the viſions which he beheld in **the three f**irſt years **of** Belſhazzar’s reign; and thoſe which follow in the four laſt chapters were revealed to him in the reign of Da­rius. The ſix laſt chapters are compoſed of prophecies delivered at different times; all of which are in some de­gree connected as parts of one great ſcheme. They extend through many ages, and furniſh the moſt ſtriking deſcription of the fall of ſucceſſive kingdoms, which were to be introductory to the eſtabliſhment of the Meſſiah’s reign. They characterize in deſcriptive terms the four great monarchies of the world to be ſucceeded by “that kingdom which ſhould not be deſtroyed.”

The whole book of Daniel being no more than a plain relation of facts, partly paſt and partly future, muſt be excluded the claſs of poetical prophecy. Much indeed of the parabolic imagery is introduced in that book; but the author introduces it as a prophet only; as viſionary and allegorical ſymbols of objects and events, totally untinctured with the true poetical colouring. The Jews, indeed, would refute to Daniel even the cha­racter of a prophet: but the arguments under which they ſhelter this opinion are very futile; for thoſe points which they maintain concerning the conditions on which the gift of prophecy is imparted, the diffe­rent gradations, and the diſcrimination between the true prophecy and mere inſpiration, are all trifling and abſurd, without any foundation in the nature of things, and totally deſtitute of ſcriptural authority. They add, that Daniel was neither originally educated in the pro­phetic diſcipline and precepts, nor afterwards lived con­formably to the manner of the prophets. It is not, however, eaſy to comprehend how this can diminiſh his claim to a divine miſſion and inſpiration; it may poſſibly enable us, indeed, to aſſign a reaſon for the diſſimilarity between the ſtyle of Daniel and that of the other prophets, and for its poſſeſſing ſo little of the dic­tion and character of poetry, which the reſt ſeem to have imbibed in common from the ſchools and diſcipline in which they were educated.

The prophecies of Daniel appear ſo plain and intel­ligible after their accompliſhment, that Porphyry, who wrote in the 3d century, affirms, that they were written after the events to which they refer took place. A little reflection will ſhow the abſurdity of this ſuppoſition. Some of the prophecies of Daniel clearly refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, with whoſe oppreſſions the Jews were too well acquainted. Had the book of Daniel not made its appearance till after the death of Epipha­nes, every Jew who read it muſt have diſcovered the forgery. And what motive could induce them to re­ceive it among their ſacred books? It is impoſſible to conceive *one.* Their character was quite the reverſe: their reſpect for the Scriptures had degenerated into ſuperſtition. But we are not left to determine this im­portant point from the character of the Jews; we have acceſs to more deciſive evidence; we are ſure that the book of Daniel contains prophecies, for ſome of them have been accompliſhed ſince the time of Porphyry; particularly thoſe reſpecting Antichriſt: now, if it con­tains any prophecies, who will take upon him to affirm that the divine Spirit, which dictated theſe many cen­turies before they were fulfilled, could not alſo have delivered prophecies concerning Antiochus Epiphanes?

The language in which the book of Daniel is com­peted proves that it was written about the time of the Babyloniſh captivity. Part of it is pure Hebrew; a language in which none of the Jewiſh books were compoſed after the age of Epiphanes. Theſe are argu­ments to a deiſt. To a Chriſtian the internal marks of the book itſelf will ſhow the time in which it was writ­ten, and the teſtimony of Ezekiel will prove Daniel to be at leaſt his contemporary@@\*.

The twelve minor prophets were ſo called, not from any ſuppoſed inferiority in their writings, but on ac­count of the ſmall ſize of their works. Perhaps it was for this reaſon that the Jews joined them together, and conſidered them as one volume. Theſe 12 prophets preſent in ſcattered hints a lively ſketch of many parti­culars relative to the hiſtory of Judah and of Iſrael, as well as of other kingdoms: they propheſy with hiſtorical exactneſs the fate of Babylon, of Nineveh, of Tyre, of Sidon, and of Damaſcus@@. The three laſt prophets eſpecially illuſtrate many circumſtances at a period when the hiſtorical pages of Scripture are cloſed, and when profane writers are entirely wanting. At firſt the Jewiſh prophets appeared only as ſingle lights, and fol­lowed each other in individual ſucceſſion; but they became more numerous about the time of the captivity. The light of inſpiration was collected into one blaze, previous to its ſuſpenſion; and it ſerved to keep alive the expectations of the Jews during the awful interval which prevailed between the expiration of prophecy and its grand completion on the advent of Chriſt.

Hoſea has been ſuppoſed the moſt ancient of the 12 minor prophets. He flouriſhed in the reign of Jero­boam II. king of Iſrael, and during the ſucceſſive reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Ju­dah. He was therefore nearly contemporary with Iſaiah, Amos, and Jonah. The prophecies of Hoſea be­ing ſcattered through the book without date or con­nection, cannot with any certainty be chronologically arranged.

Hoſea is the firſt in order of the minor prophets, and is perhaps, Jonah excepted, the moſt ancient of them all. His ſtyle exhibits the appearance of very remote antiquity; it is pointed, energetic, and conciſe. It bears a diſtinguiſhed mark of poetical compoſition, in that priſtine brevity and condenſation which is obſervable in the tentences, and which later writers have in ſome meaſure neglected. This peculiarity has not eſcaped the obſervation of Jerome: “He is altogether (ſays he, ſpeaking of this prophet) laconic and ſententious.” But this very circumſtance, which anciently was ſuppoſed no doubt to impart uncommon force and ele­gance, in the preſent ruinous ſtate of the Hebrew lite­rature is productive of ſo much obſcurity, that although the general ſubject of this writer be ſufflciently obvious, he is the moſt difficult and perplexed of all the pro­phets. There is, however, another reaſon for the ob­ſcurity of his ſtyle: Hoſea propheſied during the reigns of the four kings of Judah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. The duration of his miniſtry, therefore, in whatever manner we calculate, muſt include a very conſiderable ſpace of time. We have now only a ſmall vo­lume of his remaining, which ſeems to contain his principal prophecies; and theſe are extant in a conti­nued ſeries, with no marks of diſtinction as to the times in which they were publiſhed, or the ſubjects of which they treat. There is therefore no cauſe to wonder if, **in peru**ſ**ing** the prophecies of Hoſea, we ſometimes find

@@@[m]\* Ezek. xiv. 14. xxviii 3.

@@@[mu] Gray's Key to the Old Testament.