

of this subject, the difficulty is, not to find them, but, among so many, to make an appropriate selection.

The Bible is eminently a book of divine providence; or rather, such is its object, that the events detailed in it are seen to be more distinctly related to one another, and to a specific object, than the details of profane history. Hence we must not omit to appeal to that volume on the present occasion.

We may go back even to the antediluvian world. The extreme wickedness of the race made it necessary that God should specially interpose for its destruction by a flood of waters. But he needed at least one eminently holy man, who might be saved, and prevent the extinction of the race. Such a man was Noah. He had the firmness to persevere for one hundred and twenty years in building an ark, amid the scoffs and jeers of all around him, who depended on nature's constancy, and laughed at God's threatenings. A man of ordinary piety, and of feeble mind, never could have sustained such a trial, and therefore God raised up one, even in those times of deep degeneracy, of extraordinary energy and piety; and thus was the object accomplished, and the race preserved.

The effect, however, of this terrible penal infliction was soon lost, and idolatry and wickedness again triumphed. God therefore determined to select a particular family as the progenitors of a race to be kept distinct from all the rest of the world, and over whom he would exercise a special and even miraculous providence. It was important that the father of this nation should be a man of extraordinary mental and moral worth. No other man could lay broad and deep the foundations of a new and peculiar nation. Abraham therefore appeared at the proper time, and was made to pass through such discipline as would have crushed an ordinary man. The first startling command which he received was, to