

law to accuse the dead of what he thinks him guilty. If any one proves he was a bad man, the judges give sentence that the body shall be deprived of sepulture; but in case the informer be convicted of false accusation, then he is severely punished. If no accuser appear, or the information prove false, then all the kindred of the deceased leave off mourning, and begin to set forth his praises, yet say nothing of his birth, (as the custom is among the Greeks), because the Egyptians all think themselves equally noble; but they recount how the deceased was educated from his youth and brought up to man's estate, exalting his piety towards the gods, and justice towards men, his chastity, and other virtues wherein he excelled; and lastly pray and call upon the infernal deities (the gods below) to receive him into the societies of the just. The common people take this from the others, and consequently all is said in his praise by a loud shout, setting forth likewise his virtues in the highest strains of commendation, as one that is to live for ever with the infernal gods. Then those that have tombs of their own inter the corpse in places appointed for that purpose; and they that have none rear up the body in its coffin against some strong wall of their house. But such as are denied sepulture on account of some crime or debt, are laid up at home without coffins; yet when it shall afterwards happen that any of their posterity grows rich, he commonly pays off the deceased person's debts, and gets his crimes absolved, and so buries him honorably; for the Egyptians are wont to boast of their parents and ancestors that were honorably buried. It is a custom likewise among them to pawn the dead bodies of their parents to their creditors; but then those that do not redeem them fall under the greatest disgrace imaginable, and are denied burial themselves at their deaths. - Diod. Sic. Biblioth., lib. i., cap. 91-93, edit. Bipont. See also the Necrokedia, or Art of Embalming, by Greenhill, 4th., p. 241, who endeavored in vain to recommend and restore the art But he could not give his countrymen Egyptian manners; for a dead carcass is to the British an object of horror, and scarcely any, except a surgeon or an undertaker, cares to touch it.

Verse 3

Forty days - The body it appears required this number of days to complete the process of embalming; afterwards it lay in natron thirty days more, making in the whole seventy days, according to the preceding accounts, during which the mourning was continued.

Verse 4

Speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh - But why did not Joseph apply himself? Because he was now in his mourning habits, and in such none must appear in the presence of the eastern monarchs. See Esther 4:2.

Verse 7

The elders of his house - Persons who, by reason of their age, had acquired much experience; and who on this account were deemed the best qualified to conduct the affairs of the king's household. Similar to these were the Eldermen, or Aldermen, among our Saxon ancestors, who were senators and peers of the realm. The funeral procession of Jacob must have been truly grand. Joseph, his brethren and their descendants, the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders - all the principal men, of the land of Egypt, with chariots and horsemen, must have appeared a very great company indeed. We have seen Lords, for their greater honor, buried at the public expense; and all the male branches of the royal family, as well as the most eminent men of the nation, join in the funeral procession, as in the case of the late Lord Nelson; but what was all this in comparison of the funeral solemnity now before us? Here was no conqueror, no mighty man of valor, no person of proud descent; here was only a plain man, who had dwelt almost all his life long in tents, without any other subjects than his cattle, and whose kingdom was not of this world. Behold this man honored by a national mourning, and by a national funeral! It may be said indeed that all this was done out of respect to Joseph. Be it so; why was Joseph thus respected? Was it because he had conquered nations, had made his sword drunk with blood, had triumphed over the enemies of Egypt? No! But because he had saved men alive; because he was the king's faithful servant, the rich man's counsellor, and the poor man's friend. He was a national blessing; and the nation mourns in his affliction, and unites to do him honor.

Verse 10

The threshing-floor of Atad - As *atad* signifies a bramble or thorn, it has been understood by the Arabic, not as a man's name, but as the name of a place; but all the other versions and the Targums consider it as the name of a man. Threshing-floors were always in a field, in the open air; and Atad was probably what we would call a great farmer or chief of some clan or tribe in that place. Jerome supposed the place to have been about two leagues from Jericho; but we have no certain information on this point. The funeral procession stopped here, probably as affording pasturage to their cattle while they observed the seven days' mourning which terminated the funeral solemnities, after which nothing remained but the interment of the corpse. The mourning of the ancient Hebrews was usually of seven days' continuance, Numbers 19:19; 1 Samuel 31:13; though on certain occasions it was extended to thirty days, Numbers 20:29; Deuteronomy 21:13; Deuteronomy 34:8, but never longer. The seventy days' mourning mentioned above was that of the Egyptians, and was rendered necessary by the long process of embalming, which obliged them to keep the body out of the grave

for seventy days, as we learn both from Herodotus and Diodorus. Seven days by the order of God a man was to mourn for his dead, because during that time he was considered as unclean; but when those were finished he was to purify himself, and consider the mourning as ended; Numbers 19:11, Numbers 19:19. Thus God gave seven days, in some cases thirty, to mourn in: man, ever in his own estimation wiser than the word of God, has added eleven whole months to the term, which nature itself pronounces to be absurd, because it is incapable of supporting grief for such a time; and thus mourning is now, except in the first seven or thirty days, a mere solemn ill-conducted Farce, a grave mimicry, a vain show, that convicts itself of its own hypocrisy. Who will rise up on the side of God and common sense, and restore becoming sorrow on the death of a relative to decency of garb and moderation in its continuance? Suppose the near relatives of the deceased were to be allowed seven days of seclusion from society, for the purpose of meditating on death and eternity, and after this to appear in a mourning habit for thirty days; every important end would be accomplished, and hypocrisy, the too common attendant of man, be banished, especially from that part of his life in which deep sincerity is not less becoming than in the most solemn act of his religious intercourse with God.

In a kind of politico-religious institution formed by his late majesty Ferdinand IV., king of Naples and the Sicilies, I find the following rational institute relative to this point: "There shall be no mourning among you but only on the death of a father, mother, husband, or wife. To render to these the last duties of affection, children, wives, and husbands only shall be permitted to wear a sign or emblem of grief: a man may wear a crape tied round his right arm; a woman, a black handkerchief around her neck; and this in both cases for only two months at the most." Is there a purpose which religion, reason, or decency can demand that would not be answered by such external mourning as this? Only such relatives as the above, brothers and sisters being included, can mourn; all others make only a part of the dumb hypocritical show.

Verse 12

And his sons did unto him - This and the thirteenth verse have been supposed by Mr. Locke and others to belong to the conclusion of the preceding chapter, in which connection they certainly read more consistently than they do here.

Verse 15

Saw that their father was dead - This at once argues both a sense of guilt in their own consciences, and a want of confidence in their brother. They might have supposed that hitherto he had forbore to punish them merely on their father's account; but now that he was dead, and Joseph having them completely in his power, they imagined that he would take vengeance on them for their former conduct towards him.

Thus conscience records criminality; and, by giving birth to continual fears and doubtfulness, destroys all peace of mind, security, and confidence. On this subject an elegant poet has spoken with his usual point and discernment: -

Exemplo quodcumque malo committitur, ipsi
 Displicet auctori. Prima est haec ultio, quod se
 Judice nemo nocens absolvitur, improba quamvis
 Gratia fallaci Praetoris vicerit urna.
 Juv. Sat. xiii. 1, etc.

Happily metaphrased by Mr. Dryden: -

He that commits a fault shall quickly find
 The pressing guilt lie heavy on his mind. Though bribes, or favor shall
 assert his cause, Pronounce him guiltless, and elude the laws, None quits himself; his own impartial thought
 Will damn, and conscience will record the fault. This, first, the wicked feels.

We have seen this in the preceding history often exemplified in the case of Joseph's brethren.

Verse 16

Thy father did command - Whether he did or not we cannot tell. Some think they had feigned this story, but that is not so likely. Jacob might have had suspicions too, and might have thought that the best way to prevent evil was to humble themselves before their brother, and get a fresh assurance of his forgiveness.

Verse 17

The servants of the God of thy father - These words were wonderfully well chosen, and spoken in the most forcible manner to Joseph's piety and filial affection. No wonder then that he wept when they spake to him.

Verse 19

Am I in the place of God? - These words may be understood either as a question, or an affirmative proposition. How should I take any farther notice of your transgression? I have passed it by, the matter lies now between God and you. Or, in the order of Divine providence I am now in God's place; he has furnished me with means, and made me a distributor of his bounty; I will therefore not only nourish you, but also your little ones, Genesis

50:21: and therefore he spake comfortably unto them, as in Genesis 45:8, telling them that he attributed the whole business to the particular providence of God rather than to any ill will or malice in them, and that, in permitting him to be brought into Egypt, God had graciously saved their lives, the life of their father, the lives of the people of Canaan, and of the Egyptians: as therefore God had honored him by making him vicegerent in the dispensations of his especial bounty towards so many people, it was impossible he should be displeased with the means by which this was brought about.

Verse 22

Joseph dwelt in Egypt - Continued in Egypt after his return from Canaan till his death; he, and his father's house - all the descendants of Israel, till the exodus or departure under the direction of Moses and Aaron, which was one hundred and forty-four years after.

Verse 23

Were brought up upon Joseph's knees - They were educated by him, or under his direction; his sons and their children continuing to acknowledge him as patriarch, or head of the family, as long as he lived.

Verse 24

Joseph said - I die - That is, I am dying; and God will surely visit you - he will yet again give you, in the time when it shall be essentially necessary, the most signal proof of his unbounded love towards the seed of Jacob.

And bring you out of this land - Though ye have here every thing that can render life comfortable, yet this is not the typical land, the land given by covenant, the land which represents the rest that remains for the people of God.

Verse 25

Ye shall carry up my bones - That I may finally rest with my ancestors in the land which God gave to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and which is a pledge as it is a type of the kingdom of Heaven. Thus says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Hebrews 11:22: By Faith Joseph, when he died, (when dying), made mention of the departure (of the Exodus) of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. From this it is evident that Joseph considered all these things as typical, and by this very commandment expressed his faith in the immortality of the soul, and the general resurrection of the dead. This oath, by which Joseph then bound his brethren, their posterity considered as binding on themselves; and Moses took care, when he departed from Egypt, to carry up Joseph's body with him, Exodus 13:19; which was afterwards buried in Shechem, Joshua 24:32, the very portion which Jacob had purchased from the Amorites, and which he gave to his son Joseph, Genesis 48:22; Acts 7:16. See the reason for this command as given by Chrysostom, vol. ii., p. 695, sec. D.E.

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Verse 26

Joseph died, being a hundred and ten years old - (ben meah vaeser shanim); literally, the son of a hundred and ten years. Here the period of time he lived is personified, all the years of which it was composed being represented as a nurse or father, feeding, nourishing, and supporting him to the end. This figure, which is termed by rhetoricians prosopopoeia, is very frequent in Scripture; and by this virtues, vices, forms, attributes, and qualities, with every part of inanimate nature, are represented as endued with reason and speech, and performing all the actions of intelligent beings.

They embalmed him - See Clarke on Genesis 50:2 (note). The same precautions were taken to preserve his body as to preserve that of his father Jacob; and this was particularly necessary in his case, because his body was to be carried to Canaan a hundred and forty-four years after; which was the duration of the Israelites' bondage after the death of Joseph.

And he was put in a coffin in Egypt - On this subject I shall subjoin some useful remarks from Harmer's Observations, which several have borrowed without acknowledgment. I quoted my own edition of this Work, vol. iii., p. 69, etc. Lond. 1808.

There were some methods of honoring the dead which demand our attention; the being put into a coffin has been in particular considered as a mark of distinction.

With us the poorest people have their coffins; if the relations cannot afford them, the parish is at the expense. In the east, on the contrary, they are not always used, even in our times. The ancient Jews probably buried their dead in the same manner: neither was the body of our Lord put in a coffin, nor that of Elisha, whose bones were touched by the corpse that was let down a little after into his sepulcher, 2 Kings 13:21. That coffins

were anciently used in Egypt, all agree; and antique coffins of stone and of sycamore wood are still to be seen in that country, not to mention those said to be made of a sort of pasteboard, formed by folding and gluing cloth together a great number of times, curiously plastered, and then painted with hieroglyphics.

As it was an ancient Egyptian custom, and was not used in the neighboring countries, on these accounts the sacred historian was doubtless led to observe of Joseph that he was not only embalmed, but was also put in a coffin, both being practices almost peculiar to the Egyptians.

Mr. Maillet conjectures that all were not enclosed in coffins which were laid in the Egyptian repositories of the dead, but that it was an honor appropriated to persons of distinction; for after having given an account of several niches which are found in those chambers of death, he adds: 'But it must not be imagined that the bodies deposited in these gloomy apartments were all enclosed in chests, and placed in niches. The greater part were simply embalmed and swathed, after which they laid them one by the side of the other, without any ceremony. Some were even put into these tombs without any embalming at all, or with such a slight one that there remains nothing of them in the linen in which they were wrapped but the bones, and these half rotten. It is probable that each considerable family had one of these burial-places to themselves; that the niches were designed for the bodies of the heads of the family; and that those of their domestics and slaves had no other care taken of them than merely laying them in the ground after being slightly embalmed, and sometimes even without that; which was probably all that was done to heads of families of less distinction.'—Lett. 7, p. 281. The same author gives an account of a mode of burial anciently practiced in that country, which has been but recently discovered: it consisted in placing the bodies, after they were swathed up, on a layer of charcoal, and covering them with a mat, under a bed of sand seven or eight feet deep.

Hence it seems evident that coffins were not universally used in Egypt, and were only used for persons of eminence and distinction. It is also reasonable to believe that in times so remote as those of Joseph they might have been much less common than afterwards, and that consequently Joseph's being put in a coffin in Egypt might be mentioned with a design to express the great honors the Egyptians did him in death, as well as in life; being treated after the most sumptuous manner, embalmed, and put into a coffin.

It is no objection to this account that the widow of Nain's son is represented as carried forth to be buried in a *ἵψαλον*, or bier; for the present inhabitants of the Levant, who are well known to lay their dead in the earth unenclosed, carry them frequently out to burial in a kind of coffin, which is not deposited in the grave, the body being taken out of it, and placed in the grave in a reclining posture. It is probable that the coffins used at Nain were of the same kind, being intended for no other purpose but to carry the body to the place of interment, the body itself being buried without them.

It is very probable that the chief difference was not in being with or without a coffin, but in the expensiveness of the coffin itself; some of the Egyptian coffins being made of granite, and covered all over with hieroglyphics, the cutting of which must have been done at a prodigious expense, both of time and money; the stone being so hard that we have no tools by which we can make any impression on it. Two of these are now in the British Museum, that appear to have belonged to some of the nobles of Egypt. They are dug out of the solid stone, and adorned with almost innumerable hieroglyphics. One of these, vulgarly called Alexander's tomb, is ten feet three inches and a quarter long, ten inches thick in the sides, in breadth at top five feet three inches and a half, in breadth at bottom four feet two inches and a half, and three feet ten in depth, and weighs about ten tons. In such a coffin I suppose the body of Joseph was deposited; and such a one could not have been made and transported to Canaan at an expense that any private individual could bear. It was with incredible labor and at an extraordinary expense that the coffin in question was removed the distance of but a few miles, from the ship that brought it from Egypt, to its present residence in the British Museum. Judge, then, at what an expense such a coffin must have been dug, engraved, and transported over the desert from Egypt to Canaan, a distance of three hundred miles! We need not be surprised to hear of carriages and horsemen, a very great company, when such a coffin was to be carried so far, with a suitable company to attend it.

Joseph's life was the shortest of all the patriarchs, for which Bishop Patrick gives a sound physical reason - he was the son of his father's old age. It appears from Archbishop Usher's Chronology that Joseph governed Egypt under four kings, Mephramuthosis, Thmosis, Amenophis, and Orus. His government, we know, lasted eighty years; for when he stood before Pharaoh he was thirty years of age, Genesis 41:46, and he died when he was one hundred and ten.

On the character and conduct of Joseph many remarks have already been made in the preceding notes. On the subject of his piety there can be but one opinion. It was truly exemplary, and certainly was tried in cases in which few instances occur of persevering fidelity. His high sense of the holiness of God, the strong claims of justice, and the rights of hospitality and gratitude, led him, in the instance of the solicitations of his master's wife, to act a part which, though absolutely just and proper, can never be sufficiently praised. Heathen authors boast of some persons of such singular constancy; but the intelligent reader will recollect that these relations stand in general in their fabulous histories, and are destitute of those characteristics which truth essentially requires; such, I mean, as the story of Hippolytus and Phaedra, Bellerophon and Antea or Sthenobaea, Peleus and Astydamia, and others of this complexion, which appear to be marred pictures, taken from this highly finished original which the inspired writer has fairly drawn from life.

His fidelity to his master is not less evident, and God's approbation of his conduct is strongly marked; for he caused whatsoever he did to prosper, whether a slave in the house of his master, a prisoner in the dungeon, or a prime minister by the throne, which is a full proof that his ways pleased him; and this is more clearly seen in the providential deliverances by which he was favored.

On the political conduct of Joseph there are conflicting opinions. On the one hand it is asserted that he found the Egyptians a free people, and that he availed himself of a most afflicting providence of God to reduce them all to a state of slavery, destroyed their political consequence, and made their king despotic. In all these respects his political measures have been strongly vindicated, not only as being directed by God, but as being obviously the best, every thing considered, for the safety, honor, and welfare of his sovereign and the kingdom. It is true he bought the lands of the people for the king, but he farmed them to the original occupiers again, at the moderate and fixed crown rent of one-fifth part of the produce. Thus did he provide for the liberty and independence of the people, while he strengthened the authority of the king by making him sole proprietor of the lands. And to secure the people from farther exaction, Joseph made it a law over all the land of Egypt, that Pharaoh (i. e. the king) should have only the fifth part; which law subsisted to the time of Moses, Genesis 47:21-26. By this wise regulation, continues Dr. Hales, the people had four-fifths of the produce of the lands for their own use, and were exempted from any farther taxes, the king being bound to support his civil and military establishment out of the crown rents. By the original constitution of Egypt established by Menes, and Thoth or Hermes his prime minister, the lands were divided into three portions, between the king, the priests, and the military, each party being bound to support its respective establishment by the produce. See the quotations from Diodorus Siculus, in the note on Genesis 47:23 (note). It is certain, therefore, that the constitution of Egypt was considerably altered by Joseph, and there can be no doubt that much additional power was, by this alteration, vested in the hands of the king; but as we do not find that any improper use was made of this power, we may rest assured that it was so qualified and restricted by wholesome regulations, though they are not here particularized, as completely to prevent all abuse of the regal power, and all tyrannical usurpation of popular rights. That the people were nothing but slaves to the king, the military, and the priests before, appears from the account given by Diodorus; each of the three estates probably allowing them a certain portion of land for their own use, while cultivating the rest for the use and emolument of their masters. Matters, however, became more regular under the administration of Joseph; and it is perhaps not too much to say, that, previously to this, Egypt was without a fixed regular constitution, and that it was not the least of the blessings that it owed to the wisdom and prudence of Joseph, that he reduced it to a regular form of government, giving the people such an interest in the safety of the state as was well calculated to insure their exertions to defend the nation, and render the constitution fixed and permanent.

It is well known that Justin, one of the Roman historians, has made particular and indeed honorable mention of Joseph's administration in Egypt, in the account he gives of Jewish affairs, lib. 36. cap. 2. How the relation may have stood in Trogius Pompeius, from whose voluminous works in forty-four books or volumes Justin abridged his history, we cannot tell, as the work of Trogius is irrecoverably lost; but it is evident that the account was taken in the main from the Mosaic history, and it is written with as much candor as can be expected from a prejudiced and unprincipled heathen.

Minimus aetate inter fratres Joseph fruit, etc. Joseph was the youngest of his brethren, who, being envious of his excellent endowments, stole him and privately sold him to a company of foreign merchants, by whom he was carried into Egypt; where, having diligently cultivated magic arts, he became, in a short time, a prime favorite with the king himself. For he was the most sagacious of men in explaining prodigies; and he was the first who constructed the science of interpreting dreams. Nor was there any thing relative to laws human or Divine with which he seemed unacquainted; for he predicted a failure of the crops many years before it took place; and the inhabitants of Egypt must have been famished had not the king, through his counsel, made an edict to preserve the fruits for several years. And his experiments were so powerful, that the responses appear to have been given, not by man, but by God. Tantaque experimenta ejus fuerunt, ut non ab homine, sed a Deo, responsa dari viderentur. I believe Justin refers here in the word experimenta, to his figment of magical incantations eliciting oracular answers. Others have translated the words: So excellent were his regulations that they seemed rather to be oracular responses, not given by man, but by God.

I have already compared Joseph with his father Jacob, See Clarke on Genesis 48:12 (note), and shall make no apology for having given the latter a most decided superiority. Joseph was great; but his greatness came through the interposition of especial providences. Jacob was great, mentally and practically great, under the ordinary workings of Providence; and, towards the close of his life, not less distinguished for piety towards God than his son Joseph was in the holiest period of his life.

Thus terminates the Book of Genesis, the most ancient record in the world; including the history of two grand subjects, Creation and Providence, of each of which it gives a summary, but astonishingly minute, and detailed account. From this book almost all the ancient philosophers, astronomers, chronologists, and historians have taken their respective data; and all the modern improvements and accurate discoveries in different arts and sciences have only served to confirm the facts detailed by Moses; and to show that all the ancient writers on these subjects have approached to or receded from Truth and the phenomena of nature, in proportion as they

have followed the Mosaic history.

In this book the Creative Power and Energy of God are first introduced to the reader's notice, and the mind is overwhelmed with those grand creative acts by which the universe was brought into being. When this account is completed, and the introduction of Sin, and its awful consequences in the destruction of the earth by a flood, noticed, then the Almighty Creator is next introduced as the Restorer and Preserver of the world; and thus the history of Providence commences: a history in which the mind of man is alternately delighted and confounded with the infinitely varied plans of wisdom and mercy in preserving the human species, counteracting the evil propensities of men and devils by means of gracious influences conveyed through religious institutions, planting and watering the seeds of righteousness which himself had sowed in the hearts of men, and leading forward and maturing the grand purposes of his grace in the final salvation of the human race.

After giving a minutely detailed account of the peopling of the earth, ascertaining and settling the bounds of the different nations of mankind, the sacred writer proceeds with the history of one family only; but he chooses that one through which, as from an ever-during fountain, the streams of justice, grace, goodness, wisdom, and truth, should emanate. Here we see a pure well of living water, springing up into eternal life, restrained in its particular influence to one people till, in the fullness of time, the fountain should be opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness in general, and the earth filled with the knowledge and salvation of God; thus by means of one family, as extensive a view of the economy of providence and grace is afforded as it is possible for the human mind to comprehend.

In this epitome how wonderful do the workings of Providence appear! An astonishing concatenated train of stupendous and minute events is laid before us; and every transaction is so distinctly marked as everywhere to exhibit the finger, the hand, or the arm of God! But did God lavish his providential cares and attention on this one family, exclusive of the rest of his intelligent offspring? No: for the same superintendence, providential direction, and influence, would be equally seen in all the concerns of human life, in the preservation of individuals, the rise and fall of kingdoms and states, and in all the mighty Revolutions, natural, moral, and political, in the universe, were God, as in the preceding instances, to give us the detailed history; but what was done in the family of Abraham, was done in behalf of the whole human race. This specimen is intended to show us that God does work, and that against him and the operations of his hand, no might, no counsel, no cunning of men or devils, can prevail; that he who walks uprightly walks securely; and that all things work together for good to them who love God; that none is so ignorant, low, or lost, that God cannot instruct, raise up, and save. In a word, he shows himself by this history to be the invariable friend of mankind, embracing every opportunity to do them good, and, to speak after the manner of men, rejoicing in the frequent recurrence of such opportunities; that every man, considering the subject, may be led to exclaim in behalf of all his fellows, Behold How He Loveth Them!

On the character of Moses as a Historian and Philosopher (for in his legislative character he does not yet appear) much might be said, did the nature of this work admit. But as brevity has been everywhere studied, and minute details rarely admitted, and only where absolutely necessary, the candid reader will excuse any deficiencies of this kind which he may have already noticed.

Of the accuracy and impartiality of Moses as a historian, many examples are given in the course of the notes, with such observations and reflections as the subjects themselves suggested; and the succeeding books will afford many opportunities for farther remarks on these topics.

The character of Moses as a philosopher and chronologist, has undergone the severest scrutiny. A class of philosophers, professedly infidels, have assailed the Mosaic account of the formation of the universe, and that of the general deluge, with such repeated attacks as sufficiently prove that, in their apprehension, the pillars of their system must be shaken into ruin if those accounts could not be proved to be false. Traditions, supporting accounts different from those in the sacred history, have been borrowed from the most barbarous as well as the most civilized nations, in order to bear on this argument. These, backed by various geologic observations made in extensive travels, experiments on the formation of different strata or beds of earth, either by inundations or volcanic eruption, have been all condensed into one apparently strong but strange argument, intended to overthrow the Mosaic account of the creation. The argument may be stated thus: "The account given by Moses of the time when God commenced his creative acts is too recent; for, according to his Genesis, six thousand years have not yet elapsed since the formation of the universe; whereas a variety of phenomena prove that the earth itself must have existed, if not from eternity, yet at least fourteen if not twenty thousand years." This I call a strange argument, because it is well known that all the ancient nations in the world, the Jews excepted, have, to secure their honor and respectability, assigned to themselves a duration of the most improbable length; and have multiplied months, weeks, and even days, into years, in order to support their pretensions to the most remote antiquity. The millions of years which have been assumed by the Chinese and the Hindoos have been ridiculed for their manifest absurdity, even by those philosophers who have brought the contrary charge against the Mosaic account. So notorious are the pretensions to remote ancestry and remote eras, in every false and fabricated system of family pedigree and national antiquity, as to produce doubt at the very first view of their subjects, and to cause the impartial inquirer after truth to take every step with the extreme of caution, knowing that in going over such accounts he everywhere treads on a kind of enchanted

ground.

When in the midst of these a writer is found who, without saying a word of the systems of other nations, professes to give a simple account of the creation and peopling of the earth, and to show the very conspicuous part that his own people acted among the various nations of the world, and who assigns to the earth and to its inhabitants a duration comparatively but as of yesterday, he comes forward with such a variety of claims to be heard, read, and considered, as no other writer can pretend to. And as he departs from the universal custom of all writers on similar subjects, in assigning a comparatively recent date, not only to his own nation, but to the universe itself, he must have been actuated by motives essentially different from those which have governed all other ancient historians and chronologists.

The generally acknowledged extravagance and absurdity of all the chronological systems of ancient times, the great simplicity and harmony of that of Moses, its facts evidently borrowed by others, though disgraced by the fables they have intermixed with them, and the very late invention of arts and sciences, all tend to prove, at the very first view, that the Mosaic account, which assigns the shortest duration to the earth, is the most ancient and the most likely to be true. But all this reasoning has been supposed to be annihilated by an argument brought against the Mosaic account of the creation by Mr. Patrick Brydone, F.R.S., drawn from the evidence of different eruptions of Mount Etna. The reader may find this in his "Tour through Sicily and Malta," letter vii., where, speaking of his acquaintance with the Canonico Recupero at Catania, who was then employed on writing a natural history of Mount Etna, he says: "Near to a vault which is now thirty feet below ground, and has probably been a burying-place, there is a draw-well where there are several strata of lavas, (i. e., the liquid matter formed of stones, etc., which is discharged from the mountain in its eruptions), with earth to a considerable thickness over each stratum. Recupero has made use of this as an argument to prove the great antiquity of the eruptions of this mountain. For if it requires two thousand years and upwards to form but a scanty soil on the surface of a lava, there must have been more than that space of time between each of the eruptions which have formed these strata. But what shall we say of a pit they sunk near to Jaci, of a great depth? They pierced through seven distinct lavas, one under the other, the surfaces of which were parallel, and most of them covered with a thick bed of rich earth. Now, says he, the eruption which formed the lowest of these lavas, if we may be allowed to reason from analogy, must have flowed from the mountain at least fourteen thousand years ago! Recupero tells me, he is exceedingly embarrassed by these discoveries, in writing the history of the mountain; that Moses hangs like a dead weight upon him, and blunts all his zeal for inquiry, for that he really has not the conscience to make his mountain so young as that prophet makes the world. "The bishop, who is strenuously orthodox, (for it is an excellent see), has already warned him to be upon his guard; and not to pretend to be a better natural historian than Moses, nor to presume to urge any thing that may in the smallest degree be deemed contradictory to his sacred authority."

Though Mr. Brydone produces this as a sneer against revelation, bishops, and orthodoxy, yet the sequel will prove that it was good advice, and that the bishop was much better instructed than either Recupero or Brydone, and that it would have been much to their credit had they taken his advice.

I have given, however, this argument at length; and even in the insidious dress of Mr. Brydone, whose faith in Divine revelation appears to have been upon a par with that of Signior Recupero, both being built nearly on the same foundation; to show from the answer how slight the strongest arguments are, produced from insulated facts by prejudice and partiality, when brought to the test of sober, candid, philosophical investigation, aided by an increased knowledge of the phenomena of nature. "In answer to this argument," says Bishop Watson, (Letters to Gibbon), "it might be urged that the time necessary for converting lavas into fertile fields must be very different, according to the different consistencies of the lavas, and their different situations with respect to elevation and depression, or their being exposed to winds, rains, and other circumstances; as for instance, the quantity of ashes deposited over them, after they had cooled, etc., etc., just as the time in which heaps of iron slag, which resembles lava, are covered with verdure, is different at different furnaces, according to the nature of the slag and situation of the furnace; and something of this kind is deducible from the account of the canon (Recupero) himself, since the crevices in the strata are often full of rich good soil, and have pretty large trees growing upon them. But should not all this be thought sufficient to remove the objection, I will produce the canon an analogy in opposition to his analogy, and which is grounded on more certain facts.

"Etna and Vesuvius resemble each other in the causes which produce their eruptions, in the nature of their lavas, and in the time necessary to mellow them into soil fit for vegetation; or, if there be any slight difference in this respect, it is probably not greater than what subsists between different lavas of the same mountain. This being admitted, which no philosopher will deny, the canon's (Recupero's) analogy will prove just nothing at all if we can produce an instance of seven different lavas, with interjacent strata of vegetable earth, which have flowed from Mount Vesuvius within the space, not of fourteen thousand, but of somewhat less than one thousand seven hundred years; for then, according to our analogy, a stratum of lava may be covered with vegetable soil in about two hundred and fifty years, instead of requiring two thousand for that purpose.

"The eruption of Vesuvius, which destroyed Herculaneum and Pompeii, is rendered still more famous by the death of Pliny, recorded by his nephew in his letter to Tacitus. This event happened a. d. 79; but we are informed by unquestionable authority, (Remarks on the nature of the soil of Naples and its vicinity, by Sir

William Hamilton, Philos. Transact., vol. lxi., p. 7), that the matter which covers the ancient town of Herculaneum is not the produce of one eruption only, for there are evident marks that the matter of six eruptions has taken its course over that which lies immediately over the town, and was the cause of its destruction. The strata are either of lava or burnt matter with veins of good soil between them. You perceive, says the bishop, "with what ease a little attention and increase of knowledge may remove a great difficulty; but had we been able to say nothing in explanation of this phenomenon, we should not have acted a very rational part in making our ignorance the foundation of our infidelity, or suffering a minute philosopher to rob us of our religion." In this, as well as in all other cases, the foundation stands sure, being deeply and legibly impressed with God's seal. See also Dr. Greaves's Lectures on the Pentateuch.

There is a very sensible paper written by Don Joseph Gioeni (The Chevalier Gioeni was an inhabitant of the first region of Etna). on the eruption of Etna in 1781; in which, among many other valuable observations, I find the following note: "I was obliged to traverse the current of lava made by the eruption of 1766, the most ancient of any that took this direction, viz., Bronte. I saw several streams of lava which had crossed others, and which afforded me evident proofs of the fallacy of the conclusions of those who seek to estimate the period of the formation of the beds of lava from the change they have undergone. Some lava of earlier date than others still resist the weather, and present a vitreous and unaltered surface, while the lava of later date already begin to be covered with vegetation." - See Pinkerton on Rock, vol. ii., p. 395.

On the geology and astronomy of the book of Genesis, much has been written, both by the enemies and friends of revelation; but as Moses has said but very little on these subjects, and nothing in a systematic way, it is unfair to invent a system pretendedly collected out of his words, and thus make him accountable for what he never wrote. There are systems of this kind, the preconceived fictions of their authors, for which they have sought support and credit by tortured meanings extracted from a few Hebrew roots, and then dignified them with the title of The Mosaic System of the Universe. This has afforded infidelity a handle which it has been careful to turn to its own advantage. On the first chapter of Genesis, I have given a general view of the solar system, without pretending that I had found it there. I have also ventured to apply the comparatively recent doctrine of caloric to the Mosaic account of the creation of light previous to the formation of the sun, and have supported it with such arguments as appeared to me to render it at least probable: but I have not pledged Moses to any of my explanations, being fully convinced that it was necessarily foreign from his design to enter into philosophic details of any kind, as it was his grand object, as has been already remarked, to give a history of Creation and Providence in the most abridged form of which it was capable. And who, in so few words, ever spoke so much? By Creation I mean the production of every being, animate and inanimate, material and intellectual. And by Providence, not only the preservation and government of all being, but also the various and extraordinary provisions made by Divine justice and mercy for the comfort and final salvation of man. These subjects I have endeavored to trace out through every chapter of this book, and to exhibit them in such a manner as appeared to me the best calculated to promote glory to God in the highest, and upon Earth Peace And Good Will Among Men.