

only the first, but the second coming of our Lord. Behold, said Enoch, the Lord cometh, with ten thousand of his saints. Long, therefore, before Moses, long before Noah's flood, infallible predictions of Christ abounded ; and those of such a nature, as never to be revoked.

Antiquity, I own it, has often been urged improperly ; and to answer purposes which good men cannot approve. But when the subject is fairly introduced ; when the antiquity on which the argument turns, is as remote as possible, and in point ; when it is also of that kind which invites examination, and is made subservient to no purpose but that of grace and truth, they who do not revere it, however they may be caressed, can never be respectable for their religious opinions.

In vain are some disposed to say, We are the antients ; not those who lived before us. In vain is this sophistical notion puffed off to men of understanding. Nothing, however, on religious subjects, better guards us against such

such extravagance, than distinct, and enlarged views, of that chain of truths, and events, which is set before us in the word of God. To suppose, that any link in that chain is unconnected with the rest, is a groundless opinion. To call the first link of it the last, or, the last, the first, is a strange impropriety of speech ; and, to expect any of the blessings of Christianity, out of that connection which the Almighty approves, is infatuation.

In the third place ; the continuance of the prophetic witnesses, through so many ages ; most of them under great oppressions ; all of them having strong temptations to hold their peace ; this is a fact we cannot contradict ; nor can we account for it, but by adverting to the purpose, power, and providence of God.

Sometimes, indeed, the visions of the prophets were withdrawn, and the word of the Lord withheld from them. In those affecting periods, the eyes of the Seers, saw no more than those of other men ; nor could they deliver what they had not received. In truth,
there

there never was any period when the prophets could see, or say, what they pleased. Their message, the moment they were to deliver it, and even the manner in which it was to be expressed, (whether to many, few, or to one alone ;) were not under their own direction. Yet, under all these restrictions, a competent number of these witnesses was raised up, and prophesied of Christ, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Malachi. After Malachi, the spirit of prophecy was restrained four hundred years; when, on a sudden, it was again poured out, in a very remarkable manner.

This event merits the greater attention, as it had been repeatedly foretold. Isaiah had said, The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord : make straight in the desert an highway for our God. Joel too, in the name of Jehovah, had said, and it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons, and your daughters,
shall

shall prophecy. Malachi, likewise, speaking of the same period, foretold, that the New Testament Elijah would make his appearance, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord. These predictions were, all of them, fulfilled in their season. In the temple, Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna, prophesied of Christ, and spake of him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. In the wilderness, John lifted up his voice as Isaiah had predicted ; and, speaking of our Lord to the cities of Judah, boldly said, Behold your God ! Is it possible to deny these things, or to account for these predictions, unless we admit they were divine ?

Fourthly ; the vast extent of prophecy demands our notice. Of the grand object of prophecy, it is said, he is the image of the invisible God ; that all things were created by him, and for him ; that he is before all things, and that by him all things consist.

Prophecies proportioned to this object, and to the benevolence of his Incarnation, must be
of

of prodigious extent. Nor are we disappointed. For the prophets speak of him, as the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; as actually put to death in the fulness of time; as rising from the dead; and as reigning, till all his enemies are put beneath his feet. In short, their prophecies are stretched out, from the beginning to the conflagration; and run on, from that awful event, to the final state of the whole creation of God!

Our little minds grasp at nothing so great. The most ambitious amongst mankind, never aspired to such dominion. They who thirsted for universal empire, aimed not so much to preside with judgment, as to rule by force. They had a lust of power; but of knowledge, they had but little ambition. The consequence was, their dominion, when most of all extended, only seemed to be extensive. Their boasted conquests left unsubdued the better part of man. Their victories were obtained by blood, and secured by bondage. Over how many minds did these mighty heroes rule? Over very few indeed:
each

each perhaps, the worse for such imperious lords.

Whence then, was it, that men shut up in Judea, and fond of their own contracted country to an extreme ; whence was it, that these men, were indulged with visions so important, and with thoughts so sublime ; whilst the princes of this world, panting for posthumous fame, and assisted by every kind of genius to procure it, were always fettered by carnal attachments, and content to be praised for mischievous pursuits ? Was it for their own sakes, the prophets had this pre-eminence ? They disclaim the pretension. Was it for the Jews alone, they were thus illuminated ? The contrary is conspicuous. The truth is, they were taught by God, and shone with imparted splendor, as the stars in heaven, to every nation, tongue, and people.

Yet how have these illustrious men been treated ? To hear what some people have said of them, is provoking. From their invectives, one would imagine, they were a set of men

as contracted in their notions, as they were different from the commonality of mankind. In what strength of stile have some poets dressed up their own trifles; and some philosophers displayed their own conjectures? With what art, and malignity, have they, and other popular writers, aspersed inspired prophets! But after all, where are the poets?—where are the philosophers?—where are the popular writers, that can be compared with Moses, David, and Isaiah? In Judah, God was known: his Name was great in Israel. In his light, the sons of Jacob saw, and, by his grace, they said, what hath exceeded every thing yet seen, and said, in the court of the Gentiles, as much as the splendor of the morning exceeds the twilight of departed day.

In the fifth place; the diversified conditions of those Seers who prophesied of Christ, is a circumstance too remarkable to be overlooked. Some of them prophesied in sack-cloth; others, in splendid apparel. Among them, we behold shepherds and husbandmen; men of superior abilities; men of political importance;

importance; persons of royal extraction; and even kings of considerable renown.

This cloud of witnesses is as diversified as we can well imagine; and, like that magnificent pillar which appeared to the camp of Israel, it undoubtedly was the gift of God. That pillar, however, was of short duration; but this mystic cloud yet continues, and has lost nothing of its light from its first formation.

It is peculiar to prophecy to increase in splendor as it groweth old. Miracles may affect us the less by being wrought in times immemorial. History, as it becomes antient, becomes obscure. But prophecy, is more luminous, as its date draws back; because, as time rolls on, new events come forward, and by them, those seals are opened, which none were able to loose, till those events arrived.

Sixthly; pleasing as this circumstance may seem, yet, if the testimony of the prophets was not as harmonious, as their condition in
 this

this world was various, the friends of revelation would feel themselves disappointed. But they perceive the prophets had invariably, one object in view ; and that they always spake of him to answer the same end. This is so evident, that they might have said,—Walked we not in the same spirit ? Walked we not in the same steps ? Believers, therefore, beholding that unity and variety in the predictions of the prophets, which they observe to be more or less conspicuous in all the works of God, cannot but conclude, such prophecies must be from heaven, and not of men.

The ungodly temper of Balaam no more affects the piety of the prophets, than the treachery of Judas is of any real reproach to the apostles of Christ. Balaam, Judas, and Caiphas, were bad men : but who has given us that information ? Whatever they might be, each of these unhappy men said those things we may safely credit ; because it is clear their prophecies and confessions were not of themselves, or from their own previous resolutions.

Let

Let us then, distinguish between those who have spoken the truth in love, and those who have made it too evident they loved the works and wages of iniquity. We are exhorted to take the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering afflictions, and of patience; and (if we are attentive to that distinction just now suggested) where shall we find better examples of undissembled patience in distress, or of piety in peace?

After all, it still appears, the light which the prophets received and reflected, does not come down to us, without some shades of darkness. It may be compared to the light of the moon obscured with clouds; a light sufficiently strong and extensive, to prove it cannot be artificial; though it is neither so near us, nor so luminous, as to prevent the giddy from making gross mistakes.

In reading some part of the prophecies,
 one would imagine the night was turned into
 C day;

day ; so plainly in those parts, do the prophets speak of Christ, and of salvation by him alone ; and so strongly do they describe the nature, blessings, and prosperity of his peculiar kingdom. But in the most brilliant parts of their predictions, that occurs which seemeth strange to human wisdom. For it appears, when they were most illuminated, they said that to others, which they themselves did not fully understand. They searched therefore, what, or what manner of time, the *Spirit* of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when *it* testified beforehand, of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. This practice, and the report of it by Peter, is so far from lessening the weight of the prophetic testimony, that it augments its force ; since nothing can be more considerable on this subject, than what makes it most manifest, that the prophets were holy men of God, and that they really spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

SUM up now, if you please, what hath been said on the *force* of that testimony which the prophets

prophets give to the character and kingdom of Jesus Christ.

We have seen they were not private witnesses, but men called of God to speak by his authority, and in his name, to all nations. We have taken a view of the antiquity, continuance, and extent, of their prophecies; of the diversified conditions of these witnesses, while in this world; of the unity of their testimony; of their being unable fully to comprehend their own predictions; their confession of that fact, and their diligence to discover what was the mind of the *Spirit*; we have glanced at least, at all these things; and observed how strongly the events of every century pleads for the authenticity of the word of God; and now say, whether what hath been produced does not prove, we have a most sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in our hearts.

Though it be not common to make the re-
 C 2 mark,

mark, we may yet add, that the *typical* institutions before and after the flood, and throughout the Mosaic dispensation, may be considered as involving so many predictions of the approaching advent, and kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Prediction may be expressed by signs, as well as words; or by both, better than by words alone: and, when those typical institutions, which have been mentioned, are compared with verbal prophecies, and the agreement between them is discerned, we are convinced, that this union was not of chance, and own it was formed by divine direction.

The law was, we are expressly told, a shadow of good things to come, the body of which is Christ. Let us consider how much, and how long, that shadow was regarded by men of piety and understanding; and how exactly, when Christ appeared, the shadow and the substance corresponded—let us consider these things with due attention, and we shall of course conclude, that predictions so varied,
multiplied,

multiplied, and fulfilled, cannot be deemed cunningly devised fables.

OBJECTIONS against the Prophecies of Christ are numerous, because they are vain. Could better be fabricated, those in circulation would soon be given up. Hitherto the ablest objectors have done little more than remind us, there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord: and, why should we fear that any fresh assault will ever prevail against the Almighty?

More pains have been taken with some of our adversaries than seem to be commendable. For, though no man is absolutely below a Christian's notice, there is a decent regard which every good man owes to his subject, and himself; and, in some kinds of silence, there is a dignity which great men have always applauded. Truth, though important, may be well enough defended without giving way to personal disputes. But, if at any time they are unavoidable, they are such as may find employ for virtue, and may end

in honour to each of the contending parties.

It has been suspected, that if some infidels had not been persons of greater consequence on account of their property and power, than from their natural and acquired abilities, so much pains had not been taken to answer their frivolous objections. Surely, the love of the world has produced greater absurdities than any other principle. What concessions have been made, what arguments used, and what misconduct indulged, to gain or secure, the praise or the property of bad men ! In such contests, virtue finds no employ ; but it is to be lamented, that in these struggles, vice should be so frequently rewarded.

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ? yet who believeth that, who doth not believe what the prophets have testified of him ? Why should what they have witnessed, seem to us incredible ? For if no man, even *now*, can say, in a proper temper, that Jesus
is

is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, how should any uninspired person have foretold, so many ages before the Incarnation, that Christ *would* be Lord, to the glory of God the Father; and that unto him, every knee should bow, every tongue should swear?

A prophet, even in Pagan estimation, was of no account without his AFFLATUS; nor a poet without his MUSE. Whence the prevalence of these opinions; not only among the unlearned, but among the *literati*? Probably, from tradition; for the renown of Moses, and of other prophets, under different names, had been carried very early into the remotest regions. Probably also, national pride contributed something to the spread of these sentiments. For why should Egypt, Greece, and Italy, be less the care of heaven than Judea? This, the inhabitants of those celebrated countries were unwilling to admit. But it is still more probable, that these notions became current as they found they could not, on other principles, account for certain predictions of their own prophets, nor for some sublime pro-

ductions of their own poets. Let this be determined as you please ; yet since we are expressly told, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private impulse, it is not irrational in us, but right, to live in that belief, till it appears that the ground of our confidence is likely to fail.

Could they who write against revelation succeed, the consequences would be very painful. Were we, on their principles, to reject the Prophecies of Christ, instead of relying any longer on that testimony we have so much reason to believe is divine, we should be let loose to embrace reports changeable as the wind, and hollow as deceit. In this situation, we should either float from system to system, till life was worn out in the vain pursuit ; or, wearied with sceptical notions, we should unite ourselves to some favourite leader ; or, if yet unsettled, we should now be for this, and then for that audacious adventurer ; or, wearied with every change, we should at last, perhaps, resolve to set up for ourselves, and aspire to dominion over others.

If

If the first of these suppositions were embraced, what could be more vexatious? If the second, we should be in a state of bondage. If the third, we should only change one imperious lord for another. If the fourth, we should soon be convinced of our elaborate folly. For he that aspires to illicit dominion over the minds of men, must first, form a plausible system, different in appearance at least from those which have been already esteemed. Secondly, he must endeavour to dress it up, and make it fit for public inspection. Thirdly, he must defend it against the most formidable opposition. Of that he will find there is no end; since they who oppose him are sure to be many in number, most of them exasperated at his vanity, and all of them extremely reluctant that he should take the professor's chair.

Of how much labor and sorrow then, are they eased who live by faith! What vexations do they escape, what peace and hope do they possess! They receive what the prophets have said, not as the words of Moses, or of any other
man ;

man ; but as the word of God. They endeavour to interpret the prophetic pages with circumspection. They wait, with patience, for those providential events which may sanction their previous conjectures ; and rejoice they have already had so many opportunities to remark, that between the operations of divine Providence, and the most antient predictions, there is an agreement which confirms their faith.

The close connection between the Old Testament and the New, is clearly perceived by men of this description ; and from it they derive considerable advantage.

Of this connection our Lord himself took repeated notice. To the two disciples, who were going to Emmaus, he said, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ; and beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning himself. Afterwards, to the Eleven he said, These are the words which I spake unto you,
while

while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding to understand the scriptures; and they, thus illuminated, believed that the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy; or, as the original text may be translated, that the spirit of prophecy was the testimony of Jesus.

If we are favoured with the same kind of understanding, we shall have the same belief; and, in proportion to the degree of our faith, we, as well as the primitive believers, shall look up to Christ as our honour, and shall rejoice in him with a joy approaching to that which is unspeakable and full of glory. But the more we know of mankind, the more we perceive, that as their hearts are affected, so are their pursuits; and, as different characters are esteemed by them, so is their behaviour.

Had any earthly king entered on his reign,
after