upon the Word of Prophecy. For if we have from Prophecy so much Light as fully answers the End of giving the Prophecy, I would fain know upon what Reason we can form a Complaint for want of more? I mean this, to shew how absurd it is for Men to take Counsel of their Curiosity, when they consider the Use and Weight of Prophecy: in this View they will find nothing to satisfy them: they may go on for ever asking, why are we not told more, or more distinctly? Which Questions we may promise to answer, whenever they inform us  
upon

upon what Right they demand to be told any thing; which if they cannot do, all such Complaints must be laid aside; and we must come to the only proper and material Consideration, *What End did the Wisdom of God propose to serve by the antient Prophecies, and how has this End been served by them?*

“ By Prophecy I understand all the Declarations which God has made concerning the future State of Mankind in this World, or in the next; consequently, all the Hopes and Expectations which are grounded on God’s Promises, and do not result from Reason and natural Knowledge, I refer to Prophecy, as their Original.” If there be any other kind of Prophecy not comprehended in this Description, there may be, perhaps, before we take leave of this Subject, a proper Place to consider it; but at present I shall confine myself within the Limits of this Description.

It cannot be supposed that God has delivered Prophecies only to satisfy or employ the Curiosity of the Inquisitive; or that he gave his Spirit to Men merely to enable them to give forth Predictions for the Amusement and Entertainment of the World: there must be some End intended *worthy* of the *Author*.

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What End can you conceive *worthy* of God but the Promotion of Virtue and Religion, and the general Peace and Happiness of Mankind? These Things belong to him, as Creator and Governor of the World; these Things are his Province.

'Tis true, you'll say, these Things do belong indeed to God; but what has Prophecy to do with these Things? God can govern the World without letting us into his Secrets; and as for Virtue and Religion and our own Happiness, he has given us a plain Law to walk by, the Result of that Reason and Knowledge with which he has endowed us. Prophecy can never contradict or over-rule the Light of Reason and Nature; nor can we suppose that we came so imperfect and unfinished out of the Hands of our Creator, as not to have Light enough to see our own Duty, and to pursue our natural Happiness, but to want at every Turn an Admonisher at our Elbow.

Let us allow the original State of Nature to be as perfect and complete as you desire.

But what if the Case should be altered? how will Matters stand then? 'Tis no unreasonable Supposition, this; for since Man was created a moral Agent, with Freedom of Will, it was possible for him *to fall*; and  
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consequently, *possibly* he may *have fallen*. Let us suppose for the present this to be the Case; and tell us now, from Natural Religion, what must such Sinners do? REPENT, you'll say; for it is agreeable to the Goodness of God to accept Repentance, and to restore Offenders to his Favour. Very well; but how often will this Remedy serve? may Sin and Repentance go on for ever in a perpetual Round? To allow this, differs nothing from allowing a Liberty and Impunity to sin without Repentance. If God is Governor and Judge of the World, there must be a Time for Judgment; and Men may, after all reasonable and equitable Allowances made, be ripe for Judgment. Let this be the Case then: Suppose a Man, after all equitable Allowances made, to be condemned under and by the Law of Nature, and living in daily Expectation of Execution: I ask, what sort of Religion you would advise him to in the mean time?—Natural Religion?—To what Purpose?—He has had his Trial and Condemnation by that Law already, and has nothing to learn from it but the Misery of his Condition. I do not mean that the *Sense* of Natural Religion will be lost in such a Man. He may see, perhaps more clearly than ever he did, the Dif-

ference between Good and Evil, the Beauty of moral Virtue, and feel the Obligations which a rational Creature is under to his Maker: but what Fruit will all this Knowledge yield? what certain Hope or Comfort will it administer? A Man with a Rope about his Neck may see the Equity and Excellency of the Law by which he dies; and if he does, he must see that the Excellency of it is to protect the Virtuous and Innocent: but what is this Excellency to him, who has forfeited the Protection of all Law? If you would recommend *Natural Religion*, exclusive of all other Assistance, 'tis not enough to shew from Principles of Reason the *Excellency* and *Reasonableness* of moral Virtue, or to prove, from the *Nature of God*, that he must delight in and reward Virtue: you must go one Step further, and prove from the *Nature of Man* too, that he is *excellently* qualified to obey this Law, and cannot well fail of attaining all the Happiness under it that ever Nature designed for him. If you stop short at this Consideration, what do you gain? What imports it that the *Law* is *good*, if the *Subjects* are so *bad*, that either they will not or cannot obey it? When you prove to Sinners the Excellency of *Natural Religion*, you only shew them  
how

how justly they may expect to be punished for their Iniquity: A sad Truth, which wants no Confirmation! All the possible Hope left in such a Case is, that God may freely pardon and restore them; but whether he will or no, the Offenders can never certainly learn from Natural Religion.

Should God think fit to be reconciled to Sinners, *Natural Religion* would again become the *Rule* of their future Trial and Obedience: but their *Hopes* must flow from *another* Spring; their Confidence in God must and can arise only from the *Promise* of God; that is, from the *Word* of *Prophecy*; for which Reason *Prophecy* must for ever be an essential Part of *such* a Sinner's Religion.

This Reasoning agrees exactly with the antientest and most authentic Account we have of the Beginning of Prophecy in the World. When God had finished all his Works, and *Man, the chief of them*, he view'd them all, and *behold* they were *very good*. How long *this Goodness* lasted we know not; that it did not last very long is certain. During the Time of Man's Innocence, there were frequent Communications between God and him, but not the least Hint of any *Word* of *Prophecy* delivered to him. The *Hopes* of

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*Nature* were then *alive* and *vigorous*, and Man had before him the Prospect of all that Happiness to which he was created, to encourage and support his Obedience. In this State *Natural Religion* wanted no other Assistance, and therefore *it* had no *other*.

But when the Case was altered by the Transgression of our first Parents ; when *Natural Religion* had no longer any sure Hopes or Comforts in reserve, but left them to the fearful Expectation of Judgment near at hand ; when God came down to judge the Offenders, and yet with Intention *finally* to rescue and preserve them from the Ruin brought on themselves ; then came in the *Word of Prophecy*, not in Opposition to *Natural Religion*, but in *Support* of it, and to convey *new Hopes* to Man, since *his own* were irrecoverably lost and extinguished in the *Fall*.

The Prophecy *then* given being the first, and indeed (as I conceive) the Ground-work and Foundation of all that have been since, it well deserves our particular Consideration.

It may be expected perhaps, that the Way should be cleared to this Enquiry, by removing first the Difficulties which arise from the historical Narration of the Fall ; and  
could



could any thing *material* be added in Support of what is commonly said upon this Subject, the Time and Pains would be well placed: But the *more* and the *oftener* this Case is considered in all its Circumstances, the more will the commonly received Interpretation prevail; which is evidently the true antient Interpretation of the *Jewish Church*, as appears by the Allusions to the History of the Fall, to be met with in the Books of the Old Testament.

To some Unbelievers, if I mistake not their Principles, the *History of the Fall* would have been altogether as *incredible*, tho' perhaps not quite so *diverting*, had it been told in the *simplest* and *plainest* Language.

'Tis to little purpose therefore to trouble them with an Account of the *Genius* of the *Eastern People*, and their *Language*; for you may as soon persuade them that a *Serpent* tempted *Eve*, as that any evil Spirit did. If you ask, why the *Devil* might not as well *speak* to *Eve* under the *Form* of a *Serpent*, as give out *Oracles* to the old *Heathen World* under *that* and many *other Forms*? you gain nothing by the Question: for *Oracles*, whether *Heathen* or *Jewish*, are to them alike; they dispute not their *Authority*, but their *Reality*.

This is a Degree of Unbelief which has no Right to be admitted to debate the Question now under Consideration.

As to others, who are not Infidels with regard to Religion in general, yet are shock'd with the Circumstances of this History; I desire *them* to consider, that the *Speculations* arising from the History of the *Fall*, and the Introduction of *natural* and *moral* Evil into the World, are of all others the most abstruse, and furthest removed out of our Reach: that this Difficulty led Men in the *earliest* Time to imagine two *independent* Principles of *Good* and *Evil*; a Notion destructive of the Sovereignty of God, the Maintenance of which is the principal End and Design of the *Mosaic* History. Had the History of Man's Fall plainly introduced an *invisible evil Being*, to confound the Works of God, and to be the *Author of Iniquity*, it might have given great Countenance to this Error of two Principles; or, to prevent it, *Moses* must have writ an History of the *Angels Fall* likewise; a Point, I suppose, to which his Commission did not extend, and of which, perhaps, we are not capable Judges: and since this Difficulty might in a great measure be avoided, by having recourse to the common Usage of the

*Eastern*

*Eastern Countries*, which was, to clothe History in *Parables* and *Similitudes*, it seems not improbable that for *this Reason* the History of the Fall was put into the Dress in which we now find it.

The *Serpent* was remarkable for an *insidious Cunning*, and therefore stood as a proper Emblem of a *Deceiver*; and yet, being one of the *lowest* of the *Creatures*, the Emblem gave no Suspicion of any Power concerned that might pretend to *rival* the *Creator*.

This Method has not so obscured this History, but that we may with great Certainty come to the Knowledge of all that is necessary for us to know. Let us consider the History of *Moses*, as we should do any other antient *Eastern* History of like Antiquity: Suppose, for Instance, that this Account of the Fall had been preserved to us out of *Sanchoniatho's Phœnician* History: We should in that Case be at a Loss, perhaps, to account for every Manner of *Representation*, for every *Figure* and *Expression* in the Story; but we should soon agree, that all these Difficulties were imputable to the *Manner* and *Customs* of his *Age* and *Country*; and should shew more Respect to so *venerable* a Piece of *Antiquity*, than to charge it with *Want* of *Sense*, because

we

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we did not understand every minute Circumstance. We should likewise agree, that there were evidently *four Persons* concerned in the Story; the *Man*, the *Woman*, the *Person* represented by the *Serpent*, and *God*. Disagree we could not about their several Parts. The *Serpent* is evidently the *Tempter*; the *Man* and the *Woman* the *Offenders*; *God* the *Judge* of all Three. The *Punishments* inflicted on the *Man* and *Woman* have no Obscurity in them; and as to the *Serpent's Sentence*, we should think it reasonable to give it such a Sense as the whole Series of the Story requires.

'Tis no unreasonable Thing surely to demand the same Equity of you in interpreting the Sense of *Moses*, as you would certainly use towards any other antient Writer. And if the same Equity be allowed, this *plain Fact* undeniably arises from the History: "That Man was tempted to Disobedience, and did disobey, and forfeited all Title to Happiness, and to Life itself; that God judged *him*, and the *Deceiver* likewise under the *Form* of a *Serpent*." We require no more; and will proceed upon this Fact to consider the Prophecy before us.

The Prophecy is Part of the Sentence passed upon the Deceiver; the Words are these:

*I will*

### DISCOURSE III. 59

*I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed: It shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel: Gen. iii.*

15. Christian Writers apply this to our blessed Saviour, emphatically styled here *the Seed of the Woman*, and who came in the Fulness of Time to *bruise the Serpent's Head*, by destroying the Works of the Devil, and restoring those to the Liberty of the Sons of God, who were held under the Bondage and Captivity of Sin. You'll say, What unreasonable Liberty of Interpretation is this? Tell us, by what Rules of Language, *the Seed of the Woman* is made to denote *one particular Person*, and by what Art you discover the Mystery of *Christ's* miraculous Conception and Birth in this common Expression? Tell us, likewise, how bruising the Serpent's Head comes to signify the destroying the Power of Sin, and the Redemption of Mankind by *Christ*? 'Tis no wonder to hear such Questions from those who look no further than to the Third Chapter of *Genesis*, to see the Ground of the Christian Application. As the Prophecy stands *there*, nothing appears to point out this particular Meaning; much less to confine the Prophecy to it. But of this hereafter. Let us for the present lay aside all our own Notions, and go back to that State  
and

## 60 DISCOURSE III.

and Condition of Things, which was at the Time of the Delivery of this Prophecy; and see (if haply we may discover it) what God intended to discover at that Time by this Prophecy, and what we may reasonably suppose our first Parents understood it to mean.

They were now in a State of Sin, standing before God to receive Sentence for their Disobedience, and had Reason to expect a full Execution of the Penalty threatened, *In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* But God came in Mercy as well as Judgment, purposing not only to punish, but to restore Man. The Judgment is awful and severe; the Woman is doomed to Sorrow in Conception; the Man to Sorrow and Travel all the Days of his Life; the Ground is cursed for his sake; and the End of the Judgment is, *Dust thou art, and unto Dust thou shalt return.* Had they been left thus, they might have continued in their Labour and Sorrow for their appointed Time, and at last returned to Dust, without any well-grounded Hope or Confidence in God: They must have looked upon themselves as rejected by their Maker, delivered up to Trouble and Sorrow in this World, and as having no Hope in any other. Upon this  
Foot,

DISCOURSE III. 61

Foot, I conceive, there could have been no Religion left in the World; for a Sense of Religion without Hope, is a State of Phrenzy and Distraction, void of all Inducements to Love and Obedience, or any thing else that is praise-worthy. If therefore God intended to preserve them as Objects of Mercy, it was absolutely necessary to communicate *so much Hope* to them, as might be a *rational Foundation* for their future Endeavours to reconcile themselves to him by a better Obedience. This seems to be the *primary* Intention of this first divine Prophecy; and it was necessary to the State of the World, and the Condition of Religion, which could not possibly have been supported without the Communication of such Hopes. The Prophecy is excellently adapted to this Purpose, and manifestly conveyed such Hopes to our first Parents. For let us consider in what Sense we may suppose them to understand this Prophecy. Now they must necessarily understand the Prophecy, either according to the literal Meaning of the Words, or according to such Meaning as the whole Circumstance of the Transaction, of which they are a Part, does require. If we suppose them to understand the Words literally, and that God meant them so to be

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## 62 DISCOURSE III.

understood, this Passage must appear ridiculous. Do but imagine that you see *God* coming to *judge* the Offenders; *Adam* and *Eve* before him in the *utmost Distress*; that you hear *God* inflicting *Pains* and *Sorrows* and *Misery* and *Death* upon the First of human Race; and that in the midst of all this Scene of Woe and great Calamity, you hear *God* foretelling, with great *Solemnity*, a *very trivial* Accident that should sometimes happen in the World: That Serpents would be apt to bite Men by the Heels, and that Men would be apt to revenge themselves by striking them on the Head. What has *this Trifle* to do with the *Loss of Mankind*, with the *Corruption* of the *natural* and *moral* World, and the *Ruin* of all the *Glory* and *Happiness* of the Creation? Great Comfort it was to *Adam*, doubtless, after telling him that his Days should be short and full of Misery, and his End without Hope, to let him know, that he should now and then knock a Snake on the Head, but not even that, without paying dear for his poor Victory, for the Snake should often bite him by the Heel. *Adam*, surely, could not understand the Prophecy in this Sense, tho' some of his Sons have so understood it; a plain Indication how much



### DISCOURSE III. 63

more some Men are concerned to maintain a literal Interpretation of Scripture than they are to make it speak common Sense. Leaving this therefore as absolutely absurd and ridiculous, let us consider what Meaning the Circumstances of the Transaction do necessarily fix to the Words of this Prophecy. *Adam* tempted by his Wife, and she by the Serpent, had fallen from their Obedience, and were now in the Presence of God expecting Judgment. They knew full well at this Juncture, that their *Fall* was the *Victory* of the *Serpent*, whom by Experience they found to be an *Enemy* to God and to *Man*; to Man, whom he had *ruined* by seducing him to Sin; to God, the noblest Work of whose Creation he had defaced. It could not therefore but be some Comfort to them to hear the Serpent first condemned, and to see that, however he had prevailed against them, he had gained no Victory over their Maker, who was able to assert his own Honour, and to punish this great Author of Iniquity. By this Method of God's Proceeding they were secured from thinking that there was any evil Being equal to the Creator in Power and Dominion: An Opinion which gained Ground in After-times, through Prevalency of Evil; and is, where

where it does prevail, destructive of all true Religion. The Condemnation therefore of the Serpent was the Maintenance of God's Supremacy; and that it was so understood, we have, if I mistake not, a very antient Testimony in the Book of *Job*: *With God is Strength and Wisdom, the Deceived and the Deceiver are his*; i. e. equally subjected to his Command, *Job* xii. 16. The Belief of God's supreme Dominion, which is the Foundation of all Religion, being thus preserved, it was still necessary to give them such Hopes as might make them capable of Religion toward God. These Hopes they could not but conceive, when they heard from the Mouth of God, that the Serpent's Victory was not a compleat Victory over even themselves; that they and their Posterity should be enabled to contest his Empire; and tho' they were to suffer much in the Struggle, yet finally they should prevail and bruise the Serpent's Head, and deliver themselves from his Power and Dominion over them. What now could they conceive this Conquest over the Serpent to mean? Is it not natural to expect that we shall recover that by Victory, which we lost by being defeated? They knew that the Enemy had subdued them by Sin, could they then

then

## DISCOURSE III. 65

hen conceive Hopes of Victory otherwise than by Righteousness? They lost thro' Sin the Happiness of their Creation, could they expect less from the Return of Righteousness than the Recovery of the Blessings forfeited? What else but this could they expect? For the certain Knowledge they had of their Loss when the Serpent prevailed, could not but lead them to a clear Knowledge of what they should regain by prevailing against the Serpent. The Language of this Prophecy is indeed in part metaphorical, but it is a great Mistake to think that all Metaphors are of uncertain Signification; for the Design and Scope of the Speaker, with the Circumstances attending, create a fixed and determinate Sense. Were it otherwise, there would be no Certainty in any Language; all Languages, the *Eastern* more especially, abounding in Metaphors.

Let us now look back to our Subject, and see what Application we are to make of this Instance.

This Prophecy was to our first Parents but very obscure; it was, in the Phrase of St. *Peter*, but a Light shining in a dark Place: All that they could certainly conclude from it was, that their Case was not desperate; that

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some Remedy, that some Deliverance from the Evil they were under, would in Time appear; but *when*, or *where*, or by *what Means*, they could not understand: Their own Sentence, which returned them back again to the Dust of the Earth, made it difficult to apprehend what this Victory over the Serpent should signify, or how they, who were shortly to be Dust and Ashes, should be the better for it. But after all that can be urged upon this Head to set out the Obscurity of this Promise, I would ask one Question: Was not this Promise, or Prophecy, tho' surrounded with all this Obscurity, a Foundation for Religion and Trust and Confidence towards God after the Fall, in hopes of Deliverance from the Evils introduced by Disobedience? If it was, it fully answered the Necessity of their Case, to whom it was given, and manifested to them all that God intended to make manifest. They could have had towards God no Religion, without some Hopes of Mercy: It was necessary therefore to convey such Hopes; but to tell them how these Hopes should be accomplished, at what Time and Manner precisely, was not necessary to their Religion. And what now is to be objected against this Prophecy? It is very  
obscure,

obscure, you say; so it is; but it is obscure in the Points which God did not intend to explain at that Time; and which were not necessary to be known. You see a plain Reason for giving this Prophecy, and as far as the Reason for giving the Prophecy extends, so far the Prophecy is very plain: 'Tis obscure only, where there is no Reason why it should be plain; which surely is a Fault easily to be forgiven, and very far from being a proper Subject for Complaint.

But if this Prophecy conveyed to our first Parents only a general Hope and Expectation of Pardon and Restoration, and was intended by God to convey no more to *them*; how come we, their Posterity, to find so much more in this Promise than we suppose them to find? How is it that we pretend to discover *Christ* in this Prophecy, to see in it the Mystery of his Birth, his Sufferings, and his final Triumph over all the Powers of Darkness? By what new Light do we discern all these Secrets, by what Art do we unfold them?

'Tis no Wonder to me, that such as come to the Examination of the Prophecies applied to *Christ*, expecting to find in each of them some express Character and Mark of *Christ*,

plainly to be understood as such antecedently to his Coming, should ask these, or many other the like Questions; or that the Argument from antient Prophecy should appear so slight and trivial to those who know no better Use of it.

*Known unto God are all his Works from the Beginning*; and whatever Degree of Light he thought fit to communicate to our first Parents, or to their Children in After-times, there is no doubt but that *He* had a perfect Knowledge at all Times of all the Methods by which he intended to rescue and restore Mankind: and therefore all the Notices given by him to Mankind of his intended Salvation, must correspond to the great Event, whenever the Fulness of Time shall make it manifest. No Reason can be given why God should at all Times, or at any Time, clearly open the Secrets of his Providence to Men; it depends merely upon his good Pleasure to do it in what Time and in what Manner he thinks proper. But there is a necessary Reason to be given why all such Notices as God thinks fit to give, should answer exactly in due Time to the Completion of the great Design. It is absurd therefore to complain of the antient  
Pro-

## DISCOURSE III. 69

Prophecies for being obscure, for it is challenging God for not telling us more of his Secrets. But if we pretend that God has at length manifested to us by the Revelation of the Gospel the Method of his Salvation, it is necessary for us to shew, that all the Notices of his Salvation given to the old World do correspond to the Things which we have heard and seen with our Eyes. The Argument from Prophecy therefore is not to be formed in this manner; “ All the  
 “ antient Prophecies have expressly pointed  
 “ out and characterized *Christ Jesus* :” But it must be formed in this manner; “ All  
 “ the Notices which God gave to the Fa-  
 “ thers of his intended Salvation are per-  
 “ fectly answered by the coming of *Christ*.” He never promised or engaged his Word in any Particular relating to the Common Salvation, but what he has fully made good by sending his Son to our Redemption. Let us try these Methods upon the Prophecy before us. If you demand that we should shew you, *à priori*, *Christ Jesus* set forth in this Prophecy, and that God had limited himself by this Promise to convey the Blessing intended by sending his own Son in the Flesh, and by no other Means whatever;

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you demand what I cannot shew, nor do I know who can. But if you enquire, whether this Prophecy, in the obvious and most natural Meaning of it, in that Sense in which our first Parents, and their Children after, might easily understand it, has been verified by the Coming of *Christ*; I conceive it may be made as clear as the Sun at Noon-day, that all the Expectations raised by this Prophecy has been compleatly answered by the Redemption wrought by *Christ Jesus*. And what have you to desire more than to see a Prophecy fulfilled exactly? If you insist that the Prophecy should have been more express, you must demand of God why he gave you no more Light; but you ought at least to suspend this Demand till you have a Reason to shew for it.

I know that this Prophecy is urged further, and that Christian Writers argue from the Expression of it, to shew that *Christ* is therein particularly foretold: He properly is the *Seed of a Woman* in a Sense in which no other ever was; his Sufferings were well prefigured by *the bruising of the Heel*, his compleat Victory over Sin and Death by *bruising the Serpent's Head*. When Unbelievers hear such Reasonings, they think themselves



## DISCOURSE III. 71

themselves entitled to laugh; but their Scorn be to themselves. We readily allow, that the Expressions do not imply necessarily this Sense; we allow further, that there is no Appearance that our first Parents understood them in this Sense; or that God intended they should so understand them: But since this Prophecy has been plainly fulfilled in *Christ*, and by the Event appropriated to him only; I would fain know how it comes to be conceived to be so ridiculous a thing in us, to suppose that God, to whom the whole Event was known from the Beginning, (\*) should make choice of such Expressions, as naturally conveyed so much Knowledge as he intended to convey to our first Parents, and yet should appear in the Fulness of Time to have been peculiarly adapted to the Event which he from the Beginning saw, and which he intended the World should one Day see; and which

(\*) *Remember the former Things of old, for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me: declaring the End from the Beginning, and from antient Times the Things that are not yet done; saying, My Counsel shall stand, and I will do all my Pleasure, Isa. xlvi. 9, 10.*

*The Works of the Lord are done in Judgment from the Beginning: And from the Time he made them, he disposed the Parts thereof, Eccclus xvi. 26.*

when they should see, they might the more easily acknowledge to be the Work of his Hand, by the secret Evidence which he had inclosed from the Days of old in the Words of Prophecy. However the Wit of Man may despise this Method, yet is there nothing in it unbecoming the Wisdom of God. And when we see this to be the Case, not only in this Instance, but in many other Prophecies of the *Old Testament*, it is not without Reason we conclude, that under the Obscurity of antient Prophecy there was an Evidence of God's Truth kept in Reserve, to be made manifest in due Time.

As this Prophecy is the first, so it is the only considerable one, in which we have any Concern from the Creation to the Days of *Noah*. What has been discoursed therefore upon this Occasion, may be understood as an Account of the first Period of Prophecy. Under this Period the Light of Prophecy was proportioned to the Wants and Necessities of the World, and sufficient to maintain Religion after the Fall of Man, by affording sufficient Grounds for Trust and Confidence in God; without which Grounds, which could then no otherways be had but by Promise from God, Religion could not  
have

## DISCOURSE III. 73

have been supported in the World. This Prophecy was the Grand Charter of God's Mercy after the Fall; Nature had no certain Help for Sinners liable to Condemnation; her Right was lost with her Innocence: It was necessary therefore either to destroy the Offenders, or to save them by raising them to a Capacity of Salvation, by giving them such Hopes as might enable them to exercise a reasonable Religion. So far the Light of Prophecy extended. By what Means God intended to work his Salvation, he did not expressly declare; and who has a Right to complain that he did not; or to prescribe to him Rules in dispensing his Mercy to the Children of Men? This Prophecy we, upon whom the latter Days are come, have seen fully verified: more fully than those to whom it was delivered could perhaps conceive. View this Prophecy, then, with respect to those to whom it was given, it answered their Want and the immediate End proposed by God; view it with respect to ourselves, and it answers ours; and shall we still complain of its Obscurity?

The bringing in of *Prophecy* was not the only Change in the State of Religion occasioned by the Fall. *Sacrifice* came in at the  
same

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same Time, as appears by the course of the History; and it is hardly possible it should come in, especially at the Time it did, any otherwise than upon the Authority of Divine Institution. It is the first *Act* of Religion mentioned in the sacred Story to be *accepted* by God; which implies strongly that it was of his own Appointment: for we can hardly suppose that such a Mark of Distinction would have been set upon a mere *human* Invention. In later Times, when the Account of Things grows clearer, Sacrifice appears to be appointed by God as an *Expiation* for *Sin*; and we have no Reason to imagine that it was turned aside from its original Use. There is, indeed, no express Declaration of the *Use* of *Sacrifice* in Religion at its first Appearance, and yet something there seems to be in the Account that may give Light in this Matter. We read, that *Cain* brought an *Offering of the Fruit of the Ground*, and *Abel* of the *Firstlings of his Flock, and the Fat thereof*: *The Lord had Respect unto Abel and to his Offering; but unto Cain and to his Offering he had not Respect*. Allowing the Maxim of the Jewish Church to have been good from the first Institution of Sacrifice, *That without Blood there is no*

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DISCOURSE III. 75

*Remission*, the Case may possibly be this: *Abel* came a Petitioner for Grace and Pardon, and brought the *Atonement* appointed for Sin; *Cain* appears before God as a *just Person wanting no Repentance*; he brings an *Offering* in Acknowledgment of God's Goodness and Bounty, but no *Atonement* in Acknowledgment of his own Wretchedness. The Expostulation of God with *Cain* favours this Account; *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, Sin lieth at thy Door*: i. e. If thou art righteous, thy Righteousness shall save thee: if thou art not, by what Expiation is thy Sin purged? It lieth still at thy Door. Add to this, that the Apostle to the *Hebrews* says, that *Abel's Sacrifice* was rendered excellent by *Faith*: What could this Faith be, but a Reliance on the Promises and Appointments of God? Which Faith *Cain* wanted, relying on his well-doing.

If you admit this Interpretation, it plainly shews that the true Religion instituted by God has been *one* and the *same* from the Fall of *Adam*, subsisting ever upon the *same Principles* of Faith; at first upon only *general* and *obscure Hopes*, which were gradually opened and unfolded in every Age till the  
better

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better Days came, when God thought good to call us into the *marvellous Light of his Gospel.*

This Piece of History is all the Account we have of the Religion of the Ante-diluvian World: It was proper to be considered for the Relation there is between Prophecy and the State of Religion in the World; and for this Reason also, because Sacrifice may perhaps be found to be one kind of Prophecy or Representation of the one great Sacrifice once offered for the Sins of the World.



DISCOURSE

*The Use and Intent of PROPHECY, in  
the several Ages of the World.*

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I N S I X  
D I S C O U R S E S,

Delivered at the

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In APRIL and MAY, 1724.

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Four D I S S E R T A T I O N S,  
and an A P P E N D I X.

- I. *The Authority of the Second Epistle of St. PETER.*
- II. *The Sense of the Ancients, before CHRIST, upon the  
Circumstances and Consequences of the FALL.*  
*An APPENDIX to the Second Dissertation, being a farther  
Enquiry into the Mosaick Account of the FALL.*
- III. *The Blessing of JUDAH, Gen. xlix.*
- IV. *CHRIST'S Entry into Jerusalem.*

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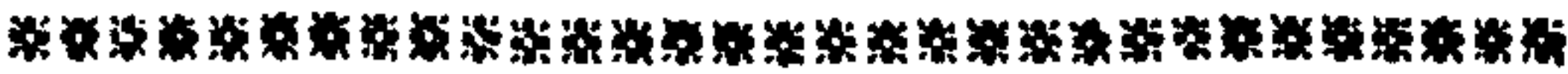
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*Late Master of the TEMPLE,  
Now Lord Bishop of LONDON.*

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## DISCOURSE IV.



**W**E have seen the Beginning of Prophecy, and its first Entrance into the World, and what Measure of Light and Hope it brought with it. The next Enquiry is, to examine by what Degrees this *Promise was opened and unfolded* in the succeeding Ages of the World; and to trace the Methods of Divine Providence in preparing all Things for its Accomplishment.

If we consider the first Prophecy as the Foundation of those Hopes, in which all the Sons of *Adam* have an Interest; in which the Ages yet to come, as well as the present and those already past, are concerned; we shall not wonder to find that the Administrations of Providence have had in all Ages relation to this Prophecy, and shall have, till the End of all Things brings with it the appointed Time for the full Accomplishment.

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One thing, I presume, will be easily granted, because it cannot be easily denied; that if the antient Prophecies which concern the general State and Condition of Man with regard either to this World or the next, are indeed *divine* Oracles, there must be a Consistency in the whole; and how dark or obscure soever some Part of them might be at the first Delivery, and for Generations afterwards, yet must they in the Event conspire and centre in that great End which was always in the View of Providence: *Known unto God are all his Works from the Beginning of the World, Acts xv. 18.*

Taking then this Prophecy to contain the Purpose of God with respect to Mankind; the Administrations of Providence, together with such further Declarations as God has thought fit to make, must needs be the best Comment to help us to its Meaning.

The Account we have of the Ante-diluvian World is very short, and conveys but little Knowledge to us of the Religion of those Times, or of the Hopes and Expectations then entertained: Yet something there is to shew that the Curse of the Fall was remembered and felt during that Period; and that those who preserved a Sense of Religion, had  
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an Expectation of being delivered from the Curse; which could be grounded, as far as appears, upon nothing but the Prophecy already mentioned.

*Noah* was born in the eleventh Century after the Fall, and at the Time of his Birth, his Father *Lamech*, by the Spirit of Prophecy, declared, *This same shall comfort us concerning our Work and Toil of our Hands, because of the Ground which the Lord hath cursed, Gen. v. 19.*

This Passage is a very material one, and, considered in all its Views, will give some Light to the State and Condition of the World during this Period. We may, I think, from hence fairly collect, 1. That the Curse upon the Ground subsisted in all its Rigour to the Days of *Lamech*; and that the Work and Toil necessary to raise from the Ground a sufficient Support for Life, was a grievous and irksome Burden. There is no Reason to imagine, but that *Lamech* had as good a Share of the Things of the World as any other in his Time; and yet he speaks of the Labour and Toil of Life, much more like a Man reporting what he had *felt*, than what he had *only seen*. 2. That there was an Expectation in his Time, at least among those who had

2 not

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not quite forgot God, of a Deliverance from the Curse of the Fall. *Lamech's* Prophecy does not introduce this Expectation, but is grounded upon it: He seems to speak to such as had the same common Hope with himself of a Deliverance to come; and points out to them *the Child* then born as the Instrument designed by Providence to ease them of their Burden. *THIS SAME shall comfort us: i. e.* This is the *Seed* of the *Woman*, the *Heir* of the *Promise*, the Effect of which shall be seen in his Time. 3. That the antient Expectation, founded on the Prophecy given at the Fall, was not of an *immediate* and *sudden* Deliverance. Above a Thousand Years were passed from the Curse to the Birth of *Noah*, and yet the Expectation of Deliverance continued; whereas, had the Notion been, that the Prophecy was to be immediately fulfilled, the Delay had been long enough to tire out their Patience and their Hopes. 4. That the antient Expectation was not that the World should be delivered *all at once* from the *whole* Curse of the Fall. *Lamech*, who so well remembered the Lord's *Curse* upon the *Ground*, cannot be supposed to forget the greater Curse upon *Man*: *Dust thou art, and to Dust thou shalt return.* And yet from *this Part* of the  
Curse

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Curse he gives no Hopes of Deliverance; *Noah* was not the Seed who should bring *Life* and *Immortality* to *Light*; of him he only foretells, that he should *save* them from the *Labour and Toil of their Hands*; and leaves the Hopes of Deliverance from the *greater Curse* to stand as they did, upon the Faith of the first Prophecy. This Notion of a *gradual* Deliverance from the old Curse is agreeable to all that has happened since, and to the present State of Things under the Gospel: It is frequently to be met with in the inspired Writers, particularly in *St. Paul*, who tells us, *THE LAST Enemy that shall be destroyed is Death.*

In Consequence of this Exposition of the Prediction of *Lamech*, it must be maintained, that the Prophecy has been verified in the Event: That the Earth has been restored from the Curse laid on it at the Fall, and now enjoys the Effect of the Blessing bestowed on *Noah*. There will arise many Prejudices, I am sensible, against this Notion now advanced. In the first Place, the Prophecy which was given at the Fall has been usually appropriated to *Christ Jesus*, and to the Deliverance we expect from him by the Restoration of Life and Immortality; and it

G may

may be thought perhaps no good Service to give any other Person a Share in this Prophecy.

In answer to this, I have some few Observations to offer: 1. That the *Curse* of the *Fall* manifestly consists of several Parts: Man was doomed to a Life of Labour and Sorrow here, the Ground cursed for his Sake, and he condemned to seek his Food in the Sweat of his Brow; and after this Life ended, he was sentenced to return to the Dust from whence he was taken. 2. The Prophecy given as a Support to Man under this Curse, mentions no kind of Deliverance particularly, but conveys a general Hope, which is limited to no one Circumstance of the Curse more than another; and is therefore naturally understood to relate to the Whole. 3. Should there appear Reason sufficient to induce us to think that this Prophecy has already, in part, had its Completion, and that the *one Part* of the *Curse* has been already removed; it will be so far from weakening, that it will mightily support and strengthen our Hopes of seeing the Whole removed in God's own Time. 4. It ought to be no Objection, that this Prophecy is supposed to point out more Events, or more Persons than one. This is according  
to

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to the Analogy of the antient Prophecies. And why may not this Prophecy mean *Noah* and *Christ*, as well as many others mean *David* and *Christ*, *Solomon* and *Christ*, &c.

Another Prejudice will arise from the common Notion of the present and past State of the Earth. Instead of seeing any Alteration for the better, according to the Prophecy of *Lamech*, Men think they see an Alteration for the worse in every Age: Nature seems to them to be almost spent and worn out, and less able to provide for her Children now than formerly. These are the Sentiments of the present Age, and they were so of those past. We meet with many Reflections of this kind in grave and serious Authors: *St. Cyprian*, I remember, complains that Things were sensibly grown worse even in the Compass of his own Time; that the Seasons of the Year were not so pleasant, nor the Fruits of the Earth so delightful and refreshing as he remembered them. I wonder not at his Judgment; for I find myself every Day growing into the same Opinion. The best and the choicest Fruits served up at the Tables of the Great, have no such Relish as those, which they once provided for themselves when they were young: And many there are who can

now find but few Days good enough to be abroad, who yet can remember when there were few bad enough to keep them at home. Such Observations, therefore, as these, shew how much Men alter themselves; but they shew nothing else.

But this Prejudice has a greater Support from antient Tradition: We read of a *Golden Age*, when Peace and Plenty reigned, when Fraud and Violence were little known. The old Writers, to whom we are indebted for this Piece of Knowledge, set off the Story, by mixing with it great Complaints of their own Times; that *Iron Age*, as they call it, in which they lived. From these Authorities many have been led to think that the *Curse* upon the Earth has been ever growing and shall grow till the End of all Things.

But it ought to be considered, that the most antient Writers, to whom we are beholden for these Accounts, lived at such a Distance of Time from the Flood, that we may very well suppose that they had little Knowledge of any Antiquity beyond it. They might well call the Times soon after the Flood antient Times, for so they were with respect to their own; and there is no  
Pretence

Pretence for thinking that they knew any thing of the Manner of Living before the Flood. They might possibly have some obscure Tradition of the Paradisiacal State; but if they had, they confounded it with their Golden Age, which plainly was a very different Thing. Now the Ages next the Flood afforded Ground enough for this antient Tradition, without supposing any such Alterations in the State of the Earth as are commonly imagined. The Earth was in a poor Condition indeed after the Flood, if it could not afford Plenty for the few Inhabitants; and what Occasion was there for Fraud and Violence when every Man had more than enough? When Men increased, and the Earth was divided in Property, the Case altered; some had more than enough, and some much less, and every Man grew concerned to be rich, and applied to the Arts of Fraud, or to open Violence, as they best served his Purpose. Here then is the *Golden Age*; and here is the *Iron Age*. The first happy State continued even to *Abraham's* Time: He and *Lot* were Strangers in the Land of *Canaan*; they had great Flocks and Herds with them, and yet what Plenty did they enjoy? When their Servants quarreled about some Conveniencies



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in feeding their Cattle, *Abraham*, as if he had been Lord of the whole Soil, offers *Lot* his Choice of the Country for his Cattle. *Is not the whole Land before thee?—If thou wilt take the Left Hand, then will I go to the Right; or if thou depart to the Right Hand, then I will go to the Left.* Such a Dispute in these Days would be attended probably with Strife and Violence, with Fraud and Deceit, and perpetual Feuds and Animosities between the contending Parties: In *Abraham's* Time the very Plenty the World enjoyed put an End to the Quarrel; not that the World is worse now than it was antiently, but Men are now so multiplied, and the Earth so divided and settled in Property, that private Men are not left to their Choice to settle where they please. Some small Parts of the Earth, lying near Towns, and Places of Habitation, were in *Abraham's* Time possessed in Property, as we learn from the Purchase which he made of a Burying-place. But he was no Purchaser or Proprietor of the Country, where he fed his Cattle, and yet he met with no Disturbance.

Setting aside, therefore, these Prejudices, let us examine what the Truth of the Case is, according to the best Light now remaining.

If you consult Interpreters for the Meaning

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ing of *Lamech's* Prediction ; some will tell you, that *Noah* found out proper Tools and Instruments of Husbandry, which was a great Abatement to the Labour and Toil of Tillage : but of this there is no Proof ; and it is much more likely, that a Descendent of *Cain's* was the Inventor of such Tools, than that *Noah* was. We read nothing of *Noah's* Skill in this way : But we read of *Tubal Cain* that he was an *Instructor of every Artificer in Brass and Iron* : And can it be imagined that there were Artificers in *Iron* so early as *Tubal Cain*, and no Application of the Art to the Works of Husbandry till *Noah's* Time ? Some will tell you, that *Noah* first invented the Art of making Wine ; a Liquor that cheers the Heart, and makes Men forget Sorrow and Trouble ; but neither for this is there any Proof. We read that after the Flood, he *began to be an Husbandman, and planted a Vineyard* ; but as he was not the *first Husbandman* in the World, so neither can it be concluded from hence, that he was the *first Vine-dresser*.

Others are of Opinion, that there is nothing prophetical in *Lamech's* Declaration, and that he had no View but to the Circumstances of his own Family. He rejoiced, they say, to see a Son born who might in Time be

assisting to him in the Toil of cultivating the Ground. According to this Interpretation, *Noah* was so far from being marked out as the Person who shall alleviate the Labour and Toil of the World, that his Father rejoiced only that he was come to take his Share of it, and to be his Fellow-labourer. But is there any thing in this particular to *Noah*? Is not every Son born to assist his Father? and may not *Lamech's* Words be applied by every Father at the Birth of every Son? Why then is this Speech reported of *Lamech* only? Why is a *peculiar* Name, with Reference to this Declaration, given to *Noah*, if there was no *peculiar* Reason for it?

The *Jewish* Interpreters are generally agreed to expound the Words of *Lamech* as importing a Deliverance to be granted from the Labour and Toil of Tillage, occasioned by the Curse on the Ground: And some of them suppose the Words to have a regard to the Restoration of the World thro' *Noah* and his Sons. But the Scripture itself will be our best Guide in this Case; thither let us go.

*Lamech* foretells that his Son *Noah* should comfort them concerning the Works and Toil of their Hands, because of the Ground which the Lord had cursed. When God informs *Noah*  
of

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of his Design to destroy the World, he adds, *But with thee will I establish my Covenant.* *Lamech* expected, in virtue of God's Promise, a Deliverance from the *Curse* of the Earth, and foresees that Deliverance would come thro' his Son. When God threatens to destroy the Earth, and compleat the Curse he had laid on it, he thinks upon his Covenant, and promises *Noah* the Benefit of it: What Covenant was this that had such immediate relation to the Destruction of the World? What could it be but the very Promise which *Lamech* saw should be made good to *Noah*; and which is here actually conveyed to *Noah* by a new Promise? The Words, *I will establish my Covenant*, must relate to a Covenant then subsisting, and not to a Covenant afterwards to be made; as will be evident to those who will examine the Import of this Phrase in Scripture. But to proceed:

The Flood being over, God declares, *I will not again curse the Ground any more for Man's sake.* It appears from this Declaration, 1. That the Flood was the Effect of that Curse which was denounced against the Earth for Man's sake. 2. That the *old* Curse was fully executed and accomplished in the Flood. In consequence of which Discharge  
from

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from the Curse, a *new* Blessing is immediately pronounced upon the Earth; *While the Earth remaineth, Seed-time and Harvest, and Cold and Heat, and Summer and Winter, and Day and Night shall not cease*, Gen. viii. 22. This is called a *Covenant* between God and the *Earth*, ch. ix. ver. 13. And a *Covenant* with *Noah* and his Seed, and with *every living Creature, of the Fowl, of the Cattle, and of every Beast* of the Field, ver. 8, 9, 10. and in Truth a Blessing, on the Earth, is properly a Blessing not only on Man, but on all living Creatures which subsist on the Earth: And it is with respect to this *Covenant* that the *Psalmist* breaks forth into the Admiration of God's Goodness. *Thy Mercy, O Lord, is in the Heavens, and thy Faithfulness reacheth unto the Clouds. Thy Righteousness is like the great Mountains, thy Judgments are a great Deep: O Lord thou preservest MAN and BEAST*, Psal. xxxvi. 5, 6.

When *Adam* was first formed and placed on the Earth, he had several Blessings and Privileges conferred on him by God. These were forfeited by the Fall. What will you say if you see these very Blessings restored again to *Noah* and his Posterity after the Flood? Whether this be the Case or no, will soon appear  
upon

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upon a Comparison of the Blessings given to *one* and the *other*. To *Adam* and *Eve* God said, *Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the Earth*, Gen. i. 28. To *Noah* and his Sons he says, *Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the Earth*, ix. 1. To our first Parents it is said, *Have Dominion over the Fish of the Sea, and over the Fowl of the Air, and over every living Thing that moveth on the Earth*, Gen. i. 28. To *Noah* and his Sons it is said, *The Fear of you and the Dread of you shall be upon every Beast of the Earth, and upon every Fowl of the Air, and upon all that moveth upon the Earth, and upon all Fishes of the Sea, into your Hand are they delivered*, Gen. ix. 2.

To *Adam* and *Eve* are granted for Food, *every Herb bearing Seed---and every Tree, in the which is the Fruit of a Tree yielding Seed*, Gen. i. 19. *Noah* and his Sons have a larger Charter—*Every moving Thing that liveth shall be Meat for you, even as the green Herb have I given you all Things*, Gen. ix. 3. The Blessing upon the Earth at the Creation was, *Let the Earth bring forth Grass and Herb yielding Seed, and the Fruit Tree yielding Fruit after his Kind, whose Seed is in itself upon the Earth*, Gen. i. 11. The Blessing after the Flood is, *While the Earth remaineth,*  
*Seed-*

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*Seed-time and Harvest shall not cease, Gen. viii. 22. In the Beginning, The Lights in the Firmament were appointed to divide the Day from the Night, and to be --- for Seasons, and for Days and Years, Gen. i. 14. After the Flood the new Blessing is, that Cold and Heat, and Summer and Winter, and Day and Night shall not cease, Gen. viii. 22. Tell me now what is there bestowed in the first Blessings, that is wanting in the second? What more did Adam enjoy in his happiest Days, what more did he forfeit in his worst, with respect to this Life, than what is contained in these Blessings? If he neither had more, nor lost more, all these Blessings you see expressly restored to Noah and his Posterity; and can you still believe that the Curse upon the Earth remains?*

All this laid together amounts, I think, to this; that the old Curse upon the Ground was finished and compleated at the Deluge. And when the whole Race of Men, eight only excepted, were destroyed, the Serpent had sufficiently bruised the Heel of the Woman's Seed; and the Time was come to relieve the World with respect to this Part of the Curse so fully executed: Accordingly a Blessing is *once more* pronounced on the Earth;

Earth; and a Covenant of temporal Prosperity confirmed to *Noah*, and by him to all Mankind, making good the Prophecy of his Father at the Time of his Birth, *This same shall comfort us, &c.*

You may think, perhaps, that we see but little Effect of this *new* Blessing; that the Life of Man is still Labour and Toil; that he still eats the Bread of Sorrow and Carefulness in the Sweat of his Brow; and that the Earth still abounds in Thorns and Thistles. Such Complaints as these are but the Effect of Prejudice: Men speak in this Case as if they thought there were no Thorns and Thistles till after the Fall, but that they were created on purpose to be a Curse; for if there were such Things (as undoubtedly there were before the Fall) why should you expect to have them removed by the Restoration of the Earth?

For what Employment do you imagine Man was made? For *a little Sleep, a little Slumber, and a little folding of the Hands to sleep*? Surely this was not the Case: Even in Paradise it was *Adam's* Business to dress and to keep the Garden. How much Labour this required we cannot tell; some it required, without doubt. After the Fall, La-  
bour



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bour increased and multiplied, and continued to be very burdensome unto the Time of the Flood: And God's Promise of regular Seasons after the Flood, seems to intimate that they were very irregular and confused before: Which one Circumstance will account for all the Change we suppose. What the Case was in the old World during the Curse, may probably be collected from the Curse denounced against *Israel* when disobedient: *I will break the Pride of their Power; and I will make your Heaven as Iron, and your Earth as Brass, and your Strength shall be spent in vain: For your Land shall not yield her Increase, neither shall the Trees of the Land yield their Fruits,* Levit. xxvi. 19, 20.

There are serious Writers who think that the Earth was very much damaged and rendered less fertile by the Flood: But is it not obvious to observe, that this Judgment ought to be grounded on the Knowledge not only of the present State of the Earth, but also of the State before the Flood? For whoever compares two Things together, and judges upon the Comparison, must be supposed to know them both; and yet it is certain that we know nothing of the antediluvian State but this only, that it was a very bad one; which

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which is not enough to support us in judging, that the present State is a much worse.

We meet with frequent Allusions to this Covenant with *Noah* in later Times, and later Books of Scripture : The Son of *Sirach* tells us, *That an everlasting Covenant was made with him*, xliv. 18. *διαθήκαι αἰῶνος*, (Gr.) *Testamenta Seculi*, (Vulg.) The Covenant of the *Age* was given him : For *Noah* was the *Father* of the *Age*, and had the Covenant of the *Age* after the Flood, in like Manner as *Christ* was the *Father*, and brought in the *new Covenant* of the succeeding *Age*.

The Prophet *Jeremiah* introduces God appealing to his own Fidelity in the Execution of this first Covenant, as a Reason why he ought to be trusted and relied on for the Performance of the second. *If you can break my Covenant of the Day, and my Covenant of the Night, --- then may also my Covenant be broken with David my Servant, that he should not have a Son to reign upon his Throne*, xxxiii. 20, 21. and ver. 25. In like manner the Prophet *Isaiab*, *This is as the Waters of Noah unto me : For as I have sworn that the Waters of Noah should no more go over the Earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee*, liv. 9. The lxxvth  
2. Psalm

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*Psalms* seems to be a Comment upon God's Covenant with *Noah*: *Thou makest the Outgoings of the Morning and Evening to rejoice. Thou visitest the Earth, and waterest it:--- Thou crownest the Year with thy Goodness, and thy Paths drop Fatness.---The Pastures are cloathed with Flocks; the Vallies also are covered with Corn; they shout forth Joy, they also sing.* It seems also to be with Reference to this Covenant that the *Psalmist* appeals to God's *Faithfulness in the Clouds*, to his *Mercy established in the Heavens*, and to the *Moon the Faithful Witness in Heaven*. Wisdom, and Power and Goodness are shewn forth in the Creation, but *Mercy* and *Faithfulness* relate to God's Dealings with Men; and when we hear of his *Faithfulness in the Clouds*, it naturally leads us to think of his Promise for *Seed-time* and *Harvest*, for the *former* and the *latter Rain*; Things evidently depending upon the *Government of the Clouds*.

During the *Age* of this Covenant, the Character by which God was known, and applied to, was relative to this Covenant, and the Blessings of it; — *Unto God would I commit my Cause, which doth great Things and unsearchable; marvellous Things without Number; who giveth Rain upon the Earth,*  
and

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*and sendeth Waters upon the Fields, Job v. 8, 9, 10. Sing Praises upon the Harp unto our God, who covereth the Heaven with Clouds, who prepareth Rain for the Earth, who maketh Grass to grow upon the Mountains. He giveth to the Beast his Food, and to the young Ravens which cry, Psalm cxlvii. 7, 8, 9.— Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth Rain, both the former and the latter in his Season: He reserveth unto us the appointed Weeks of the Harvest, Jer. v. 24. To the same Purpose, and with respect to the same Times, the Apostles Paul and Barnabas tell the People at Lystra, That God in Times past suffered all Nations to walk in their own Ways, nevertheless he left not himself without Witness, in that he did Good, and gave us Rain and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness, Acts xiv. 17. Our blessed Saviour does likewise commend and extol the Mercy of God in the Works of this first Covenant: He maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust. Which Words are directly a Comment upon the Terms of Noah's Covenant for fruitful Seasons, which were to continue without being interrupted again for the Sake of Man's Iniquity;*

H quity;

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quity; or, as the Text itself expresses it, *Tho' the Imagination of Man's Heart is evil from his Youth*, Gen. viii. 21. With respect to this Covenant of temporal Blessings given to *Noah*, and to the Second Covenant of future Glory given to *Christ*, must St. Paul be understood to speak, when he says, *Godliness is profitable to all Things, having Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come*. In any other View the Words are capable of no Exposition consistent with Experience; or with the Admonitions of the Gospel, which warn the Righteous to expect Sufferings in this World: But true it is, that for Godliness-sake *the Promise of the Life that now is* was confirmed with *Noah*; and for the same Reason was the Covenant of better Hopes confirmed with *Christ*.

These Allusions, and many more, suppose a Restoration of the Earth after the Flood, and a new Blessing given to it in virtue of God's Covenant; and without this Supposition I know not how to account for some Passages in Scripture, which speak of the Goodness of the Earth, and the great Plenty it affords. How comes it to pass that *this very Earth*, cursed with Barrenness, and to be a *Nursery* for Thorns and Thistles, is afterwards

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wards represented as flowing with Milk and Honey, abounding with Oil and Wine, and every thing useful and pleasant in Life? Can you imagine this Land of Plenty to be Part of the cursed Earth, doomed to bear Thorns and Thistles, and to weary out its Inhabitants with Toil and Labour? Yet this is the Case, if no Alteration has happened; and it will be no easy Work to reconcile these Contradictions. But if the Curse upon the Earth was expiated at the Flood; if the Earth has been *once more blessed* by its Creator, there wants no Art or Invention to solve this Difficulty: The Thing speaks for itself.

I will leave this Point upon these Reasons: Whether they are sufficient to establish an Opinion so contrary to the Prejudices of Mankind, I know not; they seem to me at least to be worth considering.

Let us consider now the State of Prophecy after the Flood, and upon what Foot the Religion of the new World subsisted.

I find no new Prophecy given to *Noah* after the Flood, nor to any of his Children till the Call of *Abraham*. The Reason of it seems to be this; the Power and Sovereignty of God were so manifestly displayed in the Deluge, and made so strong Impressions upon

the few Persons then alive, and came so well attested to the succeeding Generation, that Religion wanted no other Support: When Idolatry prevailed, and the World was in danger of being quite lost to true Religion, without the Interposition of God, the Word of Prophecy was renewed; as we shall find when we come to that Period.

It may seem surprizing, perhaps, that after so great a Revolution in the World as the Deluge made, God should say nothing to the Remnant of Mankind of the Punishments and Rewards of another Life, but should make a new Covenant with them relating merely to fruitful Seasons, and the Blessings of the Earth. All that I can say to this Difficulty, is this; I think I see plainly a gradual working of Providence towards the Redemption of the World from the Curse of the Fall; that the temporal Blessings were first restored as an Earnest and Pledge of better Things to follow; that the *Covenant of the Age* given to *Noah* had, strictly speaking, nothing to do with the Hopes of Futurity, which were reserved to be the Matter of *another Covenant in another Age*, and to be revealed by him, whose Province it was *to bring Life and Immortality to Light thro' the Gospel.*

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## DISCOURSE IV. 101

The Law of *Moses*, tho' a divine Revelation, and introduced to serve and advance the great Ends of Providence with respect to Mankind, yet being given in the *Age* of the first Covenant, was in all Things made conformable to it; and was founded in no other *express* Promises than those of temporal Happiness and Prosperity, in no other *express* Threatning than those of temporal Loss and Misery. *Abraham's* temporal Covenant was the same in kind with *Noah's*, tho' much enlarged and re-established upon further Promises and Assurances: As the Curse upon the Ground for the Wickedness of *Cain*, was of the very same kind with the Curse of the Fall; differing from it not in Kind, but in Degree.

But tho' the first Covenant, given to *Noah*, and the Law of *Moses*, founded upon the Terms of that Covenant, contain no *express* Promises of future Rewards, yet is it not to be imagined that all who lived under this Covenant were void of such Hopes and Expectations. If there were any such Hopes before the Flood, grounded upon the Prophecy consequent to the Fall, the Coming in of the Flood could not destroy them; and the Covenant of temporal Blessings given to



*Noah*, was so far from superseding better Hopes, that it did mightily strengthen and confirm them. For if *Noah* and his Forefathers expected Deliverance from the whole Curse of the Fall, the actual Deliverance from one Part of it was a very good Pledge of a further Deliverance to be expected in due Time. Man himself was cursed as well as the Ground, he was doomed to return to Dust; and fruitful Seasons are but a small Relief, compared to the Greatness of his Loss; but when fruitful Seasons came, and one Part of the Curse was evidently abated, it gave great Assurance that the other should not last for ever.

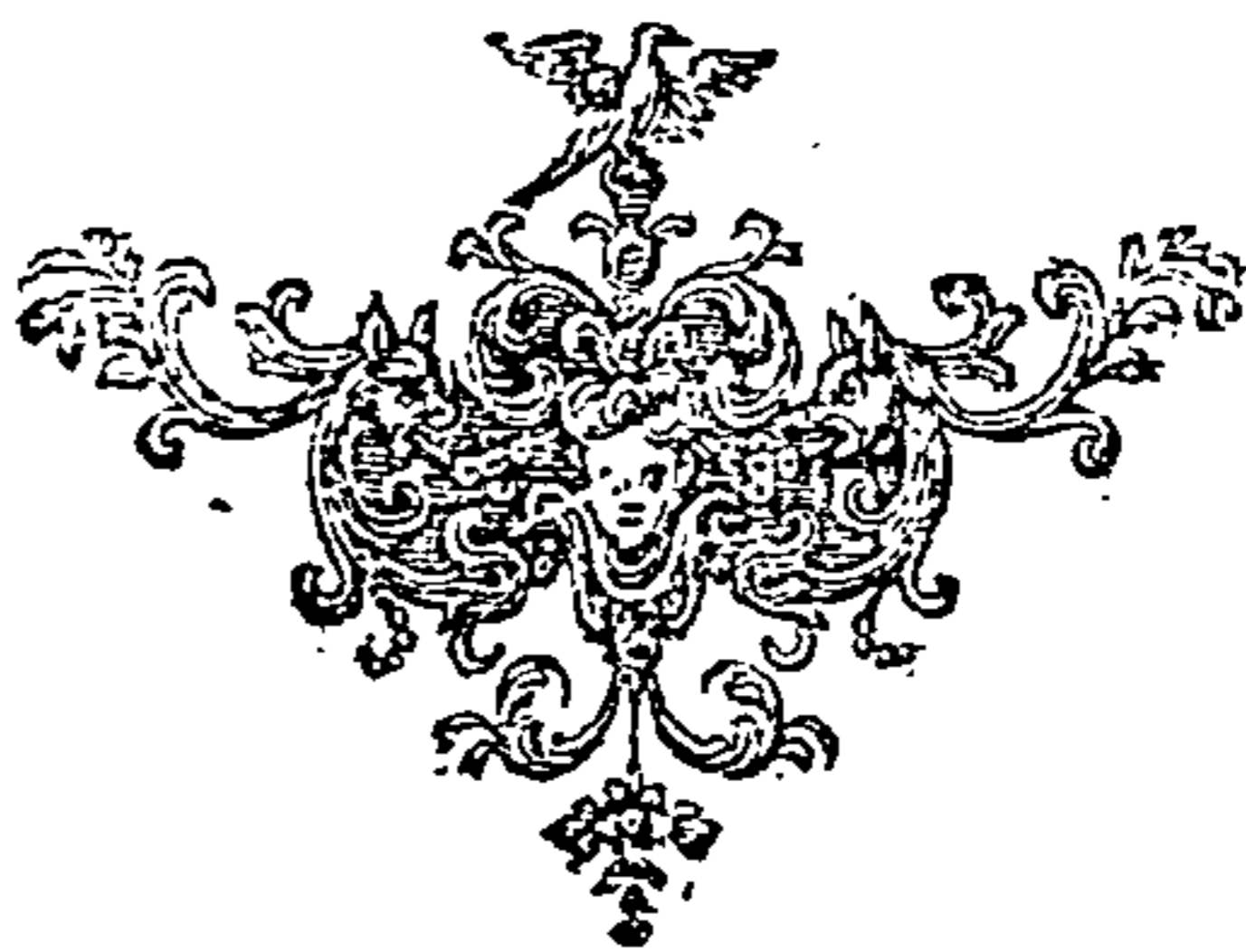
That *Noah* had such Expectations himself and transmitted them to his Posterity, seems evident from the peculiar Blessing which he bestowed on *Shem*. *Blessed, says he, be the Lord God of Shem: Canaan shall be his Servant, God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the Tents of Shem, Gen. ix. 26, 27.* Why the God of *Shem*, and not the God of *Japhet*? As to the Behaviour of these two Sons towards their Father, it was the same; they joined in the pious Office done to him; in this respect then they were equal, and equally deserving of a Blessing; if any Preference  
was

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was due to either from the Father, it was to *Japhet* his First-born; for so he was, tho' commonly last named when the Sons of *Noah* are mentioned together. This being the Case, how comes *Shem* to be preferred? And what is the Blessing conveyed to him? The temporal Covenant it could not be, for that was before confirmed with *all* the Sons of *Noah*. Day and Night, Summer and Winter, Seed-time and Harvest, were a common Gift to the World, bestowed, as our blessed Lord observes, *on the Evil as well as on the Good*. The Blessing therefore peculiar to *Shem*, was no Part of the temporal Covenant; nor was it any thing in the Power of his Father to bestow; for then his elder Brother, equally obedient and respectful to his Father, must have been served before him. Of what other Blessing *Noah* had any Notion, can never be imagined, unless we seek for it among the Hopes he conceived of further Deliverance from the Curse, grounded upon the divine Promise that the *Seed of the Woman* should finally prevail; the Right to which Promise was conveyed to him before the Flood, *With thee will I establish my Covenant*, Gen. vi. 18. For *Noah* had not only the temporal Covenant given to him and his

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Sons, but he was also, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* tells us, *Heir of the Righteousness which is by Faith*, chap. xi. 7. If this be the Case, then *Noah's* Blessing is like unto *Lamech's* Prophecy; for as *Lamech* foresaw that *Noah* should receive from God the Covenant of the Earth's Restoration; so *Noah* foresaw, that the greater Blessing still behind, even the Covenant that should restore Man to himself and to his Maker, should be conveyed thro' the Posterity of *Shem*. This accounts for the Preference given to *Shem*; for *Noah* spoke not his own Choice, but declared the Counsel of God, who had now, as he frequently did afterwards, chosen the Younger before the Elder.



DISCOURSE

*The Use and Intent of PROPHECY, in  
the several Ages of the World.*

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D I S C O U R S E S,

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- I. *The Authority of the Second Epistle of St. PETER.*
- II. *The Sense of the Ancients, before CHRIST, upon the  
Circumstances and Consequences of the FALL.*  
*An APPENDIX to the Second Dissertation, being a farther  
Enquiry into the Mosaick Account of the FALL.*
- III. *The Blessing of JUDAH, Gen. xlix.*
- IV. *CHRIST'S Entry into Jerusalem.*

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## DISCOURSE V.

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 O what Purposes the antient Prophecies were given, and upon what Foot Religion stood from the Beginning to the Restoration, or new Establishment of the World, in *Noah* and his Posterity, has been already considered. We are now advancing to Times of greater Light, to clearer and more distinct Prophecies, and more nearly relating to God's great Dispensation of Mercy and Goodness towards Mankind, manifested by the Revelation of his Son. This Period begins at the Call of *Abraham*, and runs thro' the Law and the Prophets, ending where the Gospel of *Christ Jesus* commences. It contains such a Variety and Number of Prophecies, that I cannot propose to myself so large and extensive a Subject to be the Matter of short Discourses from this Place. But it may perhaps be of some Use to inquisitive Minds, to suggest to them the great and general Design of Providence

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dence in the Prophecies of this Period ; to shew them the State of Religion during this Season ; and how well the Light of Prophecy afforded to this Generation corresponded to the State and Necessity of the Times. If in this Method of enquiring we can arrive at the Knowledge of God's Design in giving the Word of Prophecy to the old World, we shall the more easily discern of what Use these antient Oracles are to the present World ; and how far the Truth of the Gospel, which we believe and profess, depends upon the Authority and Evidence of antient Prophecy. In order to this Enquiry, it is necessary, first, to consider the State of true Religion, and the Supports it had during this Period ; for Prophecy being relative to the State of Religion in the World, we must know the one to understand the other.

How soon the World after the Deluge corrupted their Ways, and lost the Knowledge of the True God, *and changed the Glory of the incorruptible — into an Image made like to corruptible Man*, we cannot certainly know ; but this we certainly know, that in *Abraham's* Time Idolatry had spread far and wide ; and taken deep Root even in the Family of *Shem*, and in that Branch of  
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it particularly from which *Abraham* descended. This being the Case, it is highly probable that true Religion had entirely failed in the World, had not God visibly interposed to preserve such a Sense of it, as was necessary for the Accomplishment of his great Design to restore Mankind.

Necessary I say to this End ; for most evident it is, That it was not the Intention of Providence in the Call of *Abraham*, or in giving the Law of *Moses*, to propagate or restore true Religion among all Nations of the old World ; so far from it, that the Covenant with *Abraham* is founded upon the Condition not of reforming, but of destroying the idolatrous Nations in the Land of *Canaan* ; and the Sign of Circumcising was given to separate *Abraham* and his Posterity from the rest of Mankind ; which shews that the rest of Mankind were not called to that Covenant, of which Circumcision was the Sign or Sacrament. Moreover the Law of *Moses* was established in such Rites and Ceremonies, and many of them to be performed only in the Land of *Canaan*, that there is no room to suppose that it was ever intended to be a general Law for Mankind. Add to this what *Paul* and *Barnabas* tell the People at *Lystra*,  
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That God in Times past suffered all Nations to walk in their own Ways, Acts xiv. 16. And what St. Paul says to the People of Athens, God winked at the Times of Ignorance; but now commandeth all Men every where to repent, Acts xvii. 30. And it will be most evident, that the Call of *Abraham*, and the Law of *Moses* consequent to it, were not intended as general Calls to Mankind, but were subservient to some other View and Design of Providence.

If we consider now the whole World lost to all Sense of Religion, estranged from God, and void of all Hopes towards him; and suppose one Family chosen out merely for their own sakes to be delivered from the general Corruption and Misery, without any View or Design towards the general Good of Mankind, it gives so mean, so partial a View of God, that I think no Religion can consist with such a Notion.

But if the Law of *Moses* was neither intended to be a general Law for Mankind, nor yet intended as a partial Favour and Benefit to the *Jews* only, exclusive of all Mankind, what remains, but that we must consider it, as a Method of Providence working towards the great End always in View, the  
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general Restoration of Mankind from the Curse of the Fall? As the opening of that Scene which was to bring a Blessing *upon all Nations* of the Earth? Accordingly we find this to be the Case; when *Abraham* was called and received the Promises, he had Assurance given him not only of peculiar Blessings to himself and Posterity, but likewise of a general Blessing to be conveyed through him to all Mankind: “ *I will make of thee, says God, “ a great Nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy Name great, and thou shalt be a Blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee :”* Immediately it follows, “ *And in thee shall all Families of the Earth be blessed,*” Gen. xii. 2. ’Tis of great Importance in the present Question, to distinguish rightly these Promises.

The Promise of temporal Prosperity to *Abraham* and his Posterity is sufficiently explained in the Course of his Story: At the seventh Verse of this Chapter, God tells him he would *give to his Seed the Land of Canaan*: And in Chap. xv. 18. that he would give the *Land unto his Seed, “ from the River of Egypt unto the great River, the River Euphrates:”* In the seventeenth Chapter, that “ *he would*  
“ *multiply*

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“ multiply him exceedingly; that he should be  
 “ a Father of many Nations, and Kings should  
 “ come out of him.” These were great Pro-  
 mises and great Inducements to Obedience; but, except the particular Gift of the Land of *Canaan* (and there were probably other Parts of the World as good as that) there was nothing in them peculiar to *Abraham* and his Posterity only. There were before *Abraham’s* Time, and have been since, many great and powerful Nations of another Kindred; the Sons of *Ham* and *Japhet*, and those descended by other Branches from *Shem*, have arrived to great Prosperity, and left a numerous Issue behind them, in vertue of the common Blessing bestowed on their Ancestors after the Flood, to whom God said, “ Be  
 “ ye fruitful and multiply, and bring forth  
 “ abundantly in the Earth, and multiply  
 “ therein;” to them likewise he gave the Promise of fruitful Seasons, and sustained them with Corn and with Wine. Thus far then the Promise to *Abraham* was derived from the temporal Covenant established with *Noah* and his Sons after the Flood, in which other Nations and People had a Share as well as himself; and some of them in some Respects a much greater, as he must needs  
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judge, who knows any thing of the antient or present Empires of the *East* and *West*. But if we look forward, we shall see the Distinction between the several Promises grow plain, when God renews the Covenant, and limits the *peculiar Blessing* of *Abraham* to the Son which should be born of *Sarah* his Wife. In the xviiith of *Genesis* the Lord appears to *Abraham*, and says, “ *I am the Almighty God,* “ *walk before me, and be thou perfect;*” then follows, “ *I will make my Covenant between* “ *me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceed-* “ *ingly — and thou shalt be a Father of* “ *many Nations.*” At the 7th and 8th Verses God promises to establish an *everlasting* Covenant with him and his Seed *after him*, to give him and them all the *Land of Canaan* for an *everlasting Possession*, and to be their *God*. Here are either two Covenants, mentioned together in the Compass of a few Lines, or else the same Covenant repeated, with this Difference, that in the last place it is styled an *everlasting* Covenant, and the *Land of Canaan* is assigned for an *everlasting Possession*; with this remarkable Addition, that God promises to be the *God of Abraham* and of his Seed after him. And this is the first time that this peculiar Character assumed by  
God,

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God, of being the God of *Abraham*, and of his Seed, occurs in Scripture; and it is evidently connected to the Promise of the *everlasting* Covenant. Which Connexion seems to be the true Foundation of our Saviour's Argument from this Expression, to prove the Resurrection of the Dead; as the Connexion of the Promise of the Land of *Canaan* to the everlasting Covenant, seems to be the Reason of treating the Land of *Canaan* as a Type or Sign of Heaven. This Character of God, thus connected to the everlasting Covenant, is likewise a plain Intimation, that two distinct Covenants are mentioned in this Place, and not the same repeated again. Towards the Close of this Chapter, *Abraham* receives an express Promise that he should have a Son by *Sarah* his Wife, within the Compass of a Year, and that the *everlasting* Covenant should be established with *this Son*, and his Seed after him. — *Abraham* had at this Time a Son of thirteen Years old, born of *Hagar* the *Egyptian*; to whom the Angel of the Lord had appeared when she was with Child of this Son, and promised to *multiply her Seed exceedingly, that it should not be numbered for Multitude*, Gen. xvi. 10. This Promise therefore of a numerous Posterity flourishing in  
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the Earth, tho' Part of the Promise given to *Abraham*, as we have seen before, is no Part of the everlasting Covenant, confirmed to *Isaac*, exclusively to all the natural Sons of *Abraham*. This appears likewise from the very Passage where this Promise is limited to *Isaac*: *Abraham*, when he received the Promise of a Son by his Wife, puts up a Petition, whatever the Occasion of it was, for his Son *Ismael*; "O that *Ismael* might live before thee." To which he receives this Answer; "As for *Ismael*, I have heard thee: Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly: Twelve Princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great Nation:" Immediately it follows, "But my Covenant will I establish with *Isaac*, whom *Sarah* shall bear unto thee." Can any thing be plainer to shew that the everlasting Covenant, to be established with *Isaac* and his Seed, was of a very different kind from the Covenant given to *Ismael*, of multiplying his Seed, of making him Father of Kings and Princes, and of raising him into a great Nation? And yet this very Covenant was given originally to *Abraham*; he was to have a numerous Posterity, to be Father of Kings, and of a

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great Nation. *Ishmael* was admitted to the Benefit of this Covenant as well as *Isaac*, and yet expressly excluded from that which God emphatically styles MY Covenant, and the *everlasting* Covenant; an undeniable Evidence that God's Covenant with *Abraham* was founded on better Hopes than those of mere temporal Prosperity. This Distinction of two Covenants in the Case of *Ishmael* and *Isaac*, made by God himself, is the Foundation of *St. Paul's* Argument to the *Galatians*: “It  
 “ is written, says he, that *Abraham* had two  
 “ Sons, the one by a bond Maid, the other by a  
 “ free Woman: But he who was of the bond  
 “ Woman was born after the Flesh; but he of  
 “ the free Woman was by Promise: Which  
 “ Things are an Allegory; for these are the  
 “ two Covenants:” And whoever is capable of considering what is related concerning this Matter in the Book of *Genesis*, will evidently see that these are indeed two Covenants; and two such Covenants as fully justify the Apostle's Reasoning upon this Point.

Since then the Promises of temporal Prosperity, made to *Abraham* and his Seed after him, are evidently distinct from the Subject Matter of the *everlasting* Covenant, made with him, and limited to *Isaac* and *Jacob*,  
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and afterwards to the Tribe of *Judah*, and lastly to the Family of *David*; it remains to be considered, what the Subject of the Covenant so limited is. If we look back to the Call of *Abraham*, and the Promises which attend it, there we shall find, that after enumerating the temporal Blessings, which were to descend from *Abraham* to his Posterity, one Blessing is added, in which all the World has an Interest, and which was to be conveyed to them thro' *Abraham* and his Seed; “*In thee, says God, shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed.*” Whatever *Abraham* understood by this, I think verily he could not understand it as his Children at this Day understand it, who expect, in virtue of the Promises made to the Fathers, to be Lords of the World, and to have Dominion over all People: A strange *Blessing* this *to all Nations*, that they should fall from their natural Liberty, and become subject to the Dominion of one People! None but a *Jew* can see the Happiness of such a State; the Nations of the Earth, if left to their Choice, would all refuse this great Blessing for themselves. But before we enquire into the special Meaning of this Blessing upon all Nations, we must see whether

ther this *universal* Blessing, to be revealed in due Time, were truly the Matter of God's *special*, his *everlasting* Covenant with *Abraham*. We have seen already that *Ishmael* was excluded from this special Covenant, and *Isaac* admitted to it; we have the Covenant of God with *Ishmael*, and the Covenant of God as renewed with *Isaac*, both preserved in the Book of *Genesis*; and it is observed that the two Covenants, as to worldly Prosperity, are nearly the same: but they differ in this, the Covenant with *Ishmael* says nothing of the *Blessing to all Nations*; the Covenant with *Isaac* expressly renews this very Promise: *In thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed*, Gen. xxvi. 4. A plain Proof, surely, that the special Matter of God's Covenant, limited from *Abraham* to *Isaac* exclusive of *Ishmael*, consisted in the Promise of this *universal* Blessing, to be conveyed through *Abraham* and *Isaac* and their Posterity to all Mankind.

We have the like Evidence from a like Case, which happened between the Children of *Isaac*; with this only Difference, that *Ishmael* and *Isaac* were born, one of a bond Woman, the other of a free; but *Esau* and *Jacob* were Twins of one Birth, both born of  
a free



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a free Woman. The Blessing of *Abraham* was limited to *Jacob*, and denied to *Esau*: Yet *Esau* received a temporal Blessing from his Father, as well as *Jacob*. The Apostle to the *Hebrews* accounts it *Profaneness* in *Esau* that he sold his Birthright; it must be because he sold the *Blessing of Abraham*, and the Promises of God; upon any other Account there is no room for his Charge, for it was never reckoned *Profaneness* to sell mere temporal Rights; nor was *Esau* excluded from the Benefit of the temporal Promises by this scandalous Bargain. If *Jacob* was blessed with the *Dew of Heaven*, and the *Fatness of the Earth*, and *Plenty of Corn and Wine*, Gen. xxvii. 28. *Esau's* Blessing in this respect was not inferior; *Thy Dwelling*, says his Father, *shall be the Fatness of the Earth, and of the Dew of Heaven from above*, ver. 39. If *Nations were to bow down to Jacob*, ver. 29. *Esau* likewise was *to live and prevail by his Sword*, ver. 40. If *Jacob's Brethren* were to *bow down to him*, ver. 29. yet the Time would come when *Esau should have Dominion, and break even this Yoke from off his Neck*, ver. 40. Thus the Case stands between them, if we interpret the whole Blessing given to *Jacob* of temporal Prosperity and Dominion;

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but there is great Reason to limit Part of it to the peculiar Blessing of *Abraham* and *Isaac*, which was undoubtedly conveyed at this Time to *Jacob*. The conveying the Birthright in the Family of *Abraham*, was conveying the special Blessing of *Abraham*, which always attended upon the Birthright. This Birthright was evidently made over to *Jacob*, when it was said, *Be Lord over thy Brethren*. The special Blessing was in Time to be extended to *all Nations*, as well as to the House of *Abraham*, for *in his Seed all the Families of the Earth were to be blessed*; and therefore in consequence of the Birthright it is said to *Jacob*,—*Let People serve thee, and Nations bow down to thee*, ver. 29. It is very evident from the whole Story of *Isaac's* Blessing his two Sons, that the *chief Blessing* he had to bestow fell upon *Jacob*; and it is as plain that there are no Words to limit this particular Blessing to *Jacob*, but these now under Consideration; and *Isaac* himself understood that he had passed away the Blessing of *Abraham* to *Jacob* in these Words, and therefore he tells *Esau* that the Blessing was gone beyond Recovery, *I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed*, ver. 33. But *Esau* pressed his Father for a Blessing on himself:

*Isaac*

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*Isaac answered and said — Behold I have made him thy Lord, and all his Brethren have I given to him for Servants ; and with Corn and Wine have I sustained him : And what shall I do now unto thee, my Son ? ver. 37. Esau still urges his Father ; Bless me, even me also, O my Father. Upon this Isaac blesses him ; and pray observe ; of Corn and Wine and temporal Power he gives him a full and an equal Share : — Thy Dwelling shall be the Fatness of the Earth, and of the Dew of Heaven from above : The only Limitation on the Blessing is, Thou shalt serve thy Brother. Whatever then was peculiarly given to Jacob, was contained in the Grant, of being Lord over his Brethren ; and what this peculiar Gift was, we may learn from Isaac himself, who in the next Chapter renews the Blessing on Jacob, and gives expressly to him and his Seed, the Blessing of Abraham, ver. 4. In the same Chapter the Blessing is renewed and confirmed by God himself ; In thee and in thy Seed shall all the Families of the Earth be blessed, ver. 14.*

That the Regard of *all Nations* to the Seed in which they were *all to be blessed*, should be expressed by *their bowing down to him*, is no hard Figure of Speech ; that even

this Yoke, this Superiority of *Abraham's* Family, should one Day be broken, as the Promise to *Esau* sets forth, when *Jews* and *Gentiles* should be on an equal Foot, and equally the People of God, is no more than the original Covenant contains; for the Day was to come when *all Nations* should be equally *blest*.

If you expound this Blessing of temporal Dominion, see how the Case will stand: *Jacob is to rule over Esau*; yet no sooner is the Blessing given, but he flies his Country for fear of *Esau*, Gen. xxvii. 43, &c. He lives abroad for many Years; and when he returns, the Fear and Dread of his Brother returns with him: He *was greatly afraid and distressed*, Gen. xxxii. 7. His only Refuge in this Distress was to God; *Deliver me, I pray thee, from the Hand of my Brother, from the Hand of Esau*, ver. 11. When he sends a Message to him, he styles himself, *Thy Servant Jacob*, ver. 20. When he met him, *he bowed himself to the Ground seven Times, until he came near to Esau*, xxxiii. 3. When he speaks to him, he calls him *Lord*; when he was kindly received by *Esau*, he says, *I have seen thy Face, as tho' I had seen the Face of God, and thou wast pleased with me*, ver. 10. What is there in all this to shew the Rule  
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and Dominion that was given to *Jacob* over his Mother's Sons?

If you suppose the Prophecy understood of temporal Dominion, to be fulfilled in the Posterity of these two Brothers, let us see how the Case stands upon this Supposition: The Family of *Esau* was settled in Power and Dominion many Years before *Jacob's* Family had any certain Dwelling-place; the Dukes and Kings of *Esau's* House are reckoned up, *Gen. xxxvi.* and the Historian tells us, *These are the Kings that reigned in the Land of Edom, before there reigned any King over the Children of Israel, ver. 31.* When the appointed Time was come for establishing the House of *Israel*, and giving them the Land and Possessions of their Enemies, the Family of *Esau* were by a particular Decree, exempted from the Dominion of *Israel*: *The Lord spake unto Moses, — Command thou the People, saying, Ye are to pass thro' the Coast of your Brethren the Children of Esau, which dwell in Seir, and they shall be afraid of you: Take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore, meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their Land, no not so much as a Foot breadth, because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a Possession, Deut. ii. 4, 5.* If in the Time  
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of *David*, they of *Edom* became his *Servants*, 2 Sam. viii. 14. yet in the Days of *Jehoram* did they recover again, and made a *King* over themselves, 2 Kings viii. 20. And in the Time of *Abaz* they revenged the Affront, by *smiting* *Judah*, and *leading away Captives*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 17. Can you now suppose that this Variety of Fortune between the Children of *Jacob* and *Esau* was the thing intended, or meant to be described, when the Promise was given to *Jacob*, that *his Mother's Children should bow down to him*? If this were the Case, *Isaac* needed not to be so scrupulous in preserving the peculiar Blessing to *Jacob*; he might have given *Esau* a Share of it, and the Event would have answered.

It appears, I think, from hence, that the Blessing given to *Jacob*, and expressed in Words implying a *Rule over his Brethren*, was truly a Conveyance of the Birthright to him in the Family of *Abraham*; that the Birthright in *Abraham's* Family respected the special Blessing and Covenant given to *Abraham* by God; that *Isaac* himself calls this Right of Primogeniture in his House, *the Blessing of Abraham*; that God himself, in Confirmation of *Jacob's* Right of Primogeniture, assures him, that *in his Seed all the Families of the Earth shall be blessed*. Now

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Now this Promise being the only special Promise made to *Isaac* and *Jacob* in Preference to their Brethren, and in consequence of God's everlasting Covenant limited to them, this Promise must necessarily be understood to be the Subject-Matter of the everlasting Covenant: And it is very observable, that this Blessing so peculiarly belongs to this Covenant, that it is never mentioned with respect to *any other Person whatever*, than such only, to whom the Right of this Covenant, and the Promise of the Land of *Canaan* descended. Some Interpreters have imagined that these Words require no higher a Sense than this, that all Nations should see the Prosperity of *Abraham* and his Seed so evidently, that they should bless themselves and others in some such Form as this; *God make thee as great as Abraham, and his Seed*. But can we imagine that God's *everlasting Covenant*, as he himself calls it, was given only to produce a proverbial Form of Speech in the World? That the Prerogative of *Isaac* above *Ishmael*, of *Jacob* above *Esau*, lay in this only, that the Nations should use the Name of one in their mutual good Wishes, and not of the other? Besides, when was this ever the Case, when did all Nations thus  
bless

blefs themselves, or when was there Occasion for it? The Posterity of *Ishmael* was established in Power much sooner, and were as great and successful for many Ages as the *Jews*, and much larger Empires have sprung from them: So that there was hardly ever any Ground to take up this proverbial Speech, which some make to be the Whole of this special Covenant limited from *Abraham* to *Isaac* and *Jacob*.

What distinct Notion *Abraham* had of the Blessing promised to all Nations thro' him and his Seed, what he thought of the Manner and Method by which it should be effected, we cannot pretend to say. But that he understood it to be a Promise of restoring Mankind, and delivering them from the remaining Curse of the Fall, there can be little doubt. He knew that Death had entered by Sin; he knew that God had promised Victory and Redemption to the Seed of the Woman: Upon the Hopes of this Restoration the Religion of his Ancestors was founded; and when God, from whom this Blessing on *all Men* was expected, did expressly promise a Blessing on *all Men*, and in this Promise founded his *everlasting Covenant*, what could *Abraham* else expect but the Completion in  
his



his Seed of that antient Promise and Prophecy, concerning the Victory to be obtained by the Woman's Seed? The Curse of the Ground was expiated by the Flood, and the Earth restored with a Blessing, which was the Foundation of the temporal Covenant with *Noah*; a large Share of which God expressly grants to *Abraham*, and his Posterity particularly, together with a Promise, by their Means, to bring a new and further Blessing upon the whole Race of Men. Lay these Things together, and say what less could be expected from the new Promise or Prophecy given to *Abraham*, than a Deliverance from that Part of the Curse still remaining on Man, *Dust thou art, and to Dust thou shalt return?* In virtue of this Covenant, *Abraham* and his Posterity had Reason to expect that the Time would come when Man should *be called from his Dust again*: For this Expectation they had his Assurance who gave the Covenant, *That he would be their God for ever*. Well might our Saviour then tell the Sons of *Abraham*, that *even Moses at the Bush shewed the Resurrection of the Dead, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*.

To preserve these Hopes in the World,  
upon

upon which the Restoration of the World to Life and Immortality depended, was *Abraham* called from his own Country and Kindred, then tainted with Idolatry, to be a Witness to God and his Truth. Had he, with all the rest of Mankind, been suffered to continue in Idolatry, the Knowledge of God had been lost, and the Remembrance of his Providence in creating Man at first, of the Hopes given of a second and better Creation after the Fall, had utterly perished. *Abraham* was not called merely for his own Sake, much less were his Posterity, a stubborn and stiff-necked People, preserved for their own Sakes; but he was called, and they preserved, to be Instruments in the Hands of God, for fulfilling the Purposes of his Mercy, in the Restoration and Redemption of the World. The great Article of the Covenant, limited to *Abraham* and his chosen Seed, most evidently regarded the whole Race of Man, and was to grow, in the Fulness of Time, into a Blessing upon all the Nations of the Earth: He and his Posterity were Depositories of these Hopes, or, to use the Words of *St. Paul*, this was the *Jews* chief Advantage above others, “*That unto them were committed the Oracles of God.*”

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This Account will help us to a distinct View of the Prophecies relating to this Period of Time of which we are speaking. As two Covenants were given to *Abraham* and his Seed, one a temporal Covenant, to take place, and to be performed in the Land of *Canaan*; the other a Covenant of better Hopes, and to be performed in a *better Country*; so are the Prophecies, given to *Abraham* and to his Children after him, of two Kinds; one relative to the temporal Covenant, and given in Discharge and Execution of God's temporal Promises; the other relative to the spiritual Covenant, given to confirm and establish the Hopes of Futurity, and to prepare and make ready the People for the Reception of the Kingdom of God.

Many of the antient Prophecies relate to both Covenants; and hence it comes to pass, that at the first Appearance many of the antient Predictions seem to be hardly consistent with themselves, but to be made up of Ideas, which can never unite in one Person, or in one Event. Thus the Promises to *David* of a Son, to succeed in his Throne, have some Circumstances, which are applicable only to *Solomon*, and the temporal Dominion over the House of *Israel*; some, which are peculiar

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liar to that Son of *David*, who was Heir of an *everlasting* Kingdom, which was to be established on Truth and Righteousness. Hence it is, that we often find the Promises of temporal Felicity, and temporal Deliverance, raised so high, that no temporal Felicity or temporal Deliverance can answer the Description; the Thoughts and Expressions of the Prophet naturally moving from the Blessings of *one* Covenant, to the Blessings of the *other*, and sometimes describing the inconceivable Glories of one Covenant, by Expressions and Similitudes borrowed from the more sensible Glories and Blessings of the other. The Prophet *Isaiab*, being sent to raise the drooping Spirits of *Abaz* and the House of *David*, threatened at that Time with immediate Ruin by two potent Enemies, could not but remember the double Promise of a Kingdom given to *David*, which was a double Security for the Establishment of his House; together therefore with the Assurances and the Signs given of temporal Deliverance, he intermixes the Assurance and the Sign of the greater Deliverance, before the Completion of which the House of *David* could not fail; for that House should continue till *the Virgin conceived and brought forth Immanuel*, that

Son of *David*, to whom the *everlasting Kingdom* was promised. Ought it to be Matter of Wonder, that the Prophets, who were Ministers of both Covenants, entrusted with the Counsel of God for the Direction of the temporal Affairs of the People of *Israel*, and commissioned to cherish the Hopes and Expectations of a better Kingdom, to be given in virtue of God's everlasting Covenant; ought it to be wondered at, I say, that they often speak of both Kingdoms together, that they make use of the temporal Deliverances as an Argument to encourage the Hopes of the spiritual? When in truth the temporal Deliverances, being the actual Performance of one Covenant, were a great Security for the Performance of the other; and it was unnatural to see the Hand of God performing one Promise, and not to reflect upon the Certainty of his performing the other.

The Blessing belonging to the special Covenant, given to *Abraham* and his Seed, were reserved to be revealed in God's appointed Time. The Prophets under the Law could not be commissioned to declare these Blessings openly and nakedly, without anticipating the Time of their Revelation. Hence it is that the Predictions concerning *Christ* and his Kingdom

dom are clothed in such Figures as were proper to raise the Hope and Attention of the People, without carrying them beyond the Bounds of Knowledge prescribed by God to the Age of the *Jewish* Covenant.

If we consider each kind of Prophecy distinctly by itself, we shall the better discern how this Case stands. To begin then with those relating to the temporal Covenant; *Abraham* was called from his Father's House, upon a Promise that he should become a *great Nation*, and that his *Seed should possess the Land of Canaan*. This Promise could not be fulfilled in all its Parts, till *Abraham's* Family was multiplied into a Nation. This required many Years; and what must become of these Children of Promise in the mean time? They had no Country of their own; where then should they settle and multiply? I will not launch out into Speculation upon the Methods of Providence, by which the People of *Israel* were raised and preserved; but let any one read the Prophecies from the Call of *Abraham* to *Moses*, he will evidently see that they refer to this State of Things: To arm the Faith of *Abraham* and his Posterity, against the Fears of Disappointments, under the necessary Delays, and  
some

some evil Treatments they were to undergo, God acquaints *Abraham* with his Purpose, and tells him, his Seed should be *four hundred Years in a strange Land*. This Circumstance, had it not been foretold, would, in all Probability, have blotted out the Memory of the Promise; four hundred Years of Distress are sufficient to cure any People of their great Expectations. But this Prophecy was a Warning and a Security in this respect. When the Time of Servitude drew near, and the People wanted more than ordinary Help to preserve their Trust in the Promise of God, *Jacob*, before his End, was enlightened, by the Spirit of Prophecy, to set before the Twelve Tribes the Glory, and Honours, and Possessions, that should accrue to each in the happy Day of their Triumph: By the same Spirit, *Joseph*, on his Death-bed, assures them, That *God would surely visit them, and bring them into the Land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob*. These were Cordials prepared against the Day of Distress, then near at hand.

The Times of *Moses* and of *Joshua*, those Days of Miracles as well as Prophecies, want no Explication: The Intention of Providence appears plain in every Step, and may be discerned by every Eye.

The Commonwealth of *Israel* was raised, and flourished, under the temporal Covenant, given at first to *Noah*; and in a particular Manner, with additional Promises, confirmed to *Abraham* and his Seed: For this Reason all the Promises and Threatnings of the Law are temporal, suitable to the Age and Season of the World. But these temporal Blessings and Punishments were so visibly administered by the Hand of God, that every Instance of the Execution of the Threats and Promises of the Law became a new Proof of its divine Authority. If you enquire why God did so visibly interpose in the Government of this People, always guiding and directing them in the Conduct of temporal Affairs, and Matters of State, by the Voice of his Prophets, when all other Nations before, and since, have been left under the general Rules of Providence to their own Conduct and Discretion; the Answer, I think, is this: No other Nation ever had a divine Law, given upon the Establishment of temporal Blessings and Punishments; and therefore God had not so bound himself to any other Nation, to account to them for their temporal Prosperity and Adversity: But to the *Jews*, with whom he had established a Law and a Covenant upon *temporal Promises*, he stood obliged



obliged to make good his Word, and to justify himself to them in the Administration of *temporal Affairs*. For this Reason a Succession of Prophets was raised up among them, at whose Mouths they might receive the Direction of God: And this is what *Moses* means, when he says, “ *What Nation*  
 “ *is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto*  
 “ *them, as the Lord our God is in all Things*  
 “ *that we call upon him for?* Deut. iv. 7.

Whenever it was necessary to punish the People for their Disobedience, that they might not be tempted by the Prosperity of other Nations, and their own Adversity, to fall away to other Gods, they were forewarned of the Things that were to befall them; their Calamities were prophetically described to them, that they might know, whenever they suffered, that it was the very Hand of God, *of their own God*, that was upon them: And this is the Reason of our finding so many Prophecies, under the Law, relating to the Civil State and Condition of the *Jews*; for this Cause the great Captivity of *Babylon* is so largely and fully foretold by the Prophets, that the People might not be tempted to think that the Gods of the Nations had prevailed against them, and thereby

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be seduced, as oftentimes they were seduced by this very Imagination, to forsake God in their Distress; but that they might know that the Almighty Hand of the Lord was in all their Sufferings, and might thereby become humble and obedient: and further, that they might know that all their Adversity and Prosperity came on them, according to the express Terms of their Covenant with God, who blessed them when obedient, and humbled them when obstinate. All Nations have had, and still have, their Turns of Prosperity and Adversity, and God thinks not himself obliged to account to them for the Measures of his Providence towards them: But the Case was otherwise with the *Jewish* Nation; for God having established a Covenant with them, upon temporal Promises and temporal Curses, the very Execution of the Covenant, on God's Part, required him to appear, and openly administer the Penalties and Promises of his Law; to procure the Happiness of the People when obedient, and to inflict the Punishment due to their Iniquity. Hence it is that he directs them in the Way of temporal Happiness by the Voice of the Prophets, and gives them open Warning of all Evils which he brings on them;

them; that they may see him in every instance performing the Word of his Covenant. Every Prophecy from God spoke in the Language of *Moses's* Song, *See now, that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my Hand.*

This accounts for all the Prophecies of the *Old Testament* relating to the temporal State of the *Jewish* Nation; with which we have no further Concern, than only to give a reasonable Account of them; that the ancient Prophets of God may not pass for mere *Fortune-tellers*, as they have been represented to the World of late.

The People of the *Jews* were so prone to follow the Customs of the Nations around them, and to fall away to Idolatry, that from their coming into *Canaan*, till the Times of the *Babylonish* Captivity, there was a perpetual Struggle between the Prophets of God, and the false Prophets of the Nations, which should prevail; with this View are many ancient Prophecies given to preserve the People from being seduced by the Nations round them. We may learn this from the Reproof given to the Messengers of *Abaziab*, who

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had sent to enquire of *Baalzebub* the God of *Ekron*, whether he should recover of his Disease: Go, says the Angel of the Lord to  
 “ *Elijah, Go meet the Messengers of the King*  
 “ *of Samaria, and say unto them; Is it not*  
 “ *because there is not a God in Israel, that*  
 “ *ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the God of*  
 “ *Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the Lord,*  
 “ *Thou shalt not come down from that Bed on*  
 “ *which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die,*”

2 Kings i. 3, 4. To the very same Purpose God speaks in the Prophet *Isaiab*, rendering an Account of his ancient Prophecies——

“ *I have declared the former Things from the*  
 “ *Beginning, and they went forth out of my*  
 “ *Mouth, and I shewed them, I did them sud-*  
 “ *denly, and they came to pass. Because I*  
 “ *knew that thou art obstinate, and thy Neck*  
 “ *is an Iron Sinerw, and thy Brow Brass. I*  
 “ *have even from the Beginning declared it to*  
 “ *thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee;*  
 “ *lest thou shouldst say, Mine Idol hath done*  
 “ *them, and my graven Image, and my mol-*  
 “ *ten Image hath commanded them,*” *Isaiab*  
 xlviii. 3, 4, 5.

You see now upon what Foot all the Prophecies in the Old Testament stand, which relate to the temporal Concerns of the *Jew*  
*ish*

## DISCOURSE V. 137

*ish* Nation; you see likewise the Reason why this kind of Prophecy has ceased in the *Christian* Church. The Gospel is not founded in temporal Promises; so far from it, that we are called upon to take up our Cross, and follow *Christ*. The bringing in of better Hopes has vacated the Promises of the *Mosaic* Covenant; and it is expected of us, after so much Light given, that our Faith should be Proof against the Adversaries of the World, without the Help of a Prophet to foretel, or to reveal to us, in every Instance, the Counsel of God.

These Prophecies relating to the Things of this Life, concern us but little; they have had their Completion, long since, in Events which affect not us: But others there are relating to the great *Depositum* entrusted with the *Jews*, even the Hopes of Redemption, which were to be a Blessing to all the Nations of the Earth, in which we are highly concerned, and which will deserve our particular Consideration.

## DISCOURSE

*The Use and Intent of PROPHECY, in  
the several Ages of the World.*

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D I S C O U R S E S,

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- I. *The Authority of the Second Epistle of St. PETER.*
- II. *The Sense of the Ancients, before CHRIST, upon the  
Circumstances and Consequences of the FALL.*  
*An APPENDIX to the Second Dissertation, being a farther  
Enquiry into the Mosaick Account of the FALL.*
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- IV. *CHRIST'S Entry into Jerusalem.*

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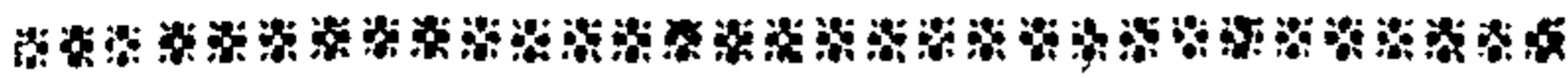
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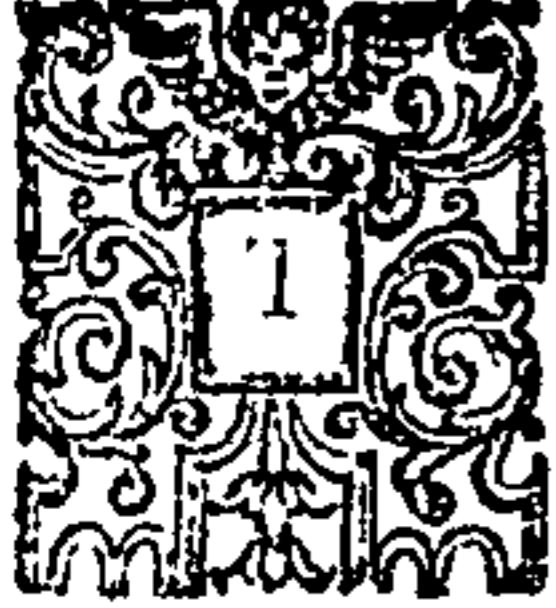
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## DISCOURSE VI.




 HE Prophecies of the Old Testament, generally considered, relate either to the temporal State and Condition of the *Jews*, and were, in order to the Administration and Execution, on God's Part, of the temporal Covenant, given to *Abraham* and his natural Descendants; or they relate to that great and universal Blessing, promised to *Abraham* and to his Seed, though not limited to them, but expressly designed and extended, in the Words of the original Covenant, to *all the Nations of the World*. Of these we have already considered the first Kind, and endeavoured to shew the Purport and Design of Providence in the many Oracles reducible to this Head. It remains now, that we consider the Prophecies of the second Kind in the same Method; not enquiring into the express Meaning and Accomplishment of

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of every single Prophecy applicable to this Subject, but into the general Use and Design of these Prophecies; which being discovered, we shall be able, with better Success, to apply ourselves to the Examination of each divine Oracle. The Prophecies of the several Periods, already considered, have been found to correspond to the State of Religion in the World, at the Time of giving the Prophecy; A great Presumption that the Case is the same under the *Jewish* Dispensation. We must therefore, in order to our present Enquiry, consider the State of Religion under the *Mosaic* Dispensation, and examine how far, and to what Purposes, Prophecy was requisite, and whether in Fact these Purposes were served by the Prophecies under the Law.

As to the State of Religion under the Law of *Moses*, to save your Time and my own, I shall refer myself to the Books of the Law, in every Man's Hand. But two Questions there are, necessary to be considered at present; and First, The Promise to *Abraham* consisting of two distinct Parts, or including two distinct Covenants, the one, relating to the temporal State and Prosperity of his Seed in the Land of *Canaan*, the other, to the Blessing,



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fing, which thro' him and his Seed, was to be conveyed to *all Nations* of the Earth; the Question is, to which of these two Covenants the Law of *Moses* is annexed. If the Law was given in Execution of the *Promise* made to *all Nations*, then have the Nations nothing further to expect; God has fulfilled his Word: The *Jews* are right in adhering to their Law; and we in the wrong in rejecting it: But if the Law of *Moses* is built upon the temporal Covenant only, and given properly to the *Jews* only, then both *Jews* and *Gentiles* have further Hopes, and a just Expectation remaining, to see God's Promise to *all Nations* accomplished; which was not accomplished by the giving of the Law.

I have already, in the Course of this Argument, observed to you, that the Law of *Moses* was given to the *Jews* only, and not to all Nations: For which these Reasons, among others, may be assigned:

*First*, The Obligation of no Law extends beyond the Terms of its Promulgation; now the Law of *Moses* was promulged to the *Jews* only; the Words are, *Hear O Israel*; whereas, had the Law been intended for all Nations, it ought to have been promulged to all, and the Words should have been,

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been, Hear *all Nations of the Earth*: And thus the *Christian Law* is promulged; the Apostles had it expressly in Commission from *Christ* “*To teach ALL NATIONS, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all Things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you ALWAYS, even unto the END OF THE WORLD:*” A Commission, which plainly shews that the Gospel Dispensation extends to all Places, and all Times, even to the End of the World; and that no other new Law is to be expected.

*Secondly*, The Law of *Moses* relates to the temporal Covenant only, as being established expressly upon the Terms and Conditions of it. The Ten Commandments are founded upon this, that God brought them, the *Jews*, out of the Land of Egypt, out of the House of Bondage: A Reason which extended to the People of the *Jews* only; for all other Nations were not brought out of the Land of Egypt, and the House of Bondage. The first Threatning is temporal, of visiting the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third and fourth Generation; the Promise is of the same Kind; both relative  
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to the temporal Covenant: as is likewise the Promise of the fifth Commandment, *That thy Days may be long in the Land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

*Thirdly*, Many Rites and Performances of the Law were confined to the Land of *Canaan*, and the Temple of *Jerusalem*: for which Reason even the *Jews*, in their Dispersion, pretend not to observe the Law in these Points, and they would be Transgressors of the Law, if they did. Now 'tis absurd, if the Law was intended for all People, that the main Performances of it should be confined within the Territories of one particular People only: And therefore, when the *Christian* Law was to take place, every Country was to be a proper Place of divine Worship: Which is the true Meaning of our Saviour's Words to the *Woman of Samaria*; *Woman believe me, the Hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this Mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father, John iv. 21.*

Now this being the Case, 'tis evident that the Promise of a Blessing to all Nations subsisted in its full Force and Vigour, during the Continuance of the Law of *Moses*; for as the Promise was not compleated by the giving of the Law, in which all Nations were

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not concerned; so neither could so general a Promise be annulled, or set aside, by a private Law, given to one People only. And this is the true Sense and Meaning of *St. Paul's* Argument, *Gal. iii.* “*This I say, that the*  
“*Covenant that was confirmed before of God*  
“*in Christ, the Law which was four hun-*  
“*dred and thirty Years after cannot disan-*  
“*nul that it should make the Promise of none*  
“*effect.*”

*Secondly,* Another Question proper to be considered with respect to the State of Religion under the *Jewish* Dispensation, is this: How far the Religion of the *Jews* was preparatory to that new Dispensation, which was in due Time to be revealed, in Accomplishment of the Promise made to all Nations. Now if *Abraham* and his Posterity were chosen, not merely for their own Sakes, or out of any partial Views and Regards towards them, but to be Instruments in the Hand of God for bringing about his great Designs in the World; if the temporal Covenant was given for the Sake of the everlasting Covenant, and to be subservient to the Introduction of it; 'tis highly probable that all Parts of the *Jewish* Dispensation were adapted to serve the same End, and that  
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the Law founded on the temporal Covenant itself was, to prepare the Way to better Promises. If this, upon the whole, appears to be a reasonable Supposition, then have we a Foundation to enquire into the Meaning of the Law, not merely as it is a literal Command to the *Jews*, but as containing the Figure and Image of good Things to come. It can hardly be supposed, that God, intending finally to save the World by *Christ* and the Preaching of the Gospel, should give an intermediate Law, which had no respect nor relation to the Covenant which he intended to establish for ever. And whoever will be at the Pains to consider seriously the whole Administration of Providence together, from the Beginning to the End, may see perhaps more Reason than he imagines, to allow of Types and Figures in the *Jewish* Law.

To proceed then: The *Jewish* Dispensation not conveying to *all Nations* the Blessing promised through *Abraham's* Seed, but being only the Administration of the Hopes and Expectations, created by the Promise of God; in this respect it stood entirely upon the Word of Prophecy; for future Hopes and Expectations from God can have no other real Foundation. In as much then as the

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*Jewish*

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*Jewish* Religion did virtually contain the Hopes of the Gospel, the Religion itself was a Prophecy; and as the *Jewish* Church was founded to preserve, and to administer these Hopes, the prophetic Office was in some Measure necessary and essential to this Church, to nourish and support their Hopes and Expectations from God.

In what Manner the *Blessing of all Men* was established with *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, we have already seen. The next Limitation of it is to the Tribe of *Judah*, in that famous Prophecy delivered by *Jacob*, just before his Death, *The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a Lawgiver from between his Feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the People be*, Gen. xlix. 10. There are so many Interpretations of this Prophecy, some peculiar to the *Jews*, and some to *Christians*; and so many Difficulties to be accounted for, whatever Way we take, that I shall not pretend to enter into the Decision of them at present. But take the whole Prophecy, relating to the Tribe of *Judah*, together, and there will be enough to answer our immediate Purpose, without entering into these Obscurities. *Judah*, says *Jacob*, *Thou art he whom thy Brethren*

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*thren shall praise; thy Hand shall be in the Neck of thine Enemies: Thy Father's Children shall bow down before thee.* In a Form of Words, not unlike this, the peculiar Blessing was appropriated to *Shem*; *Japhet shall dwell in the Tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his Servant,* Gen. ix. 27. And when *Jacob* himself had the Blessing of *Abraham* settled on him, by his Father *Isaac*, in Preference to his Brother *Esau*, the very Words in which the Grant was made to him, are these: *Let People serve thee, and Nations bow down to thee; be thou Lord over thy Brethren, and let thy Mother's Sons bow down to thee,* Gen. xxvii. 29. Now when *Jacob* uses, partly these very Words, partly others of like Import, can he be understood to bestow any other Blessing on his Son *Judah*, than that very Blessing, which he, in this same Form of Words, received from his Father? Could he forget the Import of his own Blessing when he was preferred to *Esau*? Or could he use this solemn Form of Words, and mean something quite different from the Sense they carried, when his antient Father pronounced them over him? The other Parts of this Prophecy relate, I think, to the temporal Prosperity of *Judah*, and pro-

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mise a Continuance of that Tribe till the *Blessing of Abraham* should come, and be extended to all *Nations*: but I will not enter into this large Field of Controversy.

The next and the last Limitation of this special Promise is to the Family of *David*; a Point so uncontested, that there is no room to call it in question, without rejecting the Authority of all the Prophets; and so plain withal, that it needs no proving. Here the Promise rested until it fell upon *him*, for whom it was reserved, and to whom it was ever due; upon him, to whom the *Birth-right* appertained, who was the *First-born* of every Creature; and concerning whom the Almighty had declared long before, *I will make him my First-born, higher than the Kings of the Earth*. Here it is fixed, and here it must rest, till *all Things are accomplished*; for he must reign till he hath put all *Enemies under his Feet*; till *Death* itself is *swallowed up in Victory*.

It is much to be observed, that the Prophecies relating to the Covenant of better Hopes, were given to the People of God, when Religion itself seemed to be in Distress, and to want all Helps to support it in the Word. When *Abraham* was called to forsake

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sake the Country and the Religion of his  
 Fathers, then had he the Promise of the  
 blessed Seed. *Isaac* and *Jacob* being sur-  
 rounded on all Sides with Idolatry, in the  
 midst of a very corrupt and degenerate  
 World, were sustained by the same Hopes.  
 When the People of *Israel* were in *Egypt*,  
 and under many Temptations of following  
 the Gods of the Country, then was the Pro-  
 mise settled on *Judah*, and the remarkable  
 Prophecy given of *Shiloh's* Coming. As soon  
 as God appeared manifestly, and oftentimes  
 miraculously, making good the Promises of  
 the temporal Covenant to the Children of  
*Abraham*, and the People wanted no other  
 Evidence to keep them steadfast in their Obe-  
 dience, or to secure them from falling away  
 to the Gods of the Nations round them, we  
 meet with few Instances of this Sort of Pro-  
 phecy. Whilst God himself was Governor  
 and King of the People, and directed all their  
 Affairs by the Voice of his Prophets, their  
 Adversity and their Prosperity, which were  
 always in Proportion to their Obedience and  
 Disobedience, were a sufficient Instruction  
 to them to cleave to God steadfastly. This  
 was the Case from *Moses* to *David*, who had  
 the Promise of the everlasting Covenant

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established with him and with his Seed, in Reward of his Constancy and Faith towards God under all the Difficulties, thro' which he made his Way to the Crown, appointed to him by God. But when the succeeding Kings fell into Idolatry, and the People, prone to Evil, followed their Example, so that God determined to remove them out of his Sight, and scatter them among the Idolatrous Nations, whose Gods they had chosen before the Lord their Saviour; then, for the Sake of the few Righteous, were the better Hopes revived, that *the Just might live by Faith*, and that a *Remnant might be saved*. The Prophet *Isaiab*, who speaks so plainly of the Kingdom of *Christ*, entered upon his Office not long before the Ten Tribes were carried into Captivity, as a Punishment for their Idolatry: The Prophet *Jeremy* saw the other Tribes carried away to *Babylon*: And *Daniel* was himself one of the Children of the Captivity. This was the Time in which true Faith wanted the Comfort of future Hopes; the present Scene was dark and gloomy, the Loving-kindness of the Lord was hid from his People, and they saw nothing but Tokens of Anger and Displeasure on every side: In this Time therefore

God

God thought fit to give more and plainer Intimations of his Purpose to establish the Kingdom of Righteousness, than ever had been given before from the Days of *Adam*. Now was it that the *Seed in whom all Nations were to be blessed* was manifestly described; that the Time and Place of his Birth were appointed; his great Works, his Glories, and his Sufferings, were foretold. Now was it, that God taught his People plainly to expect a new Covenant, a better than that made with their Fathers: In a word, now was it, that all Eyes were opened to look for his coming, who was to be the *Glory of Israel; the Desire of all Nations; a Light to lighten the Gentiles*. This great Scene being opened, and placed in so clear a View, the Work of Prophecy was finished, and in a few Years the Gift itself ceased: A plain Evidence that the *Spirit of Prophecy* is the *Testimony of Jesus*; and that all the Blessings and Promises, given to God's antient People, were to have their final Accomplishment in the Manifestation of the *blessed Seed*.

The Ten Tribes, which were carried away by the King of *Assyria*, never more returned to their own Country; the Tribe of *Judah*, after seventy Years Captivity, came back to

the Land of *Canaan*, erected a new Temple, and continued to be a Tribe and a People till the last Destruction of *Jerusalem* by the *Romans*. If you think all this happened by Chance, there is no room to ask you any Questions about it: But if you allow the Hand of God to be in these Events, tell me from whence this Distinction, this partial Regard to the Tribe of *Judah*? Read their own Prophets, and learn from thence the Character of their Tribe, you'll find no Merit in them to justify this Regard of God towards them: They were as bad as their Neighbours: but they had one Advantage, they had a Promise which none of the Ten Tribes had, *That the Sceptre should not depart from Judah — till Shiloh came*: For the fulfilling of this Promise, and all the Promises relating to the *blessed Seed*, was *this Tribe* preserved some hundreds of Years after the others had ceased to be a People.

That this Tribe was re-settled purely for the Accomplishment of God's Promises of a better Covenant, appears from all the Circumstances of their Condition after their Return: They were not restored to enjoy the antient Privileges of the People of God in the Land of *Canaan*: Those Privileges were  
 forfeited

## DISCOURSE VI. 153

forfeited by their Iniquity; their *Urim* and their *Thummim* were no more heard of; and after they were once established in the Land (a Point in which Providence was nearly concerned) the Gift of Prophecy ceased, and God appeared not in the Management of their temporal Affairs, as formerly he had done: They were often distressed, and often brought near Ruin; they suffered in all the Changes of the Empire of the East, and were, as they express themselves, *Servants in the Land which God gave to their Fathers*, Neh. ix. 36. I mention this Particular, to account to you the more clearly for the ceasing of Prophecy some Ages before the coming of *Christ*. Prophecy among the *Jews* was relative to the two Covenants given to *Abraham*; when the *Jews* had forfeited the Blessings of the temporal Covenant, and God had fully opened and prepared the Way for the coming in of the Second, he recalled his Ministers and Ambassadors, for whose Service he had no longer any occasion.

That the Prophecies, relating to the second and better Covenant, produced a suitable Effect, and were Matter of Comfort and Consolation to the Righteous among the *Israelites*, may be collected from some few Allusions

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sions to the Opinions of their own Times, to be found in the Books of the Prophets, That the People of *Israel* had, in the Days of the Prophet *Amos*, a Notion of some great Deliverance, or Blessing still to come, may be gathered from the Reproof given to those, who, tho' void of the Fear of God, yet expected a Share in his Blessing. *Wo unto you that desire the Days of the Lord: To what End is it for you? The Day of the Lord is Darkness, and not Light, Amos, v. 18.* As some waited in Faith for the Consolation of *Israel*, so others there were who mocked at all such Hopes and Expectations: To these the Prophet *Isaiab* speaks; *Wo unto them that draw Iniquity with Cords of Vanity, and sin as it were with a Cart-rope: That say, Let him make Speed and hasten his Work, that we may see it: And let the Counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it, Isa. v. 18, 19.* Under the Power of these irreligious Mockers the Righteous (and such has ever been their Lot) were wearied and oppressed, but the Prophet speaks Comfort to them; *Hear the Words of the Lord, ye that tremble at his Word; your Brethren that hated you, and cast you out for my Name-sakes, said, Let the Lord be glorified:*

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*fiel: But he shall appear to your Joy, and they shall be askamed, lxvi. 5. As wicked as the People of Israel were, yet in all Times were there some who waited for the Salvation of God; whose Faith and Hope are well expressed by the Son of Sirach; the Power of the Earth is in the Hand of the Lord, and in due Time he will set over it one that is profitable, Eccclus. x. 4.*

That the Prophecy, given at the Time of the Fall, was understood, in the antient Jewish Church, to relate to the Times of the *Messias*, may with great Probability be inferred from many Passages, but especially from one in *Isaiab*, where after a full Description of the Kingdom of *Christ*, and the Happiness of those who were the *Seed of the Blessed of the Lord*, the State and Condition of the Wicked, in the Time of that Kingdom, is thus described in few Words; *And Dust shall be the Serpent's Meat, Isa. lxxv. 25.* By what Figure of Speech, or for what Reason is the Serpent here made to signify those, who are distinguished from the *Seed of the Blessed*? And how comes the Punishment of these Reprobates to be set forth by the *Serpent's eating Dust*? Here is nothing in the Prophet to explain this Figure; but he seems  
to

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to use it as a Saying well known, and perfectly understood by his Countrymen ; and from whence could they borrow it, but from the History of Man's Fall ? There you may find the *Seed of the Blessed*, to whom Victory over the Serpent is promised ; and there may you see the *Serpent* doomed to eat *Dust* ; and the Allusions to this antient Prophecy, in *Isaiab's* Description of the Kingdom of the *Messias*, shews in what Sense it was understood of old, and for many Ages before the Birth of *Christ*.

These Prophecies, relating to the Kingdom of the *Messias*, have still a larger and more extensive Use, not confined to any particular Age, but reaching to every Age of the *Christian* Church : They were given to the *Jews of old* for the Support of their Faith, and are a standing Reproof to their Children of *this Age* for their Unbelief : They taught those of *old Time* to expect the Kingdom of *Christ*, and are a Condemnation to those of *this Time* for rejecting it : They are a Support and an Evidence to the Gospel, and furnish every true Believer with an Answer to give to him, who asketh the Reason of the Hope that is in him.

They who are educated in the Belief of  
*Christianity,*



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*Christianity*, and taught to receive the Books of both Testaments with equal Reverence, are not apt to distinguish between the Evidence for their Faith, arising from the one and the other. But if we look back to the earliest Times of preaching the Gospel, and consider how the Case stood as to the *Jewish* Converts on one side, who were convinced of the divine Authority of the Old Testament, and as to the *Gentile* Converts on the other, who had no such Persuasion, the Distinction will appear very manifestly. The antient Prophecies, tho' they are Evidence both to the *Jew* and to the *Gentile*, yet are they not so to both in the same way of Reasoning and Deduction, nor to the same End and Purpose. For consider; the *Jew* was possessed of the Oracles of God, and firmly persuaded of the Truth of them; the very first Thing therefore which he had to do upon the Appearance of the *Messiah*, was to examine his Title, by the Character given of him in the Prophets; he could not, consistently with his Belief in God, and Faith in the antient Prophecies, attend to other Arguments, till fully satisfied and convinced in this: All the Prophecies of the Old Testament, relating to the Office and Character of  
the

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the *Messiah*, were immoveable Bars to all Pretensions, till fulfilled and accomplished in the Person pretending to be the promised, and long-expected Redeemer. For this Reason the Preachers of the Gospel, in applying to the *Jews*, begin with the Argument from Prophecy. Thus *St. Paul*, in his Discourse with the *Jews* at *Antioch* in *Pisidia*, begins with the Call of *Abraham*, and after a short historical Deduction of Matters from thence to the Times of *David*, he adds, *Of this Man's Seed bath God, according to his Promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour Jesus*, Acts xiii. 23. Where you see plainly that the whole Argument rests upon the Authority of Prophecy; and all the Parts of this Apostolical Sermon are answerable to this Beginning, proceeding from one End to the other upon the Authority of the old Prophets: But the very same Apostle *St. Paul*, preaching to the People of *Athens*, Acts xvii. argues from other Topics; he says nothing of the Prophets, to whose Mission and Authority the *Athenians* were perfect Strangers, but begins with declaring to them, *God that made the World, and all Things therein*; He goes on condemning all idolatrous Practises, and assuring them that

“ *God is not worshiped with Men's Hands, as*

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“*tho’ he needed any thing.*” He accounts to them for the past Times of Ignorance at which God winked, and tells them, that *now* he calls all Men to Repentance, having appointed *Christ Jesus to be the Judge of all Men*; for the Truth of which he appeals to the Evidence of *Christ’s Resurrection*, —

“*Whereof, says the Apostle, he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead,*” ver. 31. Whence comes this Difference? How comes *St. Paul’s* Argument, upon one and the same Subject, in *Acts* xiii. and xvii. to be so unlike to each other? Can this be accounted for any other way, than by considering the different Circumstances of the Persons to whom he delivered himself. In *Acts* xiii. he argues professedly with *Jews*, to whom were committed the Oracles of God, and who, from these Oracles, were well instructed in the great Marks and Characters of the expected *Messiah*. It had been highly absurd therefore to reason with them upon other Arguments, till he had first convinced them by their Prophets; — and having so convinced them, it would have been impertinent. To them therefore he urges and applies the Authority of Prophecy only: But to the *Athenians*,

who

who knew not the Prophets, or if they knew them, yet had no Reverence or Esteem for them, it had been quite ridiculous to offer Proofs from Prophecies: The Appeal therefore, before them, is made to the sound and clear Principles of Natural Religion; and to the Miracles of the Gospel, the Fame of which probably had, long before, reached to *Athens*; and the Truth of which, they being mere Matters of Fact, was capable of undeniable Evidence and Demonstration.

It is very observable that *St. Paul*, in his Sermon at *Athens*, goes no further, than calling them to Repentance, and to Faith in *Christ*, as the Person appointed by God to judge the World: In which Doctrine he had Natural Religion with him in every Point, excepting the Appointment of *Christ* to be Judge, for which he appeals to the Evidence given by God in raising *Jesus* from the Dead. But to the *Jews* he speaks of a Saviour, of Remission of Sins, of Justification of all Believers from all Things, from which the Law of *Moses* could not justify. Whence comes this Difference, unless from hence, that the *Jews* were from their Scriptures well acquainted with the lost Condition of Man, and knew that a Redemption from Sin, and  
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the Powers of it, was to be expected? But the *Gentiles* had lost this Knowledge; and were first to be taught the Condition of the World and the various Administrations of Providence with regard to Mankind, before they could have any just Notion of the Redemption of the World.

With respect to the *Gentiles* then, the Case stood thus: They were called from Idols to the Acknowledgment of the true God, from Iniquity to the Practice of Virtue, by setting before them *Christ Jesus*, the Preacher of Righteousness, and the appointed Judge of the World, under the Confirmation of many Signs and Wonders, wrought by God for this Purpose. Being so far established, they were led back to View this wonderful Scene of Providence, as it stood in the antient Prophecies; and with them the Authority of the Prophecies stood mainly upon the exact Completion, which was before their Eyes: From the Authority of Prophecy, so established, they understood the past Workings of Providence and the State of the World; and came to see that *Christ* was not only the Judge, but the Redeemer of Mankind. To the *Jew* Prophecy was the first Proof, to the *Gentile* it was the last: The *Jew* believed in

M *Christ,*

*Christ*, because foretold by the Prophets ; the *Gentiles* believed the Prophets, because they had so exactly foretold *Jesus Christ*. Both became firm Believers ; having, each in his way, a full View of all the Dispensations of Providence towards Mankind.

If this Account be true, as it appears to me to be, it will enable us to clear this Argument from Prophecy of the many Misrepresentations, under which it has been industriously clouded : It will shew us, that there is no Occasion for a *Gentile* to become a *Jew*, in order to his becoming a *Christian*, upon the Authority of the antient Prophets : It will shew us, that the Proof from Prophecy is not *Argumentum ad hominem*, in the *Jews* Case, nor in the *Gentiles* ; nor yet an Argument of the same kind in both Cases, tho', in both Cases, proceeding upon real and solid Principles of Reason. But I must leave these Applications to you, and proceed to observe another Use of Prophecy, with regard to the *Jews*, and for which the *Gentile* World seems not to have had the same Occasion.

The *Jews* lived under a divine Law, established in Signs and Wonders, and mighty Works, founded in very great Promises on one side, in Threatnings of mighty Terror  
on

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on the other; as far as the Blessings and Terrors of this World can extend: They are warned over and over not to forsake their Law, or to suffer any strange Customs and Ceremonies to grow up among them. These Cautions, intended to preserve them from the Corruptions of the Heathen Nations around them, might easily, as in the Event they have done, grow into Prejudices against any future Revelation, though made upon the Authority of God himself. To guard against such Prejudices, and to render them without Excuse, it was but reasonable to give them early and frequent Notice of the Change intended, that they might not, under the Colour of adhering stedfastly and faithfully to God's first Covenant, reject his second, when the Time of Publication came. There are of this Sort many Prophecies in the Old Testament; of this Kind are the many Declarations on God's Part, that he had no Pleasure in Sacrifices and Oblations, in New Moons and in Sabbaths; strange Declarations, considering that all these were his own Appointments! But not strange, considering the many and frequent Prophecies of a new and a better Covenant, to be established with his People. The Prophet *Isaiab* is frequent-

ly styled the Evangelical Prophet, because of the many and exprefs Prophecies, to be found in him, relating to *Christ* and his Church: Now this Prophet, in the very Entrance upon his Work, shews the little Value of mere legal Institutions: *To what Purpose*, says he, speaking in God's Name, *is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me? — I am full of the Burnt-Offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts, and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats — Your New Moons, and your appointed Feasts, my Soul hateth: they are a Trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them, Isaiah i. 11, 14.*

But the most remarkable Passage of this kind, and which deserves our particular Attention, is the Prophecy of *Moses* himself, recorded in the xviii<sup>th</sup> of *Deuteronomy*. *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, ver. 15.* The same is repeated again, *ver. 18.* with this Addition; *And it shall come to pass, (they are the Words of God) that whosoever will not hearken unto my Words, which he (that Prophet) shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him, ver. 19.* Here now is a plain  
 Declaration



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Declaration on God's Parts, at the very Time the Law was established, of another Prophet, like unto *Moses*, to be raised in Time, as a new Lawgiver, to whom all were to yield Obedience. I know full well, that great Authorities are produced for interpreting these Words of a Succession of Prophets, in the *Jewish* Church: But be the Authorities never so great, the Appeal lies to the Law and to the Testimony, and thither we must go.

In the first Place then, the Text speaks of one Prophet only, in the singular Number, and not of many. In this Case therefore the *Letter* of the *Text* is with us; an Argument which ought to be of great weight with those, who make such heavy Complaints, whenever we pretend to go beyond the *literal Sense* of the Old Testament. But,

*Secondly*, To expound this Passage of a *Succession* of Prophets, and to say that they *all* were to be like *Moses*, contradicts God's own Declaration concerning the Manner in which he intended to deal with *other* Prophets.

In the Twelfth of *Numbers* we read, that *Miriam* and *Aaron* began to mutiny against the Influence and Authority of *Moses*: *Hath*

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*the Lord spoken only to Moses, say they, hath he not spoken also by us? This Controversy was like to be attended with such ill Consequences, that God thought proper to interpose himself. Hear then his Determination; If there be a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a Vision, and will speak unto him in a Dream. My Servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine House; with him will I speak Mouth to Mouth, even apparently, and not in dark Speeches; and the Similitude of the Lord shall be beheld: Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my Servant Moses.*

Here now is a plain Declaration of the great Difference between *Moses* and all other Prophets, and as plain an Account wherein that Difference did lie: As to all other Prophets, God declares he would speak to them in *Visions* and in *Dreams*, but with *Moses* he would converse *Mouth to Mouth*, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, *Face to Face*. Herein then consisted one chief Dignity and Eminence of *Moses*; and in this Respect the Prophets of *Israel* were not to be like him.

*Thirdly*, That the Likeness to *Moses* spoken of in the Passage under Consideration, had a special Regard to this singular *Privilege*  
of

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of seeing God *Face to Face*, is evident, partly from the Text itself, and partly from the Close of the Book of *Deuteronomy*, compared with the Text: In the Text itself a Promise is given of a Prophet like *Moses*, which Likeness in the 18th Verse is expounded by God's saying, *I will put my Words in his Mouth*: Which imports something more than speaking to him in *Visions* and in *Dreams*: And that the Likeness to *Moses* was understood to consist in this immediate Communication with God, is most evident from the last Verses of the Book: where it is said, *And there arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew Face to Face*. Who added these Words to the Book of *Deuteronomy*, it matters not at present to enquire; for, they having been received in the *Jewish Church*, are an authentic Testimony, *first*, how the antient *Jews* understood these Words, *like unto Moses*; and *secondly*, That the antient Church had seen no Prophet like unto *Moses*: And yet they had a Succession of Prophets immediately from the Death of *Moses*, of whom *Joshua* was the first\*; and these last Verses of *Deuteronomy*, added after, at least in the Time of

\* *Hos.* xii. 13. *Eccles.* xlvi. 1.

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*Josua*, exclude him from all Pretensions of being *the Prophet*, or *one* of the Prophets like unto *Moses*: And if this Character will not fit *Josua*, much less will it fit those who succeeded him, who were not greater, nor had greater Employment under God, than he: An evident Proof that the Promise of a Prophet *like unto Moses*, was not understood by the antient *Jewish* Church to relate to a Succession of Prophets among them; since they declare to us, that in the Succession of Prophets, there had not been one *like* unto *Moses*.

The latter *Jews* have not departed from the Opinion of their Ancestors in this respect. They distinguish *Moses* from all other Prophets, and the highest Degree of Inspiration is styled by them *Gradus Mosaicus*. The Difference between this Degree and all others, they make to consist in four Particulars. 1. *Moses* had no Dreams nor Visions. 2. He had Light from God immediately, without the Ministry or Interposition of Angels. 3. His Mind was never disturbed or dismayed by the prophetic Influence, *For God spake to him as a Man speaks to his Friend*. 4. He could prophesy at all Times when he would; whereas others prophesied  
only

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only at particular Times, when the Word of God came to them\*.

Another chief Dignity belonging to *Moses*, and in which the Prophets under the Law were not like unto him, is, that he was a *Lawgiver*. No Prophet after *Moses* was sent with such a Commission, during the Time of the Law; and yet the Prophet here foretold was evidently to resemble *Moses* in this Particular. “*He was to speak all that God commanded him; and whoever hearkened not to him, was to be destroyed.*” *Moses* had no greater Authority than this, nor can any Words describe a greater. Besides, there is a Circumstance belonging to this Prophecy, which ties it down, I think, to this Sense. *Moses* says, *God will raise up unto thee a Prophet like unto me, according to all that thou desiredst of him in Horeb, in the Day of the Assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the Voice of the Lord my God; neither let me see this great Fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, they have well spoken — I will raise them up a Prophet from among their Brethren like unto thee, and will put my Words in his Mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him, &c.*

It is to be observed, that this Request of

\* See Smith's *select Discourses*, Page 261.

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the People was made at the *giving of the Law* in *Horeb*: *Moses* had often *prophefied* to them before, and they were not put under any Terror by it; but when the *Law* was delivered, and God *descended in Fire*, and the whole *Mount* *quaked greatly*, they desired that *Moses* might speak to them, and not God, lest they should die: Upon this the Promise is given, *I will raise them a Prophet like unto thee, and put my Words in his Mouth*. Is it not evident, that this new Prophet was to do that, in a familiar gentle way, which God himself did in the Mount surrounded with Majesty and Terror? And was not that the giving of the Law? To apply this Promise to any thing else, is making it to have no relation to the Request upon which it was granted. The People liked *Moses* his ordinary way of *prophefying* to them so well, that they desired he might be employed to deliver God's Laws to them in the same manner that he delivered God's other Commands: The Request related therefore merely to the Manner of God's giving his Law; they were under no Uneasiness at his Method in conveying Prophecies to them: And consequently the Promise of God must relate to the *giving of a Law* to his People by one to be raised up among themselves, and not merely to a *Succession of Prophets*,

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*Prophets*, about which the People were in no Distress.

*Lastly*, If we enquire, from historical Evidence; after the Completion of this Prophecy, we shall find, that it did most punctually agree to the Character of our blessed Saviour, and not to any other Prophet, either before or after him; all the Prophets of the Old Testament *saw Visions*, and dreamed *Dreams*; all the Prophets of the New were in the same State. *St. Peter* had a Vision, *St. John* saw Visions, *St. Paul* had Visions and Dreams: But *Christ* himself neither saw Visions, nor dreamed a Dream, but had intimate and immediate Communication with the Father; he was in the *Father's Bosom*, he and no Man else had *seen the Father*, was *one with the Father*, and had the *Fulness of the Godhead* in him. Let any Man now seriously consider this; *Moses* and *Christ* are the *only Two*, in all the sacred History, who had this Communication with God: The Likeness to *Moses* is said directly to lie in this, of seeing *God Face to Face*. Can the Promise then of raising a Prophet like unto *Moses* be possibly applied to any other Person than *Christ Jesus*? The other Part of the Parallel needs not to be insisted on; that *Christ* was a Lawgiver,  
will

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will be easily admitted on all Hands. But the Execution of the Threat, annexed to this Prophecy, is too remarkable to be passed over in Silence; it has been literally fulfilled upon the whole Nation; every Man who considers the State of the *Jews*, from the Rejection of *Christ* to this Day, must own, that this Part of the Prophecy, at least, has been punctually verified.

This Prophecy, and many others, seem, as I observed, intended for the *Jews* principally, to prepare them betimes for the Reception of a new Lawgiver, and to intimate to them, that the *Mosaic* Covenant was not to be perpetual.

Thus have I gone thro' the several Periods of Prophecy under the Old Testament, and endeavoured to shew the main Design and Use of it, opening a Way to a fair and impartial Consideration of the particular Prophecies relating to each Period. I conceived it reasonable, at a Time when the Argument from Prophecy was exposed to open Ridicule, to suggest some proper Observations on the Subject, for the Assistance of serious Minds disposed to consider; to throw in one Mite, as an Offering to the Love of *Christ*, and his Gospel, in which I hope to live and to die.

FOUR

*Side-Note: Four Sermons on Prophecy, in which he exhibits similar views, & goes over part of the same ground with the Bishop.*





F O U R

DISSERTATIONS.

I. The Authority of the Second Epistle of St. P E T E R.

II. The Sense of the Antients before CHRIST, upon the Circumstances and Consequences of the FALL. With an APPENDIX.

III. The Blessing of JUDAH, *Gen.* xlv.

IV. CHRIST'S Entry into *Jerusalem.*

