

**THE FORCE OF THE ARGUMENT  
FOR THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY  
DRAWN FROM A COLLECTIVE  
VIEW  
OF PROPHECY, IN THREE PARTS**

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The Force of the Argument for the Truth of Christianity Drawn from a Collective View of  
Prophecy, in Three Parts by Mr. John Rotheram

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**MR. JOHN ROTHERAM**

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**A R G U M E N T**  
FOR THE  
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY  
DRAWN FROM A  
Collective View of Prophecy,  
IN THREE PARTS,

- I. A brief State of the Argument.
- II. A Defence and further Illustration of the Argument.
- III. A brief State of the Question, whether Prophecies or Miracles afford a stronger Evidence for the Truth of Christianity.

Occasion'd by *Dr. Middleton's Examination of the Lord Bishop of London's Discourses.*

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By the Rev. Mr. JOHN ROTHERAM,  
Late of *Queen's College in Oxford*, and now  
of *Codrington College in Barbados.*

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I. A brief State of the Argument for  
the Truth of Christianity drawn from  
a Collective View of Prophecy.

**T**HE learned Bishop *Sberlock*, in his *Discourses on the Use and Intent of Prophecy*, has observed, that there is a general Dependency amongst all those Prophecies, that were delivered to the World, concerning the Messiah that was to come; that, in applying those Prophecies to our Saviour, we shall often fail of giving them their just Force, if we consider them only separately and independently; and that such a partial Consideration can by no Means give Us an adequate Idea of the grand Scheme of Providence in the Redemption of Mankind.

His Lordship has further observed, that these Prophecies were intended by Providence to serve Two great Purposes. First, *to support the Faith and Religion of the old World.* And Secondly, *to give Testimony to the Mission of Jesus.* He has shewn, with a View to the *first*, how the Revelation of the Messiah was gradually opened, and unfolded by little and little, according to the dif-

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ferent Exigences of the several Ages in which it was delivered, and the Measure of Support and Comfort that was necessary to be imparted to them: But He observes, that the *second* Purpose above-mentioned will be still farther assisted by taking in one entire View the whole Scheme of Prophecy, and that *they who consider the Prophecies under the old Testament, as so many Predictions only, independent on each other, can never form a right Judgment of the Argument for the Truth of Christianity drawn from this Topic.*

Now an entire View of the Prophecies may be taken in *two* different Lights: either *successfully, as they lie in Order of Time; or collectively, as they All together make up one compleat Set of Predictions relating to the same Person.* These Views are manifestly distinct: The *first* of them is, I apprehend, chiefly to be attended to, when we speak of *supporting the Faith of the Old World;* as the *latter* of them is most subservient to the *Proof of Christianity.*

THAT the Prophecies of the Messiah recorded in the Old Testament are disposed in a regular and dependent Order, cannot be doubted by any one who seriously considers them: and that this Order was not fallen upon accidentally, and without Design, I think will admit of as little Dispute. The *Giving Testimony to Christ's Mission* could not be the Design of Providence in disposing them in this Order: For it will appear that a Set of Prophecies, if they only contained a full Description of the Messiah, would have given as  
perfect



perfect an Evidence to the divine Mission of Jesus, in whatever Order they had been delivered, or delivered even without any Regard to Order, as they do when ranged in that Regularity in which they now appear.

No other Conditions could be requisite for this End than that the Prophecies should be, 1. *so clear as to be easily applicable to the Messiah*; 2. *so numerous and particular, as to comprehend a View of the most material Actions of his Life, and the Intention of his Coming*; and, as to be necessarily restrained to him, and applicable to no one else. Now these Conditions might be obtained, without any Regard to the Order in which the Prophecies were delivered: and therefore the giving a more perfect Testimony to the Mission of Jesus, could not be the Design of Providence in giving that regular Arrangement to these Prophecies in which they are disposed. But then these Conditions could not both be obtained without a Regard to the *second View* of Prophecies which we have pointed out. For though the Prophecies might have been so plain as to be easily applicable to the Messiah (as in Fact all the Prophecies applied to him are) yet unless they did all together make up *one compleat Set of Predictions relating to the same Person*, they could not have been so numerous and particular as to comprehend a View of the most material of our Saviour's Actions, and the Intention of his Coming, nor as to be restrained to him alone, and applicable to no one else.

THESE Distinctions then, I apprehend, give a clear and easy Account how far Prophecies, distinctly and independently considered, can go towards producing a perfect Testimony of the divine Mission of Jesus, and how far they must fail in doing this. We must easily see, that Prophecies, singly considered, might be so plain as to be applicable to our Saviour: but then under this View only they could go no farther. They might still be of such a Nature, (and in Fact many of them are of that Nature,) as to be applicable to many more besides the Person of our Saviour. Thus that Prediction, which says the Messiah should make his Grave with the Rich, is plainly applicable to our Lord, because it undoubtedly happened to him; but it happened to many more besides our Saviour, and therefore, if we consider it no otherwise than singly, the Evidence of this Prophecy is manifestly lost. It can no more, by its own single Force, prove Jesus of *Nazareth* to be the Messiah, than it can a Thousand others, to whom the same Thing happened in common with him. It only sets his Claim to that Title upon a Level with that of all those on whose Corpses, since the giving out of the Prophecy, the same distinguished Interment has been bestowed. But when we give it a Place amongst a Collection of Prophecies that were all given out concerning the same Messiah, then we see how, under this collected View, it is at once restrained, and assists in restraining others, to the Person of our Saviour; since it can then

then only be applicable to him in whom all the other Circumstances concurred, nor can the rest be applied, but where this is also due. 'Tis true there are some of the Prophecies by their Nature more restrained. There are perhaps some of them which no one could, in strict Justice, pretend to have fulfilled but our Saviour alone. These are however far the smallest Number. Nay there are scarce any of them, which a cavilling Age would have allowed him a peaceable and incontestèd Right to: and, in by far the greatest Number, He would have had many Competitors. But if they fail here, much less can scattered, disjointed Predictions answer the other Part of the second Condition. For it is a Contradiction, that a Prophecy of a single Event should comprehend a View of the most material Actions of the Messiah, and the Intention of his Coming. We see how small a Part of that Evidence for the Truth of our Saviour's Mission, which Reason teaches us to expect from Prophecy, is obtainable from Prophecies singly and independently considered: and therefore how necessary it is, in Order to draw a conclusive Argument for the Truth of Christianity from this Topic, to take an entire View of the Prophecies of the Old Testament in the second Light, as they all together make up one compleat Set of Predictions relating to the same Person.

IF we should attend only to one single Operation of Nature, or to one single Act of God's Dealings with his Creatures, we might perhaps  
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