

DIVINITY.

*Sufferings and Death of our Saviour, and his offering himself a Sacrifice for Sin, are foretold and manifested in the Writings of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms; the first Prophecy upon the Subject, and indeed the first that was given to Man, is that in the third Chapter of Genesis, and 15th Verse; and I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed: It shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel. As this dark Prophecy has been differently understood by several of the Sons of Adam, we beg Leave to lay before our Readers, the Bishop of Salisbury's most admirable Discourse, of the Use and Intent of Prophecy in the several Ages of the World. Disc. III. p. 57.*

LET us consider the History of Moses, as we should do any other antient Eastern story of the like Antiquity: Suppose, for instance, that this Account of the Fall had been served to us out of Sanchoniatho's Phœnician story; we should, in that Case, be at a Loss how to account for every Manner of Representation, for every Figure and Expression in the Story; but we should soon agree that all these Difficulties were imputable to the Manners and Customs of his Age and Country; and would shew more Respect to so venerable a Piece of Antiquity, than to charge it with Want of Sense, because we did not understand every minute Circumstance: We should likewise agree that there were evidently four Persons concerned in the Story; the Man, the Woman, the Person represented by the Serpent, and God. Disagree we could not about their several Parts. The Serpent is evidently the Tempter; the Man and Woman are the Offenders; and God the Judge of all three. The Punishments inflicted on the Man and Woman have no Obscurity in them; and as to the Serpent's Sentence, we should think it reasonable to give it such a Sense as the whole Series of the Story requires.

'Tis no unreasonable Thing surely to demand the same Equity of you in interpreting the Sense of Moses, as you would certainly use towards any other antient Writer. And if the same Equity be allow'd, this plain Fact undeniably arises from the History; That Man was tempted to Disobedience, and did disobey, and

forfeited all Title to Happiness, and to Life itself; That God judged him, and the Deceiver likewise under the Form of a Serpent. We require no more; and will proceed upon this Fact to consider this Prophecy before us.

The Prophecy is Part of the Sentence passed upon the Deceiver: The Words are these; *I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed: It shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel;* Gen. iii. 15. Christian Writers apply this to our blessed Saviour, emphatically styled here the Seed of the Woman, and who came in the Fullness of Time to bruise the Serpent's Head; by destroying the Works of the Devil, and restoring those to the Liberty of the Sons of God, who were held under the Bondage and Captivity of Sin. You'll say, What unreasonable Liberty of Interpretation is this? Tell us by what Rules of Language the Seed of the Woman is made to denote one particular Person, and by what Art you discover the Mystery of Christ's miraculous Conception and Birth in this common Expression? Tell us likewise, how bruising the Serpent's Head comes to signify the destroying the Power of Sin, and the Redemption of Mankind by Christ? 'Tis no Wonder to hear such Questions, from those who look no farther than to the third Chapter of Genesis, to see the Ground of the Christian Application. As the Prophecy stands there, nothing appears to point out this particular Meaning; much less to confine this Prophecy to it. But of this hereafter. Let us for the present lay a-side all our own Notions, and go back to the State and Condition of Things, as they were at the Time of the Delivery of this Prophecy; and see (if haply we may discover it) what God intended to discover at that Time by this Prophecy, and what we may reasonably suppose our first Parents understood it to mean.

They were now in a State of Sin, standing before God to receive Sentence for their Disobedience, and Reason to expect a full Execution of the Penalty threatened, *In the Day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* But God came in Mercy as well as Judgment, purposing not only to punish, but to restore Man. The Judgment is awful and severe; the Woman is doom'd to Sorrow in Conception; the Man to Sorrow and Travail all the Days of his Life; the Ground is cursed for his Sake; and the End of the Judgment is, *Dust thou art,*