chariah, Malachi. The four firſt are called the *greater* prophets; the other twelve are denominated the *minor* prophets.

The writings of the Prophets are to Chriſtians the moſt intereſting part of the Old Teſtament; for they af­ford one of the moſt powerful arguments for the divine origin of the Chriſtian religion. If we could only prove, therefore, that theſe prophecies were uttered a ſingle century before the events took place to which they relate, their claim to inſpiration would be unques­tionable. But we can prove that the interval between their enunciation and accompliſhment extended much farther, even to 500 and 1000 years, and in ſome cafes much more.

The books of the prophets are mentioned by Joſephus, and therefore ſurely exiſted in his time; they are alſo quoted by our Saviour, under the general denomina­tion of the *Prophets.* We are informed by Tacitus and Suetonius, that about 60 years before the birth of our Saviour there was an univerſal expectation in the eaſt of a great perſonage who was to ariſe; and the ſource of this expectation is traced by the ſame writers to the ſacred books of the Jews. They exiſted alſo in the time of Amtiochus Epiphanes, A. C. 166; for when that tyrant prohibited the reading of the law, the books of the Prophets were ſubſtituted in its place, and were continued as a part of the daily ſervice after the inter­dict againſt the law of Moſes was taken off. We for­merly remarked, that references are made by the author of *Ecclesiasticus,* A. C. 200, to the writings of Iſaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and that he mentions the 12 Prophets. We can aſcend ſtill higher, and aſſert from the language of the Prophets, that all their writings muſt have been compoſed before the Babyloniſh capti­vity, or within a century after it; for all of them, ex­cept Daniel and Ezra, are compoſed in Hebrew, and even in them long paſſages are found in that language: but it is a well known fact, that all the books written by Jews about two centuries after that era are compoſed in the Syriac, or Chaldaic, or Greek language.

"Let any man (ſays Michaelis) compare what was writ­ten in Hebrew after the Babyloniſh exile, and, I appre­hend, he will perceive no leſs evident marks of decay than in the Latin language.” Even in the time of Ez­ra, the common people, from their long reſidence in Babylonia, had forgotten the Hebrew, and it was neceſſary for the learned to interpret the law of Moſes to them. We can therefore aſcertain with very conſiderable preciſion the date of the prophetic writings; which indeed is the only important point to be deter­mined: For whether we can diſcover the authors or not, if we can only eſtabliſh their ancient date, we ſhall be fully entitled to draw this concluſion, that the pre­dictions of the Prophets are inſpired.

Much has been written to explain the nature of in­ſpiration, and to ſhow by what methods God imparted to the prophets that divine knowledge which they were commanded to publiſh to their countrymen. At­tempts have been made to diſcloſe the nature of dreams and viſions, and to deſcribe the ecſtacy or rapture to which the prophets were ſuppoſed to be raiſed while they uttered their predictions. Not to mention the degrading and indecent compariſon which this laſt circumſtance ſuggeſts, we ſhall only inform thoſe who ex­pect here an explanation of the prophetic dreams and

viſions, that *we ſhall not attempt to be wiſe above what it written.* The manner in which the allwiſe and unſeen God may think proper to operate upon the minds of his creatures, we might expect a *priori* to be myſterious and inexplicable. Indeed ſuch an inquiry, though it were ſucceſsful, would only gratify curioſity, without being in the leaſt degree conducive to uſeful know­ledge.

The buſineſs of philoſophy is not to inquire how al­mighty power produced the frame of nature, and beſtowed upon it that beauty and grandeur which is eve­rywhere conſpicuous, but to diſcover thoſe marks of in­telligence and deſign, and the various purpoſes to which the works of nature are ſubſervient. Philoſophy has of late been directed to theology and the ſtudy of the Scriptures with the happieſt effects; but it is not per­mitted to enter within the vail which the Lord of Na­ture has thrown over his councils. Its province, which is ſufficiently extenſive, is to examine the lan­guage of the prophecies, and to diſcover their appli­cation.

The character of the prophetic ſtyle varies accord­ing to the genius, the education, and mode of li­ving of the reſpective authors; but there are ſome pe­culiarities which run through the whole prophetic books. A plain unadorned ſtyle would not have ſuited thoſe men who were to wrap the myſteries of futu­rity in a veil, which was not to be penetrated till the events themſelves ſhould be accompliſhed. For it was never the intention of prophecy to unfold futurity to our view, as many of the raſh interpreters of prophecy fondly imagine; for this would be inconſiſtent with the free agency of man. It was therefore agreeable to the wiſdom of God that prophecies ſhould be couched in a language which would render them unintelligible till the period of their completion; yet ſuch a language as is diſtinct, regular, and would be eaſily explained when the events themſelves ſhould have taken place. This is preciſely the character of the prophetic lan­guage. It is partly derived from the hieroglyphical ſymbols of Egypt, to which the Iſraelites during their ſervitude were familiarized, and partly from that ana­logy which ſubſiſts between natural objects and thoſe which are moral and political.

The prophets borrowed their imagery from the moſt ſplendid and ſublime natural objects, from the hoſt of heaven, from ſeas and mountains, from ſtorms and earthquakes, and from the moſt ſtriking revolutions in nature. The *cele*ſt*ial bodies* they uſed as ſymbols to expreſs thrones and dignities, and thoſe who enjoyed them. *Earth* was the ſymbol for men of low eſtate. *Hades* repreſents the miſerable. Asc*ending to heaven,* and *depending to earthy* are phraſes which expreſs riling to power, or falling from it. *Great earthquakes*, the *peaking oſ heaven and earth,* denote the commotions and overthrow of kingdoms. The sun represents the whole race of kings ſhining with regal power and glory. The *moon* is the ſymbol of the common people. The st*ars* are ſubordinate princes and great men. *Light* denotes glory, truth, or knowledge. *Darkneſs* expreſſes obſcurity of condition, error, and ignorance. The *darkening oſ the sun,* the *turning oſ the moon into blood,* and the *fall­ing oſ the stαrs,* ſignify the deſtruction or deſolation of a kingdom. *New moons,* the returning of a nation from a diſperſed ſtate. *Conflagration oſ the earth,* is the ſym-