THE WORKS

OF

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ARCHDEACON OF CARLISLE.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

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PART II.

OF THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

Prophecy.

Isaiah li. 13. lili. "Behold my Servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and exalted, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man,) and his form more than the sons of men;) so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them, shall they see; and that which they had not heard, shall they consider.—Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

Upon this, throwing himself on his knees, resting his elbow on the stone of the temple, and covering his face with his hands, he spake the following prayer—O Lord, that thou hast influence with the Almighty, have pity on the darkness of my understanding, and through his mercy continue on his knees four hours, not in the least disturbed by the vast crowd of surrounding suppliants. During this time, all the arguments which he ever heard or read in favour of Christianity, occurred to him with so much force, and seemed so strong and convincing, that he went home fully satisfied of the truth of religion in general, and of the holiness and power of that person, who, as he supposed, had engaged the Divine Goodness to enlighten his understanding so suddenly.---

Douglas’s Crit of Mir. p. 214.

was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, and shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

These words are extant in a book, purporting to contain the predictions of a writer who lived seven centuries before the Christian era.

That material part of every argument from prophecy, namely, that the words alleged were actually spoken or written before the fact to which they are applied took place, or could by any natural means be foreseen, is, in the present instance, incontestable. The record comes out of the custody of adversaries. The Jews, as an ancient father well observed, are our librarians. The passage is in their copies, as well as in ours. With many attempts to explain it away, none has ever been made by them to discredit its authenticity.

And, what adds to the force of the quotation is, that it is taken from a writing declaredly prophetic; a writing, professing to describe such future transactions and changes in the world, as were connected with the fate and interests of the Jewish nation. It is not a passage in an historical or devotional composition, which, because it turns out to be applicable to some future events, or to some future situation of affairs, is presumed to have been oracular. The words of Isaiah were delivered by him in a prophetic character, with the solemnity belonging to that character: and what he so delivered, was all along understood by the Jewish reader to refer to something that was to take place after the time of the author. The public sentiments of the Jews concerning the design of Isaiah's writings are set forth in the book of Ecclesiasticus:—"He saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion. He showed what should come to pass for ever, and secret things or ever they came." It is also an advantage which this prophecy possesses, that it is intermixed with no other subject. It is entire, separate, and uninter ruptedly directed to one scene of things.

* Chap. xlviii. ver.
The application of the prophecy to the evangelical history is plain and appropriate. Here is no double sense; no figurative language, but what is sufficiently intelligible to every reader of every country. The obscurities (by which I mean the expressions that require a knowledge of local diction, and of local allusion) are few, and not of great importance. Nor have I found that these vary between the reading, or a different construing of the original, produce any material alteration in the sense of the prophecy. Compare the common translation with that of Bishop Lowth, and the difference is not considerable. So far as they do differ, Bishop Lowth's corrections, which are the faithful result of an accurate examination, bring the description nearer to the New Testament history than it was before. In the fourth verse of the fifty-third chapter, what our Bible renders "stricken," he translates "judicially stricken;" and in the eighth verse, the clause, "he was taken from prison and from judgment," the bishop gives "by an oppressive judgment he was taken off." The next words to these, "who shall declare his generation?" are much cleared up in their meaning, by the bishop's version; "his manner of life who would declare?" i.e. who would stand forth in his defence? The former part of the ninth verse, "and he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death," which inverts the circumstances of Christ's passion, the bishop brings out in an order perfectly agreeable to the event; "and his grave was appointed with the rich;" and at the words in the eleventh verse, "by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," are, in the bishop's version, "by the knowledge of him shall my righteous servant justify many." It is natural to inquire what turn the Jews themselves give to this prophecy. * There is good proof that the ancient Rabbins explained it found that this respected Messiah, but that their modern expositors concur, I think, in representing it as a description of the calamitous state, and intended restoration of the Jewish people, who are here, as they say, exhibited under the character of a single person. I have not discovered that their exposition rests upon any critical arguments, or upon these in any other than in a very minute degree. The clause in the verse, "he was stricken," for the transgression of my people was he stricken, and in the margin, "was the stroke upon him," the Jews read "for the transgression of my people was the stroke upon them." And what they allege in support of the alteration amounts only to this, that the Hebrew pronoun is capable of a plural as well as of a singular signification; that is to say, is capable of their construction as well as ours. * And this is all the variation contended for; the rest of the prophecy they read as we do. The probability therefore, of their exposition, is a subject of which we are as capable of judging as themselves. This judgment is open indeed to the good sense of every attentive reader. The application which the Jews contend for, appears to me to labour under insuperable difficulties; in particular, it may be demanded of them to explain, in whose name or person, if the Jewish people be the sufferer, does the prophet speak, when he says, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Again, the description in the seventh verse, "he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth," quadratic rates with no part of the Jewish history with which we are acquainted. The mention of the "grave," and the "tomb," in the ninth verse, is not very applicable to the fortunes of a nation; and still less so is the conclusion of the prophecy in the twelfth verse, which expressly represents the sufferings as voluntary, and the sufferer as interceding for the offender; "be

* Bishop Lowth adopts in this place the reading of the Seventy, which gives smitten to death, for the transgression of my people was he smitten to death. The addition of the words to death, which makes an end of the Jewish interpretation of the clause. And the authority upon which this reading (though not given by the present Hebrew text) is adopted Dr. Kennicot has set forth by an argument not only so cogent, but so clear and popular, that I beg leave to describe the substance of it into this note:—"Origen, after having quoted at large this prophecy concerning the Messiah, tells us, that, having once made use of this passage, in a dispute, he showed some that were accounted wise amongst the Jews, one to press them the hardest by this sentence,—for the transgression of my people was he smitten to death. Now as Origen, the author of the Hexapla, must have understood Hebrew, we cannot suppose that he would have urged this last text as so decisive, if the Greek version had not agreed here with the Hebrew text; nor that those wise Jews would have been at all distressed by this quotation, unless the Hebrew text had read agreeably to the words to death, on which argument the words principally depended; by quoting it immediately, they would have triumphed over him, and reproved his Greek version. This, whenever they could do it, was their constant practice in their disputes with the Christians. Origen himself, who laboriously compared the Hebrew text with the Septuagint, has recorded the necessity of arguing with the Jews, from such passages only, as were in the Septuagint agreeable to the Hebrew. Wherefore, as Origen had carefully compared the Greek version of the Septuagint with the Hebrew text; and as he puzzled and confounded the learned Jews, by urging upon them the reading to death in this passage, it seems almost impossible not to conclude, both from Origen's argument, and the evidence of his history, that the Hebrew text at that time actually had the word agreeably to the version of the Seventy." Lowth's Isaiah, p. 362.

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cause he hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

There are other prophecies of the Old Testament, interpreted by Christians to relate to the Gospel history, which are deserving of both great regard, and of a very attentive consideration: but I content myself with stating the above, as well because I think it the clearest and the strongest of all, as because most of the rest, in order that their value might be represented with any tolerable degree of fidelity, require a discussion unsuitable to the limits and nature of this work. The reader will find them disposed in order, and distinctly explained, in Bishop Chandler's treatise on the subject; and he will bear in mind, what has been often, and I think, truly urged by the advocates of Christianity, that there is no other eminent person, to the history of whose life so many circumstances can be made to apply. They who object that much has been done by the power of chance, and ingenuity of accommodation, and the industry of research, ought to try whether the same, or any thing like it, could be done, if Mahomet, or any other person, were proposed as the subject of Jewish prophecy.

II. A second head of argument from prophecy, is founded upon our Lord's predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, recorded by three out of the four evangelists.

Luke xxi. 5–25. "And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, he said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what signs will there be when these things shall come to pass? And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near; go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by-and-by. Then shall he say unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines and pestilences: and fearful sights, and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends; and some of you shall cause to be put to death. And shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls. And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days; for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

In terms nearly similar, this discourse is related in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the thirteenth of Mark. The prospect of the same evils drew from our Saviour on another occasion, the following affecting expressions of concern, which are preserved by Saint Luke, (xix. 41–44.) "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."—These passages are direct and explicit predictions. References to the same event, some plain, some parabolic, or otherwise figurative, are found in divers other discourses of our Lord.*

The general agreement of the description with the event, viz. with the ruin of the Jewish nation, and the capture of Jerusalem under Vespasian, thirty-six years after Christ's death, is most evident; and the accordance in various articles of detail and circumstances has been shown by many learned writers. It is also an advantage to the inquiry, and to the argument built upon it, that we have received a copious account of the transaction from Josephus, a Jewish and contemporary historian. This part of the case is perfectly free from doubt. The only question which, in my opinion, can be raised upon the subject, is, whether the prophecy was really delivered before the event; - shall apply, therefore, my observations to this point solely.

1. The judgment of antiquity, though varying in the precise year of the publication

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of the three Gospels, concur in assigning them a date prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.*

2. This judgment is confirmed by a strong probability arising from the course of human life. The destruction of Jerusalem took place in the seventieth year after the birth of Christ. The three evangelists, one of whom was his immediate companion, and the other two associated with his companions, were, it is probable, not much younger than he was. They must, consequently, have been far advanced in life when Jerusalem was taken; and no reason has been given why they should defer writing their histories so long.

3. If the evangelists, at the time of writing the Gospels, had known of the destruction of Jerusalem, by which catastrophe the prophecies were plainly fulfilled, it is most probable, that, in recording the predictions, they would have dropped some word or other about the completion; in like manner as Luke, after relating the denunciation of a dearth by Agabus, adds, "which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar;" whereas the prophecies are given distinctly in one chapter of each of the first three Gospels, and referred to in several different passages of each, and, in none of all these places, does there appear the smallest intimation that the things spoken of had come to pass. I do admit, that it would have been the part of an impostor, who wished his readers to believe that his book was written before the event, when in truth it was written after it, to have suppressed any such intimation carefully. But this was not the character of the authors of the Gospel. Cunning was not a quality of theirs. Of all writers in the world, they thought the least of providing against objections. Moreover, there is no clause in any one of them, that makes a prediction of their having written prior to the Jewish wars, which a fraudulent purpose would have led them to pretend. They have done neither one thing nor the other; they have neither inserted any words, which might signify to the reader that their accounts were written before the destruction of Jerusalem, which a sophist would have done; nor have they dropped a hint of the completion of the prophecies recorded by them, which an undesigned writer, writing after the event, could hardly on some or other of the many occasions that presented themselves, have missed of doing.

4. The admonitions § which Christ is repre-


1 Acts xiv. 29.

2 "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh; then let them which are in Judæa flee unto the mountains; let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." Matt. xiv. 18.