guiſh them from other books; which, being of no au­thority, were kept as it were out of ſight, and there­fore ſtyled *apocryphal @@*(a).

The authenticity of the Old Teſtament may be pro ved from the character of the Jews, from internal evi­dence, and from teſtimony.

**I.** The character of the Jews affords a ſtrong preſumptive evidence that they have not forged or corrupt­ed the Old Teſtament. Were a perſon brought before a court of juſtice on a ſuſpicion of forgery, and yet no preſumption or poſitive evidence of his guilt could be produced, it would be allowed by all that he ought to be acquitted. But farther, if the forgery alleged were inconſiſtent with the character of the accuſed; if it tended to expoſe to diſgrace and reproach his gene­ral principles and conduct; or if we were aſſured that be conſidered forgery as an impious and abominable crime—it would require very ſtrong teſtimony to eſtabliſh his guilt. The cafe now mentioned correſponds exactly with the character and ſituation of the Jews. If a Jew had forged any book of the Old Teſtament, he muſt have been impelled to ſo bold and dangerous an enterpriſe by ſome very powerful motive. It could not be national pride, for there is ſcarcely one of there books which does not ſeverely cenſure the national man­ners. It could not be the love of fame; for that paſſion would have taught him to flatter and extol the na­tional character; and the puniſhment, if detected, would have been infamy and death. The love of wealth could not produce ſuch a forgery; for no wealth was to be gained.

The Jews were ſelected from the other nations of the world, and preſerved a diſtinct people from the time of their emigration from Egypt to the Babyloniſh captivity, a period of 892 years. The principal purpoſes for which they were ſelected was to preſerve in a world running headlong into idolatry the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God, and to be the guardians of thoſe ſacred books that contained the prophecies which were to prove to future ages the divine miſſion of the Redeemer of mankind. To fit them for theſe im­portant trufts, the ſpirit of their laws and the rites of their religion had the ſtrongeſt tendency. Miracles were openly performed, to convince them that the God of Iſrael was the God of all the earth, and that he alone was to be worſhipped. Public calamities always befel them when they became apoſtates to their God; yet they continued violently attached to idolatry till their captivity in Babylon made them for ever renounce it.

The Jews then had two oppoſite characters at diffe­rent periods of their hiſtory: At firſt they were addicted to idolatry; afterwards they acquired a ſtrong anti­pathy againſt it.

Had any books of the Old Teſtament been forged before the Babyloniſh captivity, when the Jews were devoted to idolatry, is it to be conceived that the impoſtor would have inveighed ſo ſtrongly againſt this vice, and ſo often imputed to it the calamities of the ſtate; ſince by ſuch conduct he knew that he would render himſelf obnoxious to the people and to thoſe ido­latrous monarchs who perſecuted the prophets?

But it may next be ſuppoſed, that “the ſacred books were forged after the Babyloniſh captivity, when the principles of the Jews would lead them to inveigh againſt the worſhip of idols. But theſe principles would ſurely never lead them to expoſe the character of their anceſtors, and to detail their follies and their crimes. Never had any people more national pride, or a higher veneration for their anceſtors, than the Jews. Miracles and prophecies ceaſed ſoon after their return to Jeruſalem; and from that period their reſpect for the ſacred books approached to ſuperſtition. They preſerved them with pious care, they read them often in their ſynagogues, and they conſidered every attempt to alter the text as an act of ſacrilege. Is it poſſible that ſuch men could be guilty of forgery, or could falſe "writings be eaſily impoſed on them?

2. There is an internal evidence in the books of the Old Teſtament that proves them to have been written by different perſons, and at diſtant periods; and enables us with preciſion to aſcertain a time at or before which they muſt have been compoſed. It is an undeniable fact that Hebrew ceaſed to be the living language of the Jews during the Babyloniſh captivity, and that the Jewiſh productions after that period were in general written either in Chaldee or in Greek. The Jews of Paleſtine, ſome ages before the coming of our Saviour, were unable, without the aſſiſtance of a Chaldee para- phraſe, to underſtand the Hebrew original. It neceſſarily follows, therefore, that every book which is writ­ten in pure Hebrew was compoſed either before or about the time of the Babyloniſh captivity. This be­ing admitted, we may advance a ſtep farther, and con­tend that the period which elapſed between the compoſition of the moſt ancient and the moſt modern book of the Old Teſtament was very conſiderable; or, in other words, that the moſt ancient books of the Old Teſta­ment were written many ages before the Babyloniſh captivity.

No language continues ſtationary; and the Hebrew, like other tongues, paſſed through the ſeveral ſtages of infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. If therefore, on compariſon, the ſeveral parts of the Hebrew Bible are found to differ not only in regard to ſtyle, but alſo in regard to character and cultivation, we have ſtrong internal marks that they were compoſed at different and diſtant periods. No claſſical ſcholar would believe, independent of the Grecian hiſtory, that the poems aſcribed to Homer were written in the age of Demoſthenes, the Orations of Demoſthenes in the time of Ori­gen, or the Commentaries of Origen in the time of Daſcaris and Chryſhloras. For the very ſarne reaſon, it is certain that the five books which arc aſcribed to Moſes were not written in the time of David, the Pſalins of David in the age of Iſaiah, nor the prophe­cies of Iſaiah in the time of Malachi; and ſince the Hebrew became a dead language about the time of the Babyloniſh captivity, the book of Malachi could not have been written much later. Before that period there- fore were written the prophecies of lſaiah, ſtill earlier the Pſalms of David, and much earlier than theſe the books which are aſcribed to Moſes.

(a) From αποχϱυπΊω, to put out of fight.