and of it; and how that was foretold in the several ages of world.

These things are exceedingly agreeable to a rational supposition, in case God makes a revelation to mankind. But if the scriptures are not a revelation of God, then man, the principal act God has made in this world, the only intelligent creature to whom he has subjected this lower part of the creation, left wholly and entirely in the dark about God's works both in creation and providence, and has nothing whereby to judge at God's scheme is, in all the great changes he sees come pass in the world, or what he aims to accomplish. Everything lies in darkness and confusion before him, without any sibility of his determining anything, or to direct him what think of God's works which he beholds, or what affections should exercise towards the Supreme Governor, on occasion them.

CHAPTER II.

e objection concerning the Apostles' apprehensions of the second coming of Christ answered.

1. With respect to that objection against the truth of the Christian religion, That the apostles seem often to speak of the coming of Christ to judgment, as if they thought it near at hand; I will begin with what the apostle Paul says that may be such appearance. In the first epistle to the Thessalonians, which is reckoned to be the first of his epistles in the order of time; and particularly chap. iv. 15—17, he says, "For this say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not premit them which are asleep: for the Lord himself shall descend in heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we be ever with the Lord." He speaks of those that shall then be alive, in the first person plural; and of those it should be asleep, in the third person. Thus it would have been more natural for him to have said, They which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent us, so shall then be asleep.—And in the 17th verse, Then they which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them.

2. Considering the scope of the apostle in these verses, that can be inferred from such a manner of speaking, is, it it might, for ought was then revealed, be while they lived.
For the scope of the apostle was to comfort the Thessalonians concerning their friends that were already dead, with the consideration, that they should surely meet them again, at the day of the Lord’s coming. And therefore, it was most proper and natural for the apostle to speak of them in the third person. And it is but just to suppose, that it was only the uncertainty of the time, that was the ground of the apostle’s using such a manner of expression; because he, in this very context, speaks of the time as altogether uncertain; as it follows immediately in the beginning of the next chapter. “But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you: for yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night,” &c. The apostle, by the expression he uses, probably had in his mind those words of Christ in Acts i. 7. “It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”

§ 3. We have an instance of a like nature with this, in the words of Joseph to his brethren. Gen. l. 25. “God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.” He does not say. God shall visit your posterity, and they shall carry up my bones from hence. Yet it cannot be argued, that Joseph concluded that the redemption out of Egypt, would be in that generation.

So the nature and design of the apostle’s discourse, necessarily gave him to distinguish between those that should be alive at Christ’s coming, and the deceased relations of the Christian Thessalonians. He speaks of them as already dead, and of their now living friends then meeting them risen from the dead.—That the apostle did not intend to be understood, as though it were certain that Christ would come while they were living; is evident, from what he himself says, speaking of those very words, and expressly denying that he intended any such thing; or that he supposed it to be certain, that the coming of Christ was at hand, in any such sense. See 2 Thess. ii. 1—3; where he very earnestly warns them not to understand him in any such sense. “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,” &c.

§ 5. Now it is evident, that the apostle does not thus write to them the second time, endeavouring to retract any thing he had written before; but it must be because he really did not intend so at first; for this epistle was written soon after the other, while the same fellow-labourers were with him.—And be—
have been supposed to be written while the apostle abode in
Athens, as appears by the postscripts. And if we well observe
he contents of this and the foregoing epistle, the principal oc-
assion of the apostle’s writing the second so soon after the
other, seems to have been an information he had received, that
his former epistle had been misunderstood in this particular:
and being much concerned about it, and fearing the ill conse-
quences of such a misunderstanding, he writes to guard them
from the mischief of such a mistake, and to establish them in
it, that it is uncertain when the Lord will come, as he had
old them before in his other epistle. And he argues the great
uncertainty there was, whether it would be in that age or not,
rom what the Holy Ghost had revealed about the coming of
Christ.

§ 6. That this apostle did not expect Christ’s coming in that
eneration, may be argued from his speaking as though he ex-
eected that those that were then alive, would rise from the
d at Christ’s second coming, as in 1 Cor. vi. 14. “And God
ath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his
wn power.” And 2 Cor. iv. 14. “Knowing that he which
aised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and
hall present us with you.”

§ 7. From what the apostle says in this second chapter of the
ccond epistle to the Thessalonians, there appears a necessity,
hat those passages in any other of his epistles, that look as
ough he expected that Christ would come in that age, should
be understood in some other sense, and that the apostle really did
not mean so, as his words on a cursory view would lead us to
ppose. For here the apostle is very express, and full, and
ernest in it, that he would by no means be so understood. It
a further evidence, that those passages in other epistles must
be understood in some other sense, that there are passages in
his very epistle, particularly in the first chapter, that we should
ready to think had such a look, were it not that the apostle
himself, immediately in the second chapter, denies any such
meaning.

§ 8. In this sense we must understand those passages, in
which it is spoken of as a duty of Christians, to look and wait
for the coming of the Lord Jesus; as, Titus ii. 13. 1 Cor. i. 7.
Philip. iii. 20. There is a necessity of understanding, in like
manner, the following passages—which were all written after
this to the Thessalonians—Rom. xiii. 11, 12. “And that know-
ing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep;
or now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The
ight is far spent; the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off
he works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.”
Ve cannot understand this as though the apostle concluded,
de day of judgment would come while they lived; because
he had before explained himself otherwise: but only that the
day of Christ's kingdom, which is the day of the salvation of
the church of Christ, was at hand. And so Philip. iv. 5. "Let
your moderation be known to all men: the Lord is at hand."
And Heb. x. 25. "Exhorting one another, and so much the
more as ye see the day approaching."

§ 9. Christ's coming was indeed at hand in many respects;
and in such respects as might well have all that influence upon
those to whom the apostle wrote that he intended. The coming
of Christ at the overthrow of the Heathen empire, might well
be said to be at hand; and Christ's last coming to judgment,
might well, considering all things, be said to be at hand, as the
apostle Peter observes, though there should be thousands of
years between. The apostle Paul speaks of ages to come,
Eph. ii. 7. That it was not to be till many generations were
past: yet it was at hand, in a sense agreeable to the common
language of the Holy Spirit. So, Christ's first coming was
spoken of as very nigh at hand, of old. Hag. ii. 6, 7. "For
thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I
will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea and the dry
land, and I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations
shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of
hosts:" Yet there was then above 500 years to it. And when
it was about 400 years, it is said, Mal. iii. 1, "The Lord whom
ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger
of the covenant, whom ye delight in." And when it was about
700 years to the gospel day, it is said to be but a very little
while. Is. xxxix. 17, 18. "It is not yet a very little while, and
Lebanon shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field
shall be esteemed as a forest. And in that day shall the deaf
hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see
out of obscurity, and out of darkness." So God represents, as
though he would very quickly perform all things prophesied of
by Jeremiah, some of them were not to be fulfilled in many
ages; Jer. i. 10—12. So the time is said to be at hand, for
the accomplishment of all the prophecies of the book of Rele-
vation, and Christ's last coming at the conclusion of them;
Rev. i. 3. and xxii. 7, 10, 12, 20; though the book evidently
contains a series of events for many ages.

§ 10. Again, when the apostle Peter says, with respect to
Christ's last coming, and its being said to be at hand, that "a
thousand years in God's sight are but as one day," it is no new
conceit of his own, to save reputation; but God's language that
he had used of old justifies him in so saying. And the expres-
sion that the apostles used about the approach of Christ's com-
ing, did not tend to the disappointment of God's people. For
Christ's coming to reward them at death was at hand, when
they should have such a comfortable and full prospect of the
MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

COMPLETE REWARD AT CHRIST'S LAST COMING; SO THAT THEY SHALL ANTICIPATE, AND AS IT WERE HAVE A POSSESSION OF IT. THOUGH THE APPEAR APPEARS LONG TO US IN OUR DIM-SIGHTED STATE, YET IT WILL APPEAR AS NOTHING TO THEM. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST WAS HIGH AT HAND, THAT THE CHURCH OF GOD MIGHT WELL TAKE ALL IT COMFORT FROM WHAT WAS REALLY TO BE UNDERSTOOD BY THOSE PRESSIONS. THE FIRST COMING OF CHRIST WAS VERY OFTEN SPOKEN OF THE COMFORT OF THE SAINTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, UNDER GREAT LICITIONS, THOUGH THEY WERE NEVER LIKE TO SEE IT IN THIS LIFE-TIME.

IN THE CASE OF ZERUBBABEL, AND JOSHUA AND DANIEL.


12. AS TO 1 PET. IV. 7, "THE END OF ALL THINGS IS AT HAND." WOULD THIS SAME APOSTLE EXPLAIN THIS PROPINQUITY? 2 PETER 3, 8. "BUT THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH WHICH ARE NOW, BY THE WORD WHICH ARE KEPT IN STORE, RESERVED UNTIL A TIME AGAINST THE DAY OF JUDGMENT AND PERDITION OF GODLY MEN. BUT, BELOVED, BE IGNORANT OF THIS ONE THING, THAT ONE DAY IS WITH THE LORD AS A THOUSAND YEARS, AND A THOUSAND YEARS AS ONE DAY." AND IT IS BEING CONSIDERED, THAT THE APOSTLE PETER WAS UNDER NO TEMPTATION TO CHANGE HIS VOICE IN THIS MATTER, FROM ANY EXPERIENCE OF EVENTS FAILING AS YET. HE HAD NOT LIVED LONG ENOUGH TO BE, BUT THAT CHRIST’S WORDS—WHENSOEVER ANY MAY SUPPOSE THEY MIGHT EXPECT CHRIST’S SECOND COMING BEFORE THE GENERATION PASS AWAY, AND BEFORE SOME THAT WERE THEN PRESENT SHOULD TASTE—MIGHT BE FULFILLED IN THAT SENSE.

13. THERE WAS NO SUCH NOTION PREVAILING AMONG THE DISCIPLES, THAT CHRIST SHOULD COME WHILE MOST OF THEM LIVED, MANIFEST FROM THIS, THAT WHEN THE DISCIPLES MISTOOK THE SIGN OF CHRIST’S WORD, JOHN X. 22. "IF I WILL THAT HE TARRY, I COME, WHAT IS THAT TO THEE?" AND FROM THENCE, FOR A WHILE, ENTERTAINED A NOTION THAT THAT DISCIPLE WAS NOT TO DIE, CHRIST CAME; IT SEEMS, THEY, EVEN WHILE UNDER THIS MISTAKE, KEPT UPON IT AS THE DISTINGUISHING PRIVILEGE OF THAT DISCIPLE, INCH NONE OF THE REST WERE TO EXPECT. AND IT IS EVIDENT, THAT IN HIMSELF CONCLUDED NO SUCH THING, AS THAT CHRIST SHOULD BE IN HIS LIFE-TIME, BECAUSE HE SPOKE OF THAT NOTION OF THE OTHER DISCIPLES ABOUT HIM AS ILL-FOUNDED.

14. IT IS A FURTHER ARGUMENT, THAT WHEN THE APOSTLES USED A KIND OF LANGUAGE AS THAT, "THE LORD IS AT HAND," &C. THEY VOL. VII.
did not use it in any such sense, as that it should be in that age or the next; that the apostle John, who was accustomed to their language, uses it still, even after he had prophesied of many great events, which plainly were to have their accomplishment in many successive ages; as Rev. iii. 11. "Behold, I come quickly." And he uses it repeatedly at the end of the book, after he had given an account of those future events, in the last chapter, ver. 7. "Behold, I come quickly;" ver. 12. "Behold, I come quickly;" and ver. 20. "He that testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly." The 17th chapter of this book alone, is sufficient to convince any one, that John could not suppose that his prophecies could be fulfilled but in several successive ages.

§ 15. It is an argument, that such a nearness of Christ's last coming as the objection supposes was not the doctrine that the apostles so much insisted upon; that the church prevailed still, when they saw that Christ did not come. Such a disappointment would have been a dreadful blow to Christianity, if this had been the universal expectation of Christians, and it had been raised by the abundant promises of Christ and his apostles. They probably, upon it, would have exceedingly lost ground, and shrunk away. But the fact was very much the contrary.


§ 17. It is evident, that when Christ speaks of his coming; of his being revealed; of his coming in his kingdom, or his kingdom coming; he has respect to his appearing in those great works of his power, justice, and grace, which should be in the destruction of Jerusalem, and other extraordinary providences which should attend it. So in Luke xvi. 22, to the end, with chap. xviii. 1—8, Christ speaks of the kingdom of God coming of the coming of the days of the Son of man; of the Son of man being revealed; and of the Son of man coming. But yet it is evident he has respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, chap. xvii. 37. "And they answered and said unto him, Where Lord? and he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, therethine shall eagles be gathered together." See also chap. xix. 13—15. So when the disciple had been observing the magnificence of the temple, and Christ had said to them, "Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down,"—having respect to the destruction of Jerusalem—the disciples asked him when these things should be? and what should be the signs of his coming, and of the
end of the world? By Christ's coming, they have plainly a respect to that time of the destruction of the temple, which Christ had spoken of; and therefore, their question is thus expressed by St. Mark, chap. xiii. 4. "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" And in like manner by St. Luke, chap. xxi. 7; and Christ has many things in his answer agreeable to this sense of this question. He warns them to beware of others that should come in his stead, Matth. xxiv. 4, 5. Then he proceeds to tell them what will precede the end, i.e. the end of the world, which the disciples inquired after, and tells them what shall be signs of its approach; Matth. xxiv. 6—16. And then speaks of the desolation of Jerusalem, and of the land, as that end and that coming of his which they inquired after; Matth. xxiv. 15—21, 28: and more plainly, Luke xxi. 20—24.

From these things, it follows,

§ 18. That when Christ speaks of his coming, his coming in his kingdom, &c. as being in that generation, and before some who were then alive should taste of death, there is no need of understanding him of his coming to the last judgment; but it may well be understood of his coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, which, as has been shown, he calls by these names, and which he also distinguishes from his coming to the last judgment, and consummation of all things. Yea,

§ 19. It is evident, that he did not suppose his coming to the last judgment, and the consummation of all things, would be till a long time after the destruction of Jerusalem. The calling of the Gentiles, instead of the Jews, is spoken of as what should be principally after the destruction of Jerusalem; Matth. xxi. 41, 43; Luke xx. 15, 16; Matth. xxii. 7—10. But this, Christ himself speaks of as a gradual work in the parables of the grain and mustard seed, and of the leaven hid in three measures of meal; Matth. xiii. 31—33; Luke xiii. 19—21; Mark iv. 26—32. And it is very manifest, that Christ did not suppose the consummation of all things to take place, till long after the destruction of Jerusalem, Luke xxi. 24; where it is said of the Jews, that they should be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled.
CHAPTER III.

Jesus's prophecies, a proof that he was the Christ, and a divine person.

§ 1. As Christ wrought miracles in a very different manner from the prophets, acting therein in his own name, and as doing what he did of his own power and will: so, also, he uttered prophecies in a way very diverse from that of the ancient prophets. The ancient prophets, when they uttered their predictions, were wont to introduce them after this manner, Hear ye the word of the Lord; or, Thus saith the Lord; showing, that they did not speak of their own knowledge, but by special revelation and direction from God. Christ foretold things to come in a remarkably different manner and style, introducing his predictions, not with a Thus saith the Lord, but, Verily, verily, I say unto you, as Matth. xxiii. 36; xxiv. 34, 45; xxvi. 13, and 21; Mark iv. 30; Luke xxi. 31, 32; John xiii. 38; xiv. 12; xvi. 20, 21, 22. The following place is very remarkable, showing what great authority Christ attributed to his own word in his predictions, Matth. xxiv. 34, 35. "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." These words are annexed to the chief prophecies that Christ ever uttered, which are contained in the 24th chapter of Matthew. See the same, Luke xxi. 31, 32.

§ 2. Christ foretold future events, and those to be accomplished after his death, not only as what he knew by his own knowledge, but what he himself would bring to pass, both future blessings to his church and people, and future calamity and destruction to those persons and people that were his enemies.—

§ 3. First. He foretold great events for the benefit of his church, that he would bring to pass; John xiv. 12, 13, 14. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." John xvi. 7—11. "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away. For, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judg-
ment, because the prince of this world is judged.” And ver. 20, 21, 22. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament; but the world shall rejoice, and ye shall be sorrowful. But your sorrow shall be turned into joy. And ye now therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man taketh from you.” See the whole of the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters of John: and Luke xxi. 15—18. “For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolks and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death: and ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.” Luke xxiv. 49. “And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you. But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” So he foretold his own resurrection from the dead, as what he himself would bring to pass by his own power; John ii. 19. “Destroy this temple, and, in three days, I will raise it up :” John x. 17, 18. “I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it from me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” Mark xvi. 17, 18. “And these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and, if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”

§ 4. Secondly, He foretold many great events, implying awful calamity and destruction to his enemies, as what he himself would bring to pass. Thus he speaks of that mighty destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, as that from which he would have protected them, if they had believed on him; Matth. xxiii. 36, 37, 38. “Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come on this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate.” This destruction is spoken of as what he would bring upon them, as a punishment for their rejection and contempt of him. Luke xix. 12, 13, 14. “He said, therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, we will not have this man to reign over us.” With verse 7. “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should sign over them, bring hither, and slay before me.”
§ 5. Christ not only foretold things future, as having ability in himself to accomplish them, but he promised to give other ability to foretell future events by his Spirit, and hereby should honour him, as having, in his foreknowledge of future things, the same honour with the Father. John xvi. 7. "If I go no away, the Comforter will not come. But if I depart I will send him unto you." Verse 13, 14, 15. "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. For he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine. Therefore, said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."

§ 6. It is observable, that never any prophet gave such great and manifold opportunity for proof and trial, whether he was a true prophet or not, in the multitude of predictions of events to be fulfilled in his life-time, and during that generation after his death; and also in the plainness of his predictions; most of them being delivered, not in visionary, mystical representations, but in a manner intelligible to all.

§ 7. Therefore, the supposition, that if Christ were an impostor, God would so order it, that all these predictions—many of them so strange and wonderful, and in themselves so exceedingly unlikely—should exactly come to pass; and that God's providence should so wonderfully confirm his words, beyond those of any other prophet that ever had been in the world is extremely unreasonable; especially considering the following things:

§ 8. 1st. That God had of old given this as a sign, by which his people might know a true prophet: viz. the coming to pass of the things foretold by him. And this rule is annexed to that great promise, which God gave of the Messias Deut. xviii. 15, &c. "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. According to all that thou desirest of the Lord thy God 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 that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a prophet from among the brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak or that shall speak in the name of other gods; even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, how shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet..."
speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass; that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken; but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously. Thou shalt not be afraid of him."—Now, therefore, since Jesus professed to be the Messiah, and the great Prophet foretold and promised by God in this place, and uttered so many great and wonderful prophecies; it might be expected, if he was a mere pretender, and spake presumptuously, and uttered what the Lord had not spoken, that God should not have confirmed his prophecies, in his providence; but, in that case, would have given his people opportunity to refute, by this rule, his pretences.

§ 9. 2d. That foretelling future events, is spoken of by God, as one great thing wherein the Messiah should differ from the false gods and false prophets, and vain pretenders of the Heathens. In that great prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, beginning with the fortieth chapter of Isaiah to the end of the book, the foretelling of future events, in such a manner as to show, that the person who foretells, does foresee, and has a view of futurity, is often mentioned as a divine prerogative, and therefore as a good evidence, that he that does so is a divine person, or speaks by divine authority. Therefore the prophets and gods of the Heathens, are often challenged on this head, and the proof of their authority often put upon this issue; Isaiah xli. 21—28; xlii. 8, 9; xliii. 9—12; xlv. 6—8; xlv. 3. and 21; xlv. 10; xlviii. 14.—In this prophecy it is declared, that herein the Messiah should differ from all vain pretenders; (see chap. xli. 27; and xlii. at the beginning; compared with chap. xli. 21—29.) Now, therefore, is it credible, that God would so order it, that one who falsely pretended to be the Messiah, should, in so high a degree, have this honour, which God had mentioned as the great and distinguishing honour which he would put on the true Messiah, as his Elect, in whom his soul delighted?

§ 10. 3d. That the foretelling of future events, as by his own knowledge, and as events that are to be accomplished by his own power, is spoken of by God, as his great prerogative, and as a good and sure evidence of the divinity of the person who can do thus; and God speaks thus, in those very places in which he is foretelling the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah xli. 21—23. "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth, and show us what shall happen: Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods." Verse 26. "Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know, and before time, that we may say, he is righteous? Yea, there is none that showeth; yea, there is none that declareth; yea, there is none that heareth your words." Then, in the next words, God promises the Messiah.
Verse 27: “The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them; and I will give to Jerusalem, one that bringeth good tidings;” i. e. that foreshows glorious future things which God is about to do for his people.

§ 11. Therefore, since God mentions the foretelling of future events in this manner, as a certain note of divinity, and a distinguishing honour that he would put on the Messiah, his elect in whom his soul delighteth; is it credible, that God would put this honour, in so great a degree, on one who falsely pretended to be the Messiah, and the beloved of God? And especially, when he pretended, in this respect, to have the same honour which belongs to God; as John xvi. 13—15. “He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath, are mine: Therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.” He, also, speaks of his knowledge of divine secrets, and future events, as the effect of the peculiar love that God had to him; John v. 20. “The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth.”

§ 12. Great changes in kingdoms and nations, coming to pass according to God’s predictions, is often spoken of by God himself as a great evidence of his being the only true God. The foretelling of the destruction of Babylon by Cyrus, is greatly insisted on by God, as a great evidence of his being the true God, and as most clearly and greatly distinguishing him from all pretenders to divinity. See chap. xli. 21—27; see, also, chap. xliv. 25. to the end, and xlvi. 10. But Jesus was one that professed divinity, and foretold revolutions of nations as great and strange as this, yea, far more wonderful. He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, which had been the holy city, and of the nation of Jews, who had been God’s own people, and whose protector he had in a special manner been, and towards whom he exercised a most peculiar providence. He also foretold the deliverance of the Christians who were in Jerusalem. It was a greater thing, and less to be expected, that such a city and such a nation should be destroyed, than that destruction should befall a nation of aliens. Therefore, to foretell this destruction, with the various circumstances of it, as they actually took place, is a greater evidence of divine foreknowledge, than to foretell the destruction of a nation of aliens.

§ 13. The turning of the wilderness into a fruitful field, is spoken of by God as a peculiar work of God, and a certain sign of a divine hand; Isaiah xli. 18, 19, 20. “I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the
Shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree. I will set in the
desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together,
that they may see and know, and consider and understand to-
gether, that the hand of the Lord hath done this." It is evi-
dent, this is not intended in a literal sense, but signifies the
happy change in the state of mankind, from a state wherein
men are represented as barren, as briars and thorns, and as
wild beasts, to a morally excellent and happy state. This
might be proved, by the frequent use of such figures in the
prophecies of scripture. But it is manifest, that this, accord-
ing to Christ's prediction, was effected, in a remarkable man-
ner, by Christ himself, and his apostles and followers, in the
turning of the world from heathenism, to the knowledge and
worship of the true God, to just apprehensions of his moral
government, and from all manner of vice to virtue.

§ 14. It is remarkable, that it is foretold, Isaiah xlii. that the
Messiah should set judgment in the earth, and his law or reli-
gion among the nations, particularly the isles, or Europe,
against strong opposition, and through great sufferings, under
which his church should seem ready to be extinguished, or
crushed, like smoking flax, or a bruised reed; but that, finally,
judgment should be brought forth to victory.

CHAPTER IV.

The propriety of a general judgment, and a future state.

§ 1. The doctrine taught in the scriptures, that at the end
of the world all mankind shall stand together before the
judgment-seat of the supreme Lawgiver and Judge, to have
all things visibly set to rights—and justice made visibly to take
place with respect to all the persons, actions, and affairs of the
moral world, by the infinitely wise, holy, and just Head of it—
is a most reasonable doctrine, and much commends itself to
our belief, from the reason of the thing, on the supposition of
a moral government maintained over the world by Him who
created it. For this implies, that he governs the world as its
lawgiver and judge, and will treat men as accountable crea-
tures. God's moral government not only requires, that there
should be divine laws, and an execution of them in rewards
and punishments, but, also, that both should be made visible.
It is requisite, that the subject should have proper means of
knowing what the laws are, by which he is obligated, and the
grounds of the obligation; and that others, who are his fellow-
subjects, should also know his obligations. For, as men are
made to dwell in society, this cannot well be, without knowing
each other's obligations, and being able to judge of the good

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