

The Catholic.

Quod semper; quod ubique; quod ab omnibus

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The truth of the Christian Religion demonstrated by the fulfillment of the prophecies, and the condition of the Jews.

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..... We have proofs as clear as day, that the facts of the history of our Lord were declared to mankind by a series of predictions, the latest of which, was delivered four hundred years before his coming. These predictions could not have been falsified; for they were in the hands of the original adversaries of christianity. They were preserved by these with even a superstitious scrupulousness. They were the pride, the consolation and the hope of the Jewish people; but they were also their condemnation; and they are now the history of their punishment.

Isaias, the great prophet of the Jews, is the principal proclaimer of christianity. Seven hundred years before the coming of Christ, this prophet declared the coming of a being, who would descend from glory in the heavens: to be expected in his supernatural might; and to disappoint expectation; to be a mark for sorrows; to have no pre-eminence upon the earth; to be despised, rejected and abandoned by man; to be the bearer of the punishment of others; yet to be stigmatized, as if he bore the wrath of heaven for crimes of his own; to be signally resigned under all; to be persecuted and cut off from the land of the living by an ignominious death; to be buried, and thus complete the course of mortal humiliation; to be yet triumphant; to vanquish the grave; to see the mighty purpose, for which he came, accomplished in the redemption of a countless multitude from the wrath of heaven; and finally, to receive a splendid and surpassing reward for his voluntary sacrifice for the sins of man. This is the substance of the fifty-second and fifty-third chapters of Isaias: and this was the being, to whom the whole Jewish nation looked forward as the great deliverer & their king.

But it was to their astonishment and utter doubt declared that, when he came, they should reject him; that his glory should not seem glorious to them; that their prejudices would have enfeebled their vision, till they shrunk from the light of truth; and that they should madly plunge into unbelief, malice and murder; that the punishment of their unfeared obstinacy should follow upon them, like a sudden storm; that the nation of God, after having thus made the last trial of heaven's patience, should be delivered over to unexampled misfortune. The temple to which the Messiah came and was rejected, he made a polluted ruin; their holy soil, the gift of God to their

forefathers, a possession for the vile, the ferocious and the unholy of the earth; all that belonged to their ancient supremacy extinguished, but the name, and that preserved with a miraculous distinctness, for their deeper punishment. The form of their nation subsisting, but in fearful mutilation; the numbers and instruments of policy all torn away—no king—no legislature—no public force—the head and hands severed, and nothing but the trunk surviving; but that kept alive to feel that it was flung upon the earth, and trampled on by the nations.

In the reign of Augustus a man burst forth upon mankind in the land given by God. His birth was announced by the voice of men of public sanctity. He wrought signs and wonders beyond all example, and was rejected. He was rejected by the great, as coming to abolish the hereditary worship, on which they held their rank. He was rejected by the people, as coming to denounce the popular vices; not to break their Roman yoke. The subtle imputed his miracles to assistant demons. The ignorant alternately worshipped and vilified him, according to the common course of untaught passions. All wondered, and a few were convinced and followed their master. He perished by the hands of the Jews. He was delivered over to death with ceremonies of which there was no record among his nation. A singular and solemn devotement of themselves and their posterity to ruin, if he was innocent. Jerusalem was at that moment submissive under the government of Rome. All disturbance seemed among the most remote probabilities, from the acknowledged and overwhelming power of the Empire. The world was at peace. Jesus in dying declared the fall of Jerusalem, and the extension of his doctrine throughout all the earth. Within a few years Jerusalem, after suffering the most fearful calamities, was laid in ruins by the Romans. The surviving Jews were driven, like wild beasts, from their country, and christianity was spread over the whole civilized world.

And what are we to think of the dull and perverted understandings of some, who would call this stupendous consummation chance? How is it to be accounted for that Isaias should conceive the extraordinary idea of a sovereign, whose power was to be displayed, not in the pomps of sovereignty, but in the heart? whose career was to be a combat with the sorrows and evils of human nature? whose majesty was to be loneliness, and whose triumphs were to be sacrifice? A king, mighty above all the names of earthly supremacy,

and who yet was to die the death of a criminal by the hands of that nation, who had been gazing into futurity for him from the days of the Patriarchs?—There is but one being in time to whom the prophecy will apply, and to him it applies with awful completeness.

The Jews who rejected the Messiah, dared not reject the prophecy. They still reverence it, as the description by which this great deliverer, from the longest of all their exiles, an exile of eighteen hundred years, is to be known. In the sullenness of prejudice they will declare that he is yet to come. The great king of the Jew and the Gentile was to come, within a limited time after the Chaldean captivity; to come while Judah was yet a nation, while her worship, her priesthood, and the body of her government subsisted, and to perish before the subversion which was to lay her in blood and dust. He was to come of a known and royal line. Where now is the genealogy of the house of David? It would be as impossible now to trace the blood of the king as of the slave. The Jew shall never see that Messiah, till he see him coming on the clouds in great power and glory to judge the nations.

The proof from prophecy is unanswerable. The prediction of the Messiah is not a solitary burst of inspiration; not a lonely splendour from one hal- lowed enlightener of the earth. It flows from the whole starry region of prophecy. To him all the prophets bear witness. A perpetual stream of prediction rushes down from the first ages, widening and brightening, till the moment when its service was complete, and its course was stopped by the same mighty influence that had poured it from on high.

In early Eden this seed of the woman was fore- told to man, as the future conqueror of his mortal foe. From the patriarchal age the hope of the earth was turned to the coming of the Messiah.—The simple remoteness of the time, precludes all deception. But the different aspects of the prophecy, as it rose more broad on the eye of man, bore the stamp of that wisdom that wastes no miracle. The prediction became distinct as its accomplishment was at hand. Imposture would have dreaded discovery, and made it obscure as it approached the time of trial.

The first announcements were little for knowl- edge, but enough for hope. They declared a combat between the spiritual rulers of human nature, a victory of good over evil, and an everlasting covenant which was to be formed between God and man. The emblems of the glorious and purified kingdom of the victor, were the tree over shadowing the earth, and at once sustaining man-