

EXPOSITION OF THE OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS

John Gill, D.D.

Volume 5 of 9

Isaiah through
Lamentations



**EXPOSITION OF
THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

By John Gill, D.D.

Complete & Unabridged

VOL. 5 of 9



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JOHN GILL, D. D.

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EXPOSITION

OF THE

Old Testament

BY

John Gill D. D.

IN SIX VOLUMES

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THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM

lux lucet in tenebris

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

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AN
EXPOSITION
OF
The Books of the Prophets
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT:

IN WHICH IT IS ATTEMPTED TO GIVE
AN ACCOUNT OF THE SEVERAL BOOKS,
AND THE WRITERS OF THEM;
A SUMMARY OF EACH CHAPTER;
AND
The genuine Sense of every Verse;
AND, THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE,
THE ORIGINAL TEXT AND VARIOUS VERSIONS ARE INSPECTED AND COMPARED;
INTERPRETERS OF THE BEST NOTE, BOTH JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN, CONSULTED;
AND
THE PROPHECIES
SHEWN CHIEFLY TO BELONG TO THE TIMES OF THE GOSPEL,
AND A GREAT NUMBER OF THEM TO TIMES YET TO COME.

BY JOHN GILL, D. D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1810.

THE PREFACE.

THE prophets I have undertaken an exposition of are those whom the Jews call the *latter prophets*; taking the hint from Zech. i. 4. The *former prophets*, with them, are the writers of Joshua, Judges, the two books of Samuel, and the two books of Kings; which are so called by them, as Huetius^a observes, because, though they are histories, yet contain significations and figures of things future. They are not indeed all agreed in this matter; for some say^b David, and Samuel, and Solomon, were the former prophets; and even some^c distinguish the latter prophets into former and latter; and make the former prophets to be all, excepting Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, to whom they give the name of the latter prophets; but generally, in the Hebrew copies of the Bible, the latter prophets begin with Isaiah, and end with Malachi; and these are divided into the greater and lesser prophets. The greater prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; to which we Christians add Daniel; but he stands excluded from the class of prophets by the Jews, for a reason that is easily discerned; not being willing to own the famous prophecy in him concerning the coming of the Messiah. They unanimously agree, as Maimonides affirms^d, to put him among the Cetubim or Hagiographa, the holy writings, but not among the prophets; they allow his book was written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, but not by the spirit of prophecy; wrongly distinguishing between the one and the other; nor should such a distinction of the sacred writings, as of Prophets and Hagiographa, be admitted; since all the inspired writings are נבואות אלהים; and so the Scriptures are called, Rom. i. 2. and xvi. 26. The latter prophets are the twelve which begin with Hosea, and end with Malachi; and, with the greater, are in all sixteen. Of these I shall not say any thing in particular here; as who they were; what time they prophesied; what, or to whom, or of whom, they prophesied; or of their style and manner of writing; for which, with other things, I refer the reader to the arguments and titles of the several books; but shall observe some things concerning prophets and prophecy in general.

The word נביא, a *prophet*, comes from נבא, which, in the Arabic language, primarily signifies to be lifted up on high, to be in an eminence^e; hence there is a mountain called Nebo, from its height and eminence, where Moses died, and from whence he had a view of the land of Canaan, Deut. xxxii. 49, 50. and xxxiv. 1. and the Chaldeans had an idol of this name, which, Hillerus^f thinks, was so called from its height and distance, Isa. xlvi. 1. and it may be prophets had their name from hence; either because they sometimes stood on an eminence, when they delivered their prophecies, that they might be the better heard; and when they cried aloud, and lifted up their voice like a trumpet: or rather because they were raised to great dignity, and invested with a high and honourable office; and indeed the highest office in the church, under the Old Testament, unless that of priests, and particularly of the high-priest, can be thought to be above it; and so, under the New Testament, prophets are set in the second place in the church, next to the apostles, 1 Cor. xii. 28. Ephes. iv. 11. This word also in the same language signifies to shew, declare, publish, and proclaim any thing; or deliver a message^g, which was one part of the business of the prophets, not only to predict things future, but to declare the will of God, whether it respected things present, or to come; their work lay very much in shewing the people, to whom they were sent, their sins and transgressions; to convince them of them; to reprove them for them; to call them to repent-

^a Demonstrat. Evangel. prop. 7. sect. 11. p. 339.

^b T. Bab. Sota, fol. 43. 2.

^c Ibid. & Misn. Sota, c. 9. sect. 12. & Maimon. & Bar-

tenora in ib.

^d More Nevochim, par. 2. c. 45.

^e נבא editus, elatus fuit, Golius, col. 2287. So Castel.

col. 2183, נבא Ar. editus, elatus fuit, Hottinger. Smegma Oriental. l. 1. c. 7. p. 170.

^f Onomastic. Sacr. p. 595, 604.

^g נבא indicavit, Schindler, col. 1056. annuntiavit. Hottinger. ib. נבא amuntiavit, apud Arabes, Stockius, p. 634.

ance and reformation; or otherwise to tell them they would issue in their ruin; and much of this kind may be observed in the writings of the prophets we are about to explain: and with this sense of the word agrees Jarchi's derivation of the word for prophet; which, whether just or no, I will not say. He derives it from נִבֵּא, which signifies to bud, to bring forth fruit; and metaphorically to speak, or utter any thing, as in Prov. x. 13. *the mouth of the just, נִבֵּא, bringeth forth or uttereth wisdom*; hence speech is called נִבְיָה שְׂפָתַיִם, *the fruit of the lips*, Isa. lvii. 19. and so, according to him, a prophet is a man that proclaims and causes people to hear the words of reproof; and who, in common speech, is called *prediger*^b, or a preacher. So Piscator^c takes the word to be akin to נִבְעַת, and to have much the same meaning; which signifies to pour, or throw out, as water out of a fountain; and so designs such persons, who, with great force and energy, and in great plenty, pour out in their ministry things secret and divine, revealed unto them, which appertain to the glory of God, and the good of his church. The prophets were faithful publishers of the mind and will of God, made known unto them; they were, as Kimchi calls them, an echo to the voice of God; they said nothing but what they heard and received from God, and that they fully and freely declared to the people; they were interpreters of the word of God, and taught the people both doctrine and duty. Thus the Lord said to Moses, Exod. vii. 1. *Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet*. The Targum of Onkelos renders it, יְרֵדִי מִתּוֹרַתְךָ, *shall be thine interpreter*; his spokesman, instead of a mouth to him; rehearse what he said, and explain it when not so well understood; Aaron being one that could speak well, plainly and clearly; when Moses had some difficulty in his speech; see ch. iv. 10, 14, 16. and prophets in Jer. xxix. 15. are explained, in the Targum of Jonathan, by מְלִפְזֵי, doctors, or teachers; and by Scribes, in 1 Sam. x. 10. all which agrees with the meaning of the words prophets and prophesying, as they are used in the New Testament; where they signify such as had gifts for the public ministry of the word, for the preaching of the Gospel, and exercised them; 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 4, 5, 6, 22, 24, 29, 31, 32. for, as the apostle says, ver. 3. *he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort*; yea, praying and praising are called prophesying, 1 Cor. xi. 4. agreeably to the use of the word in the Old Testament. So the Lord said to Abimelech concerning Abraham, *he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee*, Gen. xx. 7. prayer for others being one part of a prophet's work, which the Prophet Jeremiah was sometimes forbid to do; see Jer. vii. 16. and xi. 14. and xiv. 11. and also the sons of Asaph, and others, are said to prophesy with the harp, to give thanks and to praise the Lord, 1 Chron. xxv. 1, 2, 3. and the company of the prophets prophesying in 1 Sam. xix. 20. are by the Targum interpreted *a company of Scribes praising*; and it was no uncommon thing with persons of this character to use instruments of music; and which have been thought to have been of service, to dispose their minds for the prophetic influence; see Exod. xv. 20. 1 Sam. x. 5, 6. but, after all, the word is frequently used of foretelling things to come, or however of declaring things, whether past, present, or to come, which were so secret, as could never be known nor published without a divine revelation; and from hence it is that persons so extraordinarily gifted are called prophets; and such were those whose writings are under our present consideration; for it is easy to observe, that, besides ordinary instructions and teachings, whether with respect to doctrine or practice, there are, in them all, predictions of future events, which have had, for the most part, their certain accomplishment already; and which is a proof of their being the true prophets of the Lord

The first time we meet with the word *prophet*, in Scripture, is in Gen. xx. 7. where Abraham is called a prophet, as before observed. The learned Witsius^d thinks by it is meant no more than his being a *friend of God*, as he is elsewhere called, Isa. xli. 8. Jam. ii. 23. one that was familiar with him; a favourite of his, whom he would not suffer to be wronged; and to which the psalmist seems to allude, when speaking of his posterity in strange kingdoms, who were also much in the favour and friendship of God, says, that he reproved kings for their sakes; *saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm*, Psal. cv. 15. but, though this was true of Abraham and his seed, as it is of all other true prophets of the Lord, whom he uses as his intimate friends, and therefore discloses his secrets to them, as he did to Abraham, Gen. xviii. 17. for the Lord does nothing, but he reveals his secrets to his servants the prophets, Amos iii. 7. yet he might be called a prophet from his knowledge of future events, revealed to him by the Lord, which he no doubt spoke of to others;

^b Comment. in Exod. vii. 1.

^c Prolegomena in Prophetas, p. 7.

^d Miscell. Sacr. tom. I. l. 1. c. 1. sect. 3.

as of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah ; of the Messiah springing from his seed, whose day he is said to have seen, and rejoiced at ; and of his offspring suffering affliction in a land not theirs ; and of their continuance there, and their deliverance from thence at a certain time ; all which had their exact accomplishment ; see Gen. xviii. 22, 23. and xxii. 18. and xv. 13, 14, 16. but though the word *prophet* is not expressly used of any before Abraham, yet it is a clear case there were prophets before his time. Noah was a prophet ; for *he was warned of God of things not seen as yet*, as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says, ch. xi. 7. and by deeds, in preparing the ark, as well as by words, being a preacher of righteousness, foretold the destruction of the world by a flood ; likewise the curse that should come on his grandson Canaan, and his posterity ; the enlargement of Japhet and his offspring, and their dwelling in the tents of Shem. Gen. ix. 25, 26, 27. and Lamech his father prophesied of him, that he should comfort them, concerning their work, and the toil of their hands, Gen. v. 29. and Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of the mockers and scoffers in the last days ; and of the general judgment, as Jude expressly says, ver. 14, 15. yea, Adam the first man was a prophet ; who, upon Eve's being brought unto him, not only knew her, and for what end she was presented to him, but foretold that for the future *a man would leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they should become one flesh*, Gen. ii. 24. a prophecy that has been always fulfilling ever since ; and after the times of Abraham, quite down to those, whose books of prophecies are extant, and before us, there were many prophets. Jacob on his death-bed foretold what would befall the several tribes in future times, and even in the last days. Moses was the chief of all the prophets ; the Jews give high encomiums of him as such ; and indeed it is expressly said of him, that there arose not since such a prophet in Israel, with whom God spake face to face ; and to whom the Messiah, the great Prophet of all, was to be like, Deut. xxxiv. 10. and xviii. 15. in whose time the seventy elders, and Eldad and Medad, prophesied, Numb. xi. 25, 26. Job, though not of the Israelitish nation, yet had a spirit of prophecy, and foretold the appearance of Christ on earth, and the resurrection of the dead, ch. xix. 25, 26, 27. Samuel is placed at the head of the prophets that followed him, Acts iii. 24. and David is expressly called a prophet, Acts ii. 30. in whose days also Nathan the prophet lived, 2 Sam. vii. 2. and after his times there were Ahijah the Shilonite, Elijah and Elisha, and many in their days, of whom we shall take notice hereafter ; but these delivered their prophecies by word of mouth ; there are no prophetic writings of theirs extant, only of those sixteen before mentioned ; and who are eminently called the *prophets*, and are always meant in the New Testament when the prophets are appealed unto, or any thing quoted from them, or any thing said to be fulfilled that was written in them.

Now prophecy, from whence these men are chiefly denominated prophets, is, by the celebrated Witsius¹, truly defined “ a knowledge and manifestation of secret things, which a man knows, not “ from his own sagacity, nor from the relation of others, but by an extraordinary revelation of God “ from heaven.” It is called knowledge, with respect to the prophet himself; and a manifestation or discovery, with respect to others to whom it is made known. The things it is concerned with are secrets, whether they are things past, or present, or to come²; for a man may be denominated a prophet, from his knowledge and discovery of the one, as of the other; when they are such things as his own sagacity, and that of others, could never suggest to him; or he could never attain to by any means but by a revelation from God himself: it was in this way that Moses became acquainted with the creation of the world, and the order of it; the fall of our first parents, and the means of it; the universal deluge, and the re-peopling of the world, with other things that were past; which no man could have given that regular and orderly account of from himself, or the relation of others, had not God made it known unto him. Daniel shewed himself a prophet, by telling Nebuchadnezzar his dream, that was past; as well as by the interpretation of it; shewing what would be the fate of the four monarchies; and the woman of Samaria perceived that Christ was a prophet, by his being able to give an account of her past life and behaviour. It was by a prophetic spirit that Elisha knew that Gehazi his servant took gifts of Naaman the Syrian; so that things past and present are the subject of prophecy, as well as things to come; and those that are future are such as are not to be known by any settled laws and course of nature; such as the

¹ Miscell. Sacr. tom. 1. l. 2. c. 2. sect. 1.

² — Novit namque omnia vates

Quæ sint, quæ fuerint, quæ mox ventura trahantur. Virgil. Georgic. l. 4. ver. 391.

revolutions of day and night; of summer and winter; the ebbing and flowing of the tide; the eclipses of the luminaries, and the return of comets at certain periods; the knowledge and discovery of these is not prophecy; but it is the knowledge and discovery of things in themselves, and with respect to second causes, which are contingent and free; as the birth of persons; the names they shall be called by; and the actions they shall perform; such as these have been declared in prophecy, and have exactly come to pass, as in the instances of Josiah, Cyrus, and others.

Such kind of prophecy as this is not natural to men; it is not owing to the genius of the mind; or the temperament of the body; or the influence of the stars; but to the sovereign will and pleasure of God. Maimonides^a makes a perfection of the corporeal faculties, particularly the imagination, the subject of which is the brain, arising from the good temperament, proportion, measure, and humour of that member, to be requisite to prophecy; but we see that men of a different genius, capacity, education, and manner of living, have been endowed with the spirit of prophecy, as Isaiah and Amos: nor is this to be acquired by any means that man can make use of. It is true, indeed, there were, as it should seem, schools or colleges of prophets, which were very early, and continued long: there seems to have been one at the hill of God in Samuel's time, where was a garrison of the Philistines, where Saul met a company of the prophets that dwelt there; from whence probably it had its name, 1 Sam. x. 5. and there was another at Naioth in Ramah, where Samuel was at the head of them, being appointed over them, 1 Sam. xix. 20. and in the times of Elijah and Elisha there were of this sort at Beth-el and Gilgal, 2 Kings ii. 3, 5, and iv. 38. in those schools or seminaries of learning, young men, who are called the sons, that is, the disciples of the prophets, were educated and trained up in religious exercises; in prayer, and singing praises to God; and were instructed in the knowledge of God and his perfections; in the knowledge of the Messiah, his person and office, so far as they were then known; they were instructed in the doctrines and duties of morality; and in the institutions of the ceremonial law; and in all the parts of divine worship and service: and this will account for the number of prophets in those days; the companies that Saul met; the hundred which Obadiah hid by fifty in a cave, after a great slaughter Jezebel had made of others; and the fifty men of the sons of the prophets, that were sent to seek Elijah after his translation: now, though these are called the sons and disciples of the prophets, and prophets also; being by such means fitted for, and were capable of, instructing the people in the common principles and duties of religion; yet they did not hereby attain to that kind of prophecy we are speaking of. God might indeed, and no doubt he sometimes did, take out from among these, being sober, religious, and truly gracious men, at least some of them, and make them prophets extraordinary; just as he now does, takes some persons in our days, who are brought up in schools and academies, and makes them ministers of the Gospel; though all the learning they there obtain will not give them such a character, nor qualify them for such a work, unless God gives them grace and ministerial gifts. So the Lord was pleased to take the Apostle Paul, who was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and by his grace make him a preacher of his Gospel, when the other apostles were generally illiterate persons; so some of these sons of the prophets might be taken and made extraordinary prophets; but not all of them; nor were all that were prophets such originally; for Amos says that he was not a *prophet* that was at the head of one of these schools or colleges; nor a *prophet's son*, a disciple of any of them; but an *herdman*, and a *gatherer of sycamore-fruit*; and the Lord took him, as he *followed the flock*. and bid him *prophecy*, Amos vii. 14, 15. in short, *prophecy came not in old time by the will of man*, 2 Pet. i. 21. no man could make himself a prophet, or make any other man one, at his own will and pleasure; only the Lord, who, according to the counsel of his own will, determined upon and appointed such and such persons to be prophets; as he did Jeremy, even before he was born; and on whom, according to his sovereign will, and when he pleased, he caused his Spirit to descend, move, and influence them to speak and declare what he would have them do; or by some way or other conveyed unto them the knowledge of what he would have them make known to others, and pressed them by his Spirit to declare it; nor could they prophesy when they would themselves, but only when it was the pleasure of the Lord they should.

There were various ways and means by which prophecy came unto them, especially by dream and vision, according to Numb. xii. 6. *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.* Maimonides^o says, that in these

^a Moreh Nevochim, par. 2. c. 36.

^o Idem, *ibid.* & c. 43.

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two, dream and vision, all the degrees of prophecy are contained ; and that there is not a third way or manner besides them, though there are distinct degrees in them. Prophecy of things was sometimes delivered to the prophets in vision ; whether in the day, or in the night ; whether waking or sleeping ; and whether by external appearances to the bodily sight, or by mental representations made in the fancy or imagination. In such ways as these, the prophets before us had their prophecies by vision. Isaiah had his prophecy, which is called, in general, the vision of Isaiah, which he saw, ch. i. 1. and particularly he had a vision of the Lord on a throne, high and lifted, very magnificently described, ch. vi. 1, 2. So to Ezekiel the heavens were opened, and he saw the visions of God ; as the visions of the cherubim, the image of jealousy, and others, ch. i. 1, 28. and viii. 3, 5. So Daniel had his visions of the four beasts ; and of the ram and he-goat, Darius and Alexander, ch. vii. and viii. Zechariah had also several visions ; of the man on a red horse among the myrtle-trees ; of the four carpenters ; of another man with a measuring-line ; of Joshua the high-priest in filthy garments ; of the golden candlestick ; of the flying roll ; and of the four chariots from between two mountains ; recorded in the six first chapters of his prophecy. Sometimes they received their prophecies in dreams ; so Jeremiah had several evangelical prophecies in this way, ch. xxxi. 26. and Daniel had the prophecy of the four monarchies represented in a dream, ch. vii. 1. Sometimes the Lord instructed the prophets immediately from himself, by an instinct and impulse upon their minds ; and sometimes made known his will to them by an angel ; sometimes by a created one, as by Gabriel to Daniel, ch. viii. 16, 17. and ix. 21. and sometimes by Christ, the increated Angel, appearing in a visible form, as to the same Daniel, ch. x. 5—12. and to Zechariah, ch. i. 8, 9. and ii. 3, 4. And sometimes, as they were taught by symbolical representations what should be hereafter ; as Jeremiah by an almond-tree, a boiling pot, a linen girdle, and two baskets of figs ; and Amos by grahoppers, a plumb-line, and a basket of summer-fruits ; so they likewise conveyed the knowledge of things that would be, which were revealed unto them by various symbols also ; as Isaiah by walking naked and barefoot ; and Jeremiah by wearing yokes upon his neck ; and Ezekiel by lying on his side such a number of days he did, and by taking two sticks and making them one in his hand ; and sometimes they communicated what was revealed to them by parables ; as Ezekiel by the parables of the two eagles and vine, and of the boiling pot ; and Hosea by the parable of taking a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms : but be it in what way soever the knowledge of things to come were conveyed to them, or they communicated it to others, it was all by divine revelation, and from the Holy Spirit of God, and as under his influence ; for *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, 2 Pet. i. 21. In vain does Maimonides^p distinguish between the gift of prophecy, the first degree of it, and the Holy Ghost, which he makes a lower degree of it ; or between the Spirit of God and the Holy Ghost : and in which he is confronted by another Jewish writer^q, who makes the Holy Spirit and prophecy to be the same ; for, speaking of the several things wanting in the second temple, mentions the Holy Ghost, and adds, by way of explanation, שׁוּחַי נְבוּאָה, *which*, says he, *is prophecy*. And the Jews have a saying^r, that after the death of the latter prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, רִחוּ דְקִישׁ, *the Holy Ghost*, departed from Israel, meaning prophecy ; they being the last prophets. Nor is any such distinction to be supported by any thing that is said in the sacred writings ; from the whole of which it appears that all prophecy is to be ascribed to the inspiration and influence of the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God. And they were *holy men* that were moved and influenced by him ; such were these sixteen prophets, whose writings make so considerable a part of the oracles of God, of the canon of the Old Testament. It will not be denied but that wicked men have sometimes been under this divine afflatus, and have prophesied true things, even of the Messiah himself, which have come to pass ; as Balaam, Numb. xxiv. 17. and Caiaphas, John xi. 49—52. but, ordinarily speaking, the Spirit of God, as a spirit of prophecy, rested only upon pious and good men.

Now prophecy of this sort especially, or foretelling things to come, has always been in high esteem in all nations. Cicero^s says, “ it is an ancient opinion, handed down from times of old, and “ which is confirmed by the consent of the Roman people, and of all nations, that there is a “ sort of divination among men. which the Greeks call *μαντιν* ; that is, a foresight and knowledge

^p Moreh Nevochim, par. 2. c. 45.

^q Baal Aruch in voce נְבוּאָה, fol. 75. 3.

^r T. Bab. Sanhedrin, fol. 11. 1.

^s De Divinatione, l. 1. ab initio.

“ of future things.” We learn from Clemens Alexandrinus¹, that the Egyptians had their prophets, who were in great esteem among them; and there was one that was called an arch-prophet: and, among the Grecians, he gives a long list of prophets, who pretended to fore-knowledge, and to foretell things to come, and give responses about them; but at the close says, these were all thieves and robbers, as says the Scripture; what they foretold being chiefly from observation and probabilities, and through the influence of the devil, and other things: but the Hebrew prophets, he observes, were men of another sort, being inspired of God². Jupiter had his prophets in Crete³. The Apostle Paul quotes a passage from one of them, Tit. i. 12. *one of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, the Cretians are always liars, &c.*; this was Epimenides, whom Cicero, in the book referred to, reckons along with Bacchis, and Sybilla Erythrea, who prophesied *per furorem*; and whom Apuleius⁴ calls *inclytum fatiloquum*, a famous fortuneteller and poet. The many and renowned oracles among the Heathens are notorious: among the Egyptians, besides the famous one of Jupiter Ammon, there were the oracles of Hercules, Apollo, Minerva, Diana, and Mars; and what was had in the greatest esteem, the oracle of Latona, in the city Butus: and among the Grecians, besides the noted one of Apollo Pythius at Delphos, there were the oracles of the Branchidæ, or Apollo Didymæus, at Miletus; of Trophonius in Lebadia; and Amphiarus in Thebes; and others at Abæ and Dodona. There were also the oracles of Mars and Bacchus among the Thracians; and several others among the Ethiopians. There was an oracle of Apollo Thyrxæus at Cyaneis, upon the borders of Lycia; of Mercury at Pharaë in Achaia; of Hercules Buraicus at Bura; of Apollo Ptous, at Mount Ptous; with others, which Herodotus⁵, Diodorus Siculus⁶, Pausanias⁷, and other writers, make mention of. To these, kings and countries, cities and towns, and persons of every rank, had recourse on emergent occasions, and when difficulties arose through war or otherwise; and there were the *vates* or prophets at these oracles; who gave the responses, at least secretly; and who were loaded with gifts and presents, and became very rich. But, above all, the Sibyls were the most famous for their prophecies of future things, and were highly esteemed. Well known is the story of one of them, who offered to sale, to Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of the Romans, nine books, in which were contained the fate of the Roman people; for which she asked three hundred Philips (a gold coin of Philip king of Macedon), which were then very scarce and valuable; but being refused with contempt, she went away, and burnt three of them; and returned another day to the king, and asked the same price as before for what remained; but her second offer being rejected, she burnt three more; and came a third time, and received for the remaining three the whole sum she asked for them all: these were put into a stone chest in the capitol at Rome, where they were first under the care of two men, afterwards ten, then fifteen; and which came at last to forty, some say sixty; and were burnt with the capitol, in the times of Augustus Cæsar; who sent men into various countries afterwards to gather up all the verses of the Sibyls that could be come at; and being examined, laid them up in the temple of Apollo; and these were burnt also with Rome by Stilico⁸; so that those which are now published under their name cannot be the work of the ancient Sibyls: and indeed they seem to be the pious frauds of some Christians, to the disgrace of Christianity, which needs no such methods to support it.

Now, if such prophecies as these, which were all imposture and deceit, and the work of Satan, and of those under his influence, were so highly valued and had in such esteem, what a precious treasure should we reckon the books of the divine prophets! we have a *more sure word of prophecy* indeed, to which we do well to have respect, as to a light that shines in a dark place. The writings of the prophets are the Scriptures which our Lord chiefly had in view when he directed his hearers to search into them for testimonies concerning him; and it was out of these principally that he expounded to his disciples, after his resurrection, the things relating to himself: it was from hence the apostles fetched their proofs of the person, office, and grace of Christ, in their ministry; particularly the Apostle Paul; and it was by these the noble Bereans were concluded,

¹ Stromat. l. 1. p. 300, 303, 305. & l. 6. p. 634.

² Ibid. l. 1. p. 333, 334, 335.

³ Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 4. c. 17.

⁴ Florida, c. 15.

⁵ Clio, sive l. 1. c. 46. & Euterpe, sive l. 2. c. 52, 54, 83, 139, 152, 155. & Polymania, sive l. 7. c. 76, 111. & Urania, sive l. 8. c. 134.

⁶ Bibliothec. l. 2. p. 102. & l. 3. p. 206.

⁷ Achaia, sive l. 7. p. 440, 449. Bœotia, sive l. 9. p. 576.

⁸ Servius in Virgil. Æneid. l. 6. p. 999, 1000. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. l. 3. c. 16. Vid. Fabricii Bibl. Græc. l. 1. c. 31. sect. 1, 2, 8, 9, 10.

whether the things preached by him were so or no. These are the prophesyings we are not to despise, but entertain the highest esteem of. And there are many things which may invite us to read and study them; as the divine inspiration of them; the certain accomplishment of many already, from whence we may be sure of the rest; the vast extent of them, reaching to many kingdoms, nations, and states, in all ages, to the end of the world; the many useful instructions contained in them, with respect to our duty both to God and man; the many excellent doctrines of grace they bear testimony to; and especially our Lord Jesus Christ, being the principal subject, scope, and centre of them. These are a principal part of *all Scripture given by inspiration of God*, and are eminently useful for *doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness*; their agreement with each other, though delivered at *sundry times, and in divers manners*; the sublimity and majesty of their style; the holy precepts and holy doctrines contained in them; and the holy lives and godly simplicity of those to whom, and by whom, they were communicated; and especially the certain, precise, and exact fulfilment of such a vast number of them, put it out of all doubt that they are of God; for who but the omniscient God, that foreknows and foresees all things, could have revealed to men, with such clearness and exactness, things so very remote and contingent as many of them were? and from which we may conclude the sure and certain fulfilment of what are yet to come, and which are every day fulfilling; and we may hope, that, in a short time, they will open to our view yet more and more. These prophecies not only have respect to various kingdoms and nations then in being and flourishing when they were given out, and shew for what sins, and by what means, they would come to destruction, which are now no more; as the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Moabites, Edomites, Ammonites, and Philistines, and others; but they have, in a peculiar manner, a regard to the people of the Jews; predict their captivity in Babylon, and their deliverance from thence; their after-sufferings under Antiochus Epiphanes, in the times of the Maccabees; their state and condition before and at the coming of Christ; their destruction by the Romans; their dispersion throughout the nations of the world; and their conversion in the latter day: and they not only describe the several monarchies that have been, the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman, and settle the several fates of them, but plainly point at the fall of the Ottoman empire; the rise and ruin of antichrist, and all the antichristian states; and foretel things that shall be to the end of the world. The duties of religion they inculcate; the exhortations, cautions, and reproofs they abound with; cannot fail of being useful, for the direction and improvement of every good man, in his life and conversation, that seriously considers them; and every evangelic truth is to be illustrated and confirmed by them, particularly the great doctrines of justification by the righteousness of Christ, and pardon through him, and eternal life and salvation by him; for the righteousness of God, which is revealed in the Gospel from faith to faith, though it is without the law, yet it is *witnessed to by the law and prophets*; and this testimony they all bear, that *through the name of Christ, whoever believes in him shall receive the remission of sins*, Rom. iii. 21. Acts x. 43. and indeed the Apostle Paul assures us, that he said *none other things*, throughout his ministry, *than what Moses and the prophets did say should come*; namely, such as respect the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ; for into these two things may the distribution be made of what the Spirit of God in the prophets testified before-hand, *even the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow*. Jesus of Nazareth, the true Messiah, is he of whom *Moses, in the law and the prophets, did write*; he, in his person, office, and grace, is the sum and substance of these writings; see Acts xxvi. 22, 23. 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. John i. 45. And the Jews themselves say, that the prophets prophesied not but of the days of the Messiah, and of redemption and salvation by him; with which agrees what Zechariah says, that he was spoken of *by the mouth of the holy prophets which have been since the world began*, Luke i. 70. With what pleasure must a man, to whom Christ is precious, read those sacred pages, where, in one place, he'll observe him to be spoken of as the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and Prince of peace; and, in the same place, as the child to be born, and the son given; and, in another, he'll read of his wonderful and mysterious incarnation of a virgin. One prophet points out the place by name where he was to have his birth, Beth-lehem-ephrah; and another where his conversation would chiefly be, Galilee of the Gentiles; and another describes his public entry into Jerusalem, as riding upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass, meek and lowly, and having salvation,

Some of these prophecies represent him as mean and despicable; as a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs; as smitten and stricken for the sins of his people; as cut off, but not for himself; as pouring out his soul unto death, and being numbered among the transgressors; and as having his grave made with the wicked, and with the rich in his death: and others represent him as to rise on the third day; and as triumphing over death and the grave, and redeeming his people from them, and from all their sins; and as the Lord their righteousness, by whom they should be saved, and under whom they should dwell safely: and it seems no very difficult task, by joining at least the book of Psalms with the Prophets, to extract out of them a narrative of the person, character, birth, life, actions, sufferings, and death of Christ; his burial, resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God, and second coming to judgment. Something of this kind I attempted to do many years ago, in a treatise, entitled, "The Prophecies of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah considered, and proved to be literally fulfilled in Jesus;" this was wrote in answer to the author of *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, &c.* and of *The Scheme of literal Prophecy considered, &c.* who is generally known to be Anthony Collins, Esq. which occasioned a famous controversy on this subject, and brought out many excellent defences of the Christian religion. The very learned Fabricius, of Hamburgh, has given a list of the writers in that controversy, for or against, so far as he had knowledge of them, and which is pretty extensive, in a volume he since published in favour of the truth of Christianity, called *Salutaris Lux Evangelii, &c.*⁴ The crafty author of the *Grounds, &c.* and of *Literal Prophecy, &c.* plainly saw that Christianity was founded on prophecy; at least that this was, though not the only, yet a principal proof and evidence of it; which he endeavoured to undermine and remove, by shewing that the prophecies had another meaning, and did not respect a Messiah, and much less our Jesus, and were misapplied by the writers of the New Testament; but the contrary has been fully made to appear, and the prophecies to be a glorious confirmation of the truth of divine revelation, and which is a continual and increasing one; for, as Dr. Newton⁵ of late most truly observes, "this is one great excellency of the evidence drawn from prophecy for the truth of revelation, that it is a growing evidence; and the more prophecies are fulfilled, the more testimonies there are, and confirmations of the truth and certainty of divine revelation."

It must be owned, that there are some things in the Prophets difficult and hard to be understood; but the knowledge, sense, and meaning of them, are in a good measure attainable by prayer, meditation, and reading, and by comparing Scripture with Scripture, especially with the writings of the New Testament, and particularly the book of the Revelation; and there are some general rules, which, if attended to, will greatly facilitate the understanding of them. The learned Vitringa, in his *Typus Doctrinæ Prophetice*, has laid down several rules or canons, very useful and helpful in investigating the true sense of the Prophets; which I shall not think it too much labour to transcribe; and are as follow: 1. In all interpretation of prophecies, care and pains must be taken, and means used, in the first place, that the subject of the prophecy may be truly known; whether the prophet speaks of himself, or of others; and whether of things in his own time, or of things to come; and of these, whether he speaks of them properly and literally, or improperly and figuratively; see Acts viii. 34.—2. That we may come to an accurate and distinct knowledge of the subject, we should diligently attend to all the attributes and characters which are applied to that subject in the prophecy: for, if the subject is not mentioned by name, it may be found out by the characteristics of it; such are many of the predictions concerning Christ; and if it is expressly named, it should be inquired whether it is to be taken properly or mystically; or partly properly, and partly mystically; as when any one by name is spoken of as a type of the Messiah.—3. From the literal sense of the subject, when called by its own proper name, we must never depart; if all the attributes, or the more remarkable, noted, and principal ones, agree with the subject of the prophecy, this rule is of considerable use in the prophecies concerning Israel, Judah, Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, and others.—4. If the attributes by no means agree with the subject expressed in prophecy by its own name, we must think of another subject answerable to it, which is mystically called by this name, because of the agreement between the type and the antitype; examples of this are in Edom, Isa. lxiii. 1. in David, Jer. xxx. 20. Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24. in Elijah, Mal. iv. 5.—5. If, in prophecies, the subject is treated of under its express name, so that it will bear both the proper and

⁴ P. 172—180.⁵ Dissertations on the Prophecies, &c. p. 6.

mystical interpretation; and the attributes of the prophetic discourse are such, that some of them more rightly agree with the subject mystically taken; and others are more rightly predicated of it, in a literal and grammatic sense; we must take the subject of the prophecy not to be simple, but complex; and that the prophet, being acted and illuminated by the Spirit, so speaks, as that he would be understood of both; and the reader is to be advised of the mystical or allegorical sense, as wrapped up in the literal sense: thus, in many of the prophecies concerning Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, and Edom, there are such august and magnificent things, which, if properly taken, will admit but of a very poor and barren exposition; and therefore it must be presumed, that the Holy Ghost designed something more, and to lead our minds to spiritual Egypt, &c. and so sometimes such grand things are said of the people of the Jews returning from the Babylonish captivity, and of such blessings bestowed upon them, as necessarily oblige us to look out for a further accomplishment in redemption by Christ, and the spiritual blessings of grace bestowed upon the people of God under the Gospel dispensation; specimens of which may be seen in Isa. lii. 1, 2, 3. Jer. iii. 14, 15, 16.—6. In continued prophecies, which are not distinguished one from another by titles or inscriptions, we should carefully attend both to the beginning and end of the prophetic sermons; both to the epocha of the time in which the scene of the prophetic vision is fixed, and the terminus in which it ends; the former of these especially has its use in the sermons of Isaiah, which follow the *fortieth* chapter of that book.—7. It is probable, that those prophecies, whose *terminus a quo* demonstrates the beginning of the time of Christ's kingdom, and the *terminus ad quem* the end of that time, give a narration of the chief things that shall befall the church in a continued series, unless any thing hinders, which obliges us to go back to former times. The interpretation of the prophecy of Isaiah, from ch. liv. 1. to ch. lx. 22. depends on this foundation. The beginning of this prophecy, without all doubt, is to be applied to the beginning of the kingdom of Christ: the term or end falls upon the most flourishing state of that kingdom, which is to follow the conversion of the Jewish nation, and the vindication of the afflicted church; of which Isa. lix. 19, 20, 21. which flourishing state of the kingdom of Christ is described throughout the whole *sixtieth* chapter. It is very likely, therefore, that what is intermediate treats of the affairs or fates of both terms.—8. Yet it is to be observed, that some prophecies, whose context is continued, admit of resummptions, repetitions of sayings, and retrograde leaps and skips, or scattered or detached pieces, belonging to superior times, which are inserted into the context, for the sake of illustrating this or that part of the prophecy; examples of which are in Zech. xiii. 7. and in Isa. ch. xl. xli. xlii.—9. To these also may be rightly referred the excursions and digressions, in which the prophets, whilst they really have before their eyes some object of more remote time, suddenly leave it, and by way of excursion turn themselves to men of their own time, or the next; that, from the subject of their prophecy, they may admonish, exhort, and convince them; which when they have done, they resume the thread of their prophecy; an instance of which is in Joel iii. from ver. 4. to ver. 9.—10. That interpretation of the word of God, and especially of the prophecies, is to be accounted the best, which attends to, pursues, and demonstrates the greatest emphasis of the oration or speech, and the wisdom of the Holy Ghost; a good and sure rule, and yet to be applied prudently to the subject-context of the prophecy.—11. A sure key for the interpretation of prophecy is, a true understanding of Christ Jesus, and of righteousness to be procured by him for the church, and of the spiritual kingdom to be founded by him in the world; according to that of the apostle, Rom. xii. 6. *let us prophesy according to the proportion or analogy of faith*; for the prophets prophesied chiefly of the Messiah and his kingdom, and of the times and prerogatives of it.—12. Wherefore, when there is a twofold method of interpreting prophecies, the one barren, the other liberal; of which, those that follow that, with difficulty, and more rarely, find Christ Jesus and his kingdom; and those who adopt this more frequently find Christ, and things that belong to him; it seems not to be doubted of but the latter is to be preferred to the former. This is a rule of great use and profit; certainly the spirit, which was in the prophets, either is not Christ's, or he directly speaks of Christ; if he speaks directly and clearly of Christ, it is the business of a good interpreter, first indeed to seek diligently after Christ in the prophetic word; then, if occasion favours, to demonstrate it; but never to shun any opportunity, when it offers itself, but willingly take it.—13. Since it is not only probable, but certain, that there are, in the prophetic part of the word, distinct delineations of the whole counsel of God, interpreters act rightly, who, in prophecies which, 'tis plain, treat of the kingdom of Christ, and the affairs of it, industriously attend to the

events of the church of Christ, known from history, and produce them from the same; so that it is done without offering any violence to the Scripture; since God does nothing but he reveals his secret to his servants the prophets, Amos iii. 7.—14. The interpretation of the word of prophecy made by Christ, and by the apostles, and by the Holy Ghost, in the Revelation, is a rule and key of rightly explaining the prophecies which they have touched upon; who can doubt of this? since every one is the best interpreter of his own words; so it should be thought that the Holy Ghost, in more recent prophecies, alludes to ancient ones; yea, often uses the same words, phrases, and images, and the like, which he did formerly; designing thereby to lead us by the hand to the true understanding of those oracles.—15. Whatsoever excellently, gloriously, emphatically, characteristically, is predicted of some certain person, not called by his own name, in the Prophecies, or in the Psalms, so that the singular predicates can be demonstrated in no singular subject of that or any other time, it must be taken as said and predicted of the Messiah. This rule will deceive no man.—16. In prophecies, which treat of Christ and his kingdom, that sense is the best which is the most spiritual. This canon hath a certain and easy demonstration; for the kingdom of Christ is no other foretold in prophecies, than it is manifest in time; but that is not of this world, it is spiritual, John xviii. 36. Rom. xiv. 17. therefore no interpretation is of avail, none is right and good, which understands those things corporeally which are predicated of a thing spiritual; for the attributes and predicates of a spiritual thing are spiritual.—17. In prophecies, in some places prudently to be distinguished, there obtains an *υπερβασις*; so that on which we must dwell should be put in the last place, that it may be carried on without interruption to the end.—18. The writers of the New Testament, in confirmation of their doctrines from the prophetic writings, oftentimes borrow words from one prophet, and take the thing from another.—19. In things future, we must not indulge our conjectures, but as it becomes the faith and modesty of Christians; what are indefinitely said, and not determined by parallel prophecies, we must reckon that God wills those things should be put in his own power, as to mode, persons, times, places, and species.

Now, how far the following Exposition of the Prophets comports with these canons and rules, must be left to the judgment of the intelligent reader. I am very sensible, that, besides the spiritual means before mentioned, of prayer, meditation, and comparing Scripture with Scripture, there are other things requisite to the right interpretation of prophecies; as knowledge of the language in which the prophets wrote, and of its sister dialects, the Arabic, Syriac, and Chaldee; as well as of history, philosophy, geography, geometry, chronology, &c.; in consideration of all which, I have sometimes been fearful I have undertaken a work I am not equal to; however, being engaged in it, with what assistance I have obtained, I have done as well as I could, and hope it will be candidly received.

I greatly regret the learned Vitringa's large and excellent commentary on Isaiah not falling into my hands sooner; I had finished my exposition of that prophet before I had the favour of seeing his; however, before mine went to the press, I obtained a copy of his; and have been able to make some references to it, especially to his version; and have extracted some few things from it, and improved some passages of mine by it; and, upon the whole, think myself happy that I agree with so great a man in so many things I do, when unknown to me; and had I been more early acquainted with him, I should not have thought fit to have followed him in *all* things; but in many should have steered the course I have taken; though his commentary must be allowed to be the best that is written on that prophecy.

Pool's *Synopsis Criticorum* I expected great advantage from, with respect to the various versions and translations. I thought I should have had no more trouble than to have selected from thence such of them as I should judge would be of most use in the interpretation of passages; but the quotations of them in that work are so blended together, or included in so many parentheses, that it is very difficult, if possible, to distinguish and assign them to their proper authors; so that I soon found I should be led into many mistakes, if I trusted to that collection; and therefore was obliged to have recourse to the versions and translations themselves, which has been no small fatigue unto me; not but that that performance has been useful and beneficial on more accounts than one; and I cannot but wonder that so learned and laborious a work should be so much neglected, as it seems to be, by such who are studious of the sacred writings.

In the Preface to my Exposition of the New Testament, I have given an account of the Jewish writings quoted and referred to in that work; and therefore such of them as are made use of in this

I have no need to say much concerning, especially the Talmud and Targums, which are there largely treated of. The former of these is but sparingly made use of in this work. In the Exposition of the New Testament, I consulted that, and other Jewish writings, purely for the sake of phraseology, rites, customs, and ceremonies, which might serve to illustrate any part of it, or passages in it; but in this I have had chiefly to do with it, only for the interpretation of Scripture itself; but the sense it gives of it is for the most part so foreign, barren, and impertinent, that it has furnished me with very little of any avail or worth; only this I observe, that the Scriptures are quoted in it with scarce any variation, if any at all, from the present copy of the Hebrew text in common use; which is no inconsiderable proof of the antiquity of it; for, though, according to Buxtorf^f, the Jerusalem Talmud was not finished until the year of Christ 230; and the Babylonian Talmud not till the year 500^g; yet both consist of reasonings, disputations, and decisions on passages of Scripture, quoted by men that lived in and about the times of Christ, or quickly after, and even of some before; and give their sense, and not the sense of the compilers of them; and, I suppose, no copy or manuscript can be produced of an earlier date; and which shews the Jews, however blind and ignorant they be in the understanding of the Old Testament; a veil being over their hearts in the reading of it, as the apostle says^h; yet the oracles of God being committed to them, as the same inspired writer observesⁱ, they have been faithful keepers of them; and we are much indebted to the Masorites, for the strict care they have taken to preserve the whole entire and incorrupt, both with respect to words, letters, and points; and here I can't forbear transcribing a passage from the celebrated Vitringa, in his Preface to the reader, before the first volume of his Commentary on Isaiah: "I am verily of opinion (says he) that no mortal man, though ever so well versed in the Hebrew language, has such sharpness of wit, skill, and quickness of understanding, as that he could give the true genuine sense of our prophet (Isaiah) in very many places; unless the reading of the ancient synagogue had been preserved by tradition in the schools of the Hebrews, as we have it now expressed by the Masoretic points; whose study and labour therefore no man can sufficiently commend; for what pleasure we take in this delightful garden, we owe it to them, men so learned, and very judicious. An instance of this we have in the Greek interpreter of Alexandria, who came forth under the name and in the number of the Septuagint; who being unacquainted with the Jerusalem reading, has very often, by his unhappy and unlearned version, so deformed the prophet's discourse, in the more obscure places, that you can't know Isaiah again in Isaiah."

The Targum on the Prophets, though it is uncertain with some Christian writers who he was that wrote it, and in what age he lived, yet the Jews unanimously ascribe it to Jonathan Ben Uzziel^k, who lived and wrote about the times of Christ: of him I have given an account in the Preface to my Exposition of the New Testament, to which I refer the reader; only would observe, that this paraphrase of his is free from the fables and traditionary senses with which that upon the Pentateuch abounds, which is falsely ascribed to him; that he interprets many passages concerning the Messiah which truly belong to him, and may be improved against the Jews; that he is very happy, in a multitude of places, in explaining figurative phrases and expressions; and may very well be thought to transmit to us the sense of the ancient synagogue in many things. Vitringa, in the place just now referred to, calls him *a learned man*. There is no Targum on the book of Daniel, great part of that being written in the Chaldean language; and the book of Lamentations not being placed among the Prophets by the Jews, is paraphrased not by Jonathan, but by another; but by whom is not certain. The Jews themselves are at a loss about the author of the paraphrase of that book, and the rest of the Megillot, Ruth, Esther, Canticles, and Ecclesiastes. It is wrote in the Jerusalem dialect, and abounds with Talmudic fables, and is the last of the Targums: in it mention is made of places, as of Constantinople and others, which shew it to be of later date than the rest.

The Jewish commentators I have most frequently made mention of in this Exposition are, Jarchi, Aben Ezra, and Kimchi; and since they are writers whose names the English reader is not much used to, I shall give some short account of them. They all lived in the *twelfth* century: R. Solomon Jarchi, as he is commonly called, and by abbreviation Rashi, though his true name

^f Biblioth. Rab. p. 425.

^g So Ganz, Tzemach David, par. 1. fol. 31. 2. & 33. 1, 2.

& 34. 1.

^h 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

ⁱ Rom. iii. 2.

^k T. Bab. Megilla, fol. 3. 1.

was R. Solomon Ben Isaack, was born in France; hence he uses many French words in his writings. The Jews extol him very highly; they say there never rose up one in the kingdom of France like him¹; he wrote commentaries on the whole Bible. His style is somewhat obscure, having a concise way of writing, and using many exotic words; and being conversant with the Talmud, frequently goes according to that, and indulges too much to fable; though there are many things in him assisting and useful. Lyra frequently makes mention of him, and follows him in many places in his Exposition of the Bible. Aben Ezra must be allowed to be a much better writer, and has obtained with the Jews the name of חכם, *the wise*; he was a native of Toledo, in Spain; he lived some time in the city of Rhodes, where he finished his commentary on Daniel, in the year 4916; that is, in the year of Christ 1157; from whence it appears that he lived in the middle of the *twelfth* century. He wrote upon the whole Bible; and Father Simon says^m, no man among the Jews ever interpreted Scripture so literally, and so wisely; he was well skilled in the Arabic language, as appears by his frequent use of it in his commentaries, by which he interprets many passages of Scripture; he was a very great grammarian, astronomer, philosopher, poet, and physician; and wrote various things in each science. R. David Kimchi lived in the same century; and was the son of R. Joseph Kimchi, a Spaniard also; whose interpretation of Scripture his son often makes mention of in his commentaries. He had a brother named Moses, a very great *grammari-arian*, as he himself was; which two brothers are reckoned the principal of that sort among the Jews. David wrote on the greatest part of the Bible, in a clear style; free from every thing of the fabulous kind; and very happy, for the most part, in his sense of Scripture. The Jewsⁿ have a saying of him, that Kimchi's meal, alluding to his name, is fine flour; and there is no bran in his words. Vatablus often quotes him, by this descriptive title only, *doctus inter Hebræos*, the learned Jew. I have made but very little use of Abarbinel, a Portuguese Jew, of the *fifteenth* century; since he only, or for the most part, collects the senses of others, particularly of the above; and rejects better senses than he substitutes in their room. The author I sometimes mention by the name of Ben Melech is R. Solomon Ben Melech, a Spanish Jew, who lived in the *sixteenth* century; he wrote a commentary on the whole Old Testament, a literal and grammatical one, collected from the best interpreters among the Jews, especially David Kimchi, of whom he is a strict and close follower; his work being taken very much out of his commentaries, grammar, and lexicon.

The Jews have a common and frequent saying^o, as has been before observed, that from the time the latter prophets died, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Ghost removed from Israel; that is, as a spirit of prophecy; they being the last of the prophets in the canon of the Old Testament; for though our Lord says, *the law and the prophets were until John*, Luke xvi. 16, his meaning is not, that there were prophets in a succession down to his time; only that until his time the writings of the law and the prophets were the only ones the Jews had; for certain it is, that after Malachi, to the times of John, there arose none under the character of prophets; hence, in the lxxivth Psalm, which seems to be penned either about, or at least on occasion of, or however has respect unto the times of the Maccabees, in ver. 9, it is complained of by the people of God, *we see not our signs; there is no more any prophet; neither is there among us any that knoweth how long*; which was matter of concern unto them; prophets and prophecy from the Lord being accounted a special and peculiar favour; but when this favour was withdrawn, that either there were no prophets, or no vision seen by them, it was a token of sad and melancholy times; hence Jeremiah laments the state of the church in captivity after this manner, *the law is no more, her prophets also find no vision from the Lord*, Lam. ii. 9. and this is threatened as a sore evil to the people of the Jews, that the time should come when they should seek a *vision of the prophet*, but *the law should perish from the priest, and counsel from the ancients*, Ezek. vii. 26. but then we are not to understand this, as though prophecy entirely ceased in Malachi, and never revived more; for John the Baptist is expressly called the *prophet of the Highest*, yea, *more than a prophet*; and it is said, *that among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than he*, Luke i. 76. and vii. 28. who foretold in his ministry, that the kingdom of heaven, or of the Messiah, or Gospel dispensation, was at hand, just ready to take place; and our Lord himself was the great

¹ Shalshalet Hakabala, fol. 37. 2.

^m Hist. Critic. l. 3. c. 5. p. 18.

ⁿ Vid. Wolfii Biblioth. Hebr. vol. i. p. 299.


^o T. Bab. Yoma, fol. 9. 2. Sota, fol. 48. 2. & Sanhedrin, fol. 11. 1.

Prophet that Moses spake of, that should be raised up unto Israel, like unto him; and for whom the people, when they heard his doctrines, and saw his miracles, blessed God, that a *great Prophet* was *risen up among* them, Deut. xviii. 15. Luke vii. 16. and who not only preached the Gospel as none ever did before or since, but he foretold things to come, particularly his sufferings, and death, and resurrection; and though he is said to *seal up vision and prophecy*, Dan. ix. 24. the meaning is not to put an end to it, but to fulfil and accomplish it; and certain it is that he gave gifts to men, whereby they were qualified to be *prophets*; which seem to be a distinct sort of persons, as from apostles, so from ordinary pastors and teachers; and who not only had the gift of prophesying, or explaining Scripture, and preaching the word, but of foretelling things to come; such there were in the first Christian churches at Jerusalem and Antioch; as particularly Agabus, who, by the Spirit, signified the dearth that should be in all the world, and which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar; see Ephes. iv. 11. Acts xi. 27, 28. and xiii. 1. and what is the book of the Revelation but a prophecy of future events, to be accomplished in the world and church, from the first ages of Christianity to the second coming of Christ? and is expressly called a prophecy; and the things in it, the sayings of the prophecy of this book; and the words of the book of this prophecy, Rev. i. 3. and xxii. 7, 18, 19. and though we are not to expect, at least with any frequency, a spirit of prophecy to descend on men under the present dispensation; nor are we ever to give credit to pretended prophecies and revelations, which are not agreeable to, but apparently contradict, the word of God; or that propose to us new doctrines and modes of worship; every thing of this kind being settled in the sacred Scriptures, to continue to the end of time; yet God may vouchsafe to make known sometimes, to certain holy good men, his secrets, what he is about to do in the world, before it comes to pass; of which our Bishop Usher is a remarkable instance; but things of this nature are not in common to be looked for; we have a sure word of prophecy, the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy, sufficient to direct us in all things necessary to faith and practice; and have abundant reason to bless God for the writings of both Testaments, Old and New.

I have nothing more to add, only to observe, that I have several other commentaries on other parts of the Old Testament, particularly on what are commonly called the poetical books, finished in the same manner as these; which I purpose to publish, should these volumes meet with acceptance from the public*; and which I now commit to the blessing of God, to make them useful, for the increase of spiritual light and knowledge; for the better understanding of the Holy Scriptures; and for the glory of his name; giving him praise for all the gifts of nature and grace bestowed upon me for such service.

JOHN GILL.

* It is necessary here to state, that the Doctor published the Prophets before any other part of his Commentary.—Ed.



The Philadelphia Baptist Association, in its official minutes, of October, 1807, recommended
“that each member church of the Association subscribe for a copy of Dr. Gill’s incomparable Exposition of the Old and New Testaments for the use of their ministers, and urge all sister associations to aid in the accomplishment of this desirable object.”

A.D. Gillette,

The Minutes of the Philadelphia Baptist Association
1707-1807, p. 439

The Charleston Baptist Association

“recommended to the churches and the public to encourage, by subscription, the undertaking...to republish Dr. Gill’s Exposition and each church was advised to provide a copy for the use of its minister”

David Benedict

A General History of the Baptist Denomination,
Vol. 2, p. 149

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