ing, and afford ſufficient motives to obey his will. The effects of it accordingly were apparent in the righteous family of Seth, who ſoon diſtinguiſhed themſelves from the posterity of Cain, and for their eminent piety were honour­ed with the appellation of *the ſons of God.* Of this family ſprang a person ſo remarkable for virtue and devotion, as to be exempted from Adam's ſentence and the common lot of his ſons ; for after he had walked with God 300 years, and prophecied to his brethren, he was tranſlated that he ſhould not see death. Of this miraculous event there can be no doubt but that his contemporaries had ſome viſible demonſtration ; and as the fate of Abel was an argument to their reaſon, ſo the tranſlation of Enoch was a proof to their ſenſes of another state of life after the preſent. To Adam himſelf, if he was then alive @@(S), it must have been a lively and affecting instance of what he might have enjoyed, had he kept his innocence ; it must have been a comfortable earneſt of the promiſed victory over the evil one ; and have confirmed his hope, that when the head of the ſerpent ſhould be completely bruiſed, ſhe and his posterity would be reſtored to the favour of their Maker, and behold his pre­sence in bleſs and immortality.

Nothwithstanding this watchful care of God over his fal­len creature man, vice, and probably idolatry, ſpread through the world with a rapid pace. The family of Seth married into that oſ Cain, and adopted the manners of their new relations. Rapine and violence, unbounded lust and im­purity of every kind, prevailed univerſally ; and when thoſe giants in wickedneſs had filled the earth with tyranny, injuſtice, and oppreſſion ; when the whole race was become entirely carnal—God, after raising up another prophet to give them frequent warnings of their fate for the ſpace of 120 years, was at length obliged, in mercy to themſelves as well as to the ſucceeding generations of men, to cut them off by a general deluge. See Deluge.

Thus did God, by the ſpirit of prophecy, which is by ſome ſuppoſed to have been hereditary in the heads of fami­lies ; by frequent manifestations of his own preſence ; and by uninterrupted tradition—make ample proviſion for the inſtruction and improvement of the world for the first 1600 years. After the deluge he was pleaſed to converſe again with Noah, and make in his person a new and extenſive co­venant with mankind, (see Prophecy, n⁰ 11.). Of his power, juſtice, and goodness ; of his ſupreme dominion over the earth and the heavens ; of his abhorrence of sin, and his determination not to let it go unpunished—that patriarch and his family had been most awfully convinced ; nor could they or their children, for ſome time, want any other argu­ment to enforce obedience, fear, and worship. The ſons of Noah were an 100 years old when the deluge overwhelm­ed the earth. They had long convened with their ancestors of the old world, had frequented the religious aſſemblies, obſerved every Sabbath day, and been inſtructed by thoſe who had ſeen Adam. It is therefore impoſſible that they could be ignorant of the creation of the world, of the fall of man, or of the promiſe of future deliverance from the conſequences of that fall ; or that they could offer their ſacrifices, and perform the other rites of the instituted worſhip, without looking forward with the eye of faith to that deliverance ſeen, perhaps obſcurely, through their typi­cal oblations.

In this state of things, with the awful remembrance of the deluge continually preſent to their minds, religion might for ſome time be ſafely propagated by tradition. But when by degrees mankind corrupted that tradition in its most eſſential parts ; when, instead of the one Supreme God, they ſet up ſeveral orders of inferior deities, and worſhipped all the host of heaven ; when, at the same time they were uni­ting under one head, and forming a univerſal empire under the patronage of the Sun their chief divinity (see Babel) — God ſaw it necessary to diſperſe them into distinct colonies, by cauſing such discord among them as rendered it impoſ­ſible for any one ſpecies of idolatry to be at once univerſally eſtabliſhed.

After this diſperſion, there is reaſon to believe that par­ticular revelations were vouchſafed wherever men were diſpoſed to regard them. Peleg had his name prophetically gi­ven him from the dispersion which was to happen in his days ; and not only his father Eber, but all the heads of fa­milies mentioned from Noah to Abraham, are with much plausibility ſuppoſed to have had the ſpirit of prophecy on many occaſions. Noah was undoubtedly both priest and prophet; and living till within two years of the birth, of Abraham, or, according to others, till that patriarch was near 60 years old, he would ſurely be able to keep up a tole­rable ſenſe of true religion among ſuch of his deſcendants as ſojourned within the influence of his doctrine and example. His religious ſon Shem, who lived till after the birth of Iſaac, could not but preſerve in tolerable purity the faith and worſhip of the true God among such of his own deſcendants as lived in his neighbourhood.

But though the remains of true religion were thus preſerved among a few righteous men, idolatry, with its inſeparable attendants, unnatural lusts and cruel superstition @@(T), had in a ſhort time prevailed ſo far among the ſons of Noah, that God, in his infinite wiſdom, ſaw it expedient not only to ſhorten the lives of men, but alſo to withdraw his preſence from the generality, who had thus rendered them­ſelves unworthy of ſuch communications ; and to ſelect a particular family, in which his worſhip might be preſerved pure amidst the various corruptions that were overſpreading the world. With this view Abraham was called ; and after many remarkable trials of his faith and conſtancy, admit­ted to a particular intimacy and friendſhip with his Maker. God entered into a peculiar covenant with him, engaging to be his preſent guide, protector, and defender ; to bellow all temporal bleſſings upon him and his seed ; and to make ſome of thoſe seed the instruments of conveying bleſſings of a higher kind to all the nations of the earth.

It was doubtleſs for his singular piety that Abraham was fixed upon to be the parent of that people, who ſhould preſerve the knowledge of the unity of God in the midst of an idolatrous and polytheistic world ; but we are not to ima­gine that it was for his sake only that all this was done, or that his leſs worthy deſcendants were by the equal Lord of all treated with partial fondness for the virtues of their anceſtor ; it was for the benefit of mankind in general that he was called from his country, and from his father’s houſe, that he might preſerve the doctrine of the Divine unity in his own family, and be an inſtrument in the hand of Provi­dence (and a fit one he was) to convey the same faith to the nations around him. Accordingly, we find him diſtinguiſhed among the neighbouring princes, and kings reproved for his sake; who being made acquainted with his prophetic cha­racter, deſire his interceſſion with God. History tells us of his converting on the ſubject of religion with the most learn.

@@@(S) According to the Samaritan chronology, he was alive ; according to the Hebrew, he had been dead 57 years. @@@(T) See the effects of idolatry well deſcribed in the Apocryphal book of Wiſdom, chap. xiv.