

VI. An Account of a Book, viz.

Edmundi Dickensoni M. D. Physica vetus & vera, sive, Tractatus de Naturali veritate hexameri Mosaici. Per quem Probatur in historia Creationis cum generationis Universæ methodum atq; modum, tum veræ Philosophiæ principia, strictim atq; Breviter tradi. Londini 1702. in 40.

Many persons having cavill'd at the *Mosaical Cosmopæia*, as unphilosophically written, this Learned Author here takes upon him to shew, that *Moses*, in his History of the Creation, has briefly deliver'd both the principles of true Philosophy, and the method and manner of all generation. Undertaking to elucidate the *Mosaick Philosophy*, and conceiving it cannot be better done, than by the Corpuscularian, or Atomical Philosophy (as being most fitted for explaining and proving the generation of things) he has thought it necessary, in the first place, to remove that great prejudice, which many learned men have had against this kind of Philosophy; and having intimated its Antiquity, he says that all the ancient Greek Corpuscularian Philosophers before *Anaximender*, who was Disciple and Successor to *Thales*, maintain'd a Deity; which he denyed, and initiated many Atheistical Philosophers among the *Ionicks*, till *Anaxagoras*, that famous Corpuscularian, restored the Doctrine of *Thales*, and to the Particles of Corpuscles (as *Thales* had done before) added a mind, that is, God to work all things; and the Author says, afterward all (excepting *Epicurus*, and his followers) granting these Principles, were so far from thinking the
World

World could be made by chance, that they held an infinite Wisdom, or mind directing all things, that is, a God wholly necessary for it, who from an inform and confus'd matter, made and establish'd this wonderful order and ornament we see.

He urges the excellency of the *Mosaick Philosophy* from its Antiquity, as having been deriv'd by a continued Tradition from our first Parents. That *Noah* received it, and his Sons, especially *Sem* and *Japheth*, it is not to be doubted; who we may believe took care to convey it to Posterity, and tho' mankind fell by degrees from Piety to a Licentiousness in all Vice; so that all, in a manner, neglected, or wholly despis'd their Creator, whereby their minds were blinded, as to the notions they had imbib'd concerning God and Nature; so that whatever Doctrines they set up afterward concerning beginnings, were very obscure and imperfect, or trivial and false: Yet in the Family of *Heber* the true knowledge continued longer, who deliver'd it to the *Hebrews* descended from him. And he thinks no principles of Philosophy may be found, which more aptly agree both to Chemical and Mechanical experience, or so fitly quadrate to those things that now offer, as those which may be form'd and drawn according to the seat of the *Mosaick Wisdom*, and then he lays down the four following propositions as a foundation to build his Doctrine upon.

1. That the wisdom of the *Mosaick Cosmology* can scarce be understood, unless we first know those Principles of Philosophy which *Moses* had regard to, when he apply'd himself to write of the origin of all things.

2. Those principles can neither be discerned by reason, nor be well conjectur'd at, unless we first know what principles of Philosophy prevail'd in that Age.

3. That the Philosophy of that Age was Corpusculary, holding that whatsoever was contain'd within the Heav'ns
and

and Terraqueous Globe, was made of most subtle Particles.

4. That this way of Philosophizing did not only prevail over one or two Provinces; but was diffus'd in a manner thro all Nations, who apply'd themselves to the speculation of Nature, tho especially (as 'tis believed) thro *Phœnicia, Ægypt, Idumœa* and *Arabia*.

Upon a diligent enquiry after that knowledge of Nature, in which the Sons of *Noah* formerly concurr'd, no explication of Nature seems to him more favoured, none more true and ancient, than that which teaches that all concretions made from the beginning, and all Generations afterwards, rise from Minute Corpuscles or Atoms. These, he says, were those principles of Philosophizing, which all natural Philosophers, *Ægyptians, Phœnicians, Arabians, Hebrews, Syrians, Indians, Britains* and *Greeks*, embrac'd from all Ancient time, and which were us'd as Keys for opening the secrets of Nature, till about the year of the World 3560.

Now, he says, tho the most Ancient Sages, both before and after the Flood, had the same sentiments of the nature of things, and laid down the same Foundation of Philosophizing; yet they gave not the same names to their Principles; for some called the matter of all things to be generated, *Waters*, others either *Sand* or *Dust*, or *Particles*, or *Atoms*, or *Monads*, as the *Pythagoreans*. The *Hebrew* Technical word which is given to the principle of natural things is *Chiuk*, which signifies *Sand*, and the *Arabick* word is *Hiule* or *Hiul*, which signifies the *first matter*, and also *Sand* from *hala*, which is to pour forth *Sand*, whence *halon* is poured forth. Now from these *Hebrew* and *Arabick* words the *Ægyptians, Syrians* and *Greeks* took their word *byle*, to denote the same, and the *Phœnicians, Ilus*: both which words also at first signified minute Particles sever'd like Sand. *Moses* first call'd all the Matter, of which the World was made, Heav'n and Earth,

Earth, then Earth alone, then, by reason of the Profundity, the Abyſs, and then Waters, tho he ſcarce thinks this word was firſt us'd by *Mofes*, to notify the Matter of the World; but looks upon it as in uſe with Philoſophers for ſome Ages before; and, perhaps before the times of *Abraham*, becauſe we read that the *Druides* in *Europe*, and the *Brachmans* in *India* always thought Water to be the principle of things, and there are Learned men that ſay, the latter were taught their Philoſophy by *Abraham*; and *Magalbones* in his *India* ſays, that the ſame principles of Philoſophy that flouriſht in *Greece*, were Antiently uſed in *India* among the *Brachmans*; and, if we believe *Aventinus*, in the time of *Hermion*, King of the *Germans*, who Reign'd when *Iſaac* was not 40 years of Age, *Colledges* of the *Druides* were flouriſhing.

Next, having premitted ſome things concerning the *Chaos* and the extent of the *Mofaick Creation*, he proceeds to give an account of the *ſix days work*, where he has ſhewn much Learning in ſetting forth how all things paſt in a natural order. Then he tells us of the Creation of Matter, or the *Chaos*, contrary to the opinion of thoſe who held Matter eternal, wrongly grounding themſelves on this *Maxim*, *Nothing is made of nothing*; which *Maxim* was introduced by the firſt Philoſophers, who were *Corpufcularians*, and held only two principles of all Generations, *viz.* an active Power, which was Spiritual and Incorporeal, and a Paſſive, *viz.* *Matter*, and apprehended nothing in the Nature of Body, beſide matter various ways diſpoſed by magnitude, figure, life and motion; or reſt, conceiving in no Generation, a new ſubſtance to be produced, but only the old to be mixt and chang'd after other ways, ſo that a new ſpecies of things ariſes, as another mixture and turn of matter give it new forms and qualities; not that they thought thoſe forms and qualities had a real exiſtence in that thing, to which they were ſaid to belong; but that they are only our ſenſations, to which they ſeem

to have a being, for if they had a real being, new entities would arise daily from nothing by ordinary generation, which would be absurd to think. Therefore they wisely inculcated the above-mention'd *Maxime*, *Nothing is generated of nothing*, viz. by the power of nature; for they understood it of natural productions, and brought it in, to take away qualities and substantial forms. But Philosophers of after ages wrested the force of that *Maxime* to set up an æternity of Matter, conceiving it absolutely and always necessary that whatsoever arises be generated from another thing, either because they thought that nothing but what is material and corporeal ever existed, which because it could not make it self, they believ'd to be eternal: or if they denyed not an Immaterial power, or a God, yet they consider'd not his omnipotency, as able to create matter of nothing: or if they thought it could be created by God, why do they think it was not created, but existed before the world was made; since Matter existing, nothing was wanting but motion for the formation of the Heav'ns and Earth.

Speaking concerning the motion of Matter, he says, God gave it that motion, and at the motion of the Matter, which he excited, he created that power which we call Nature, this being nothing but the motion of Matter, made according to the Laws, which the prime Author of Nature establisht in the beginning.

He treats next of the primigenial Fire and Light, or of the first Heaven, and shews after what order it was made, upon a motion of the Particles; and says, it pleas'd God among those works which he put under the Laws of Nature, from the beginning to institute some great Miracles here and there, above the power of Nature, more signally to shew he was Lord of the frame of the world, and that the Divine Mind is always to give rule to Nature: and shews by many Suggestions and Chymical Experiments, that it's no absurdity in Reason to admit the Su-

percaelestial Waters intimated by *Moses*, whatsoever some may object.

Treating of the *Expansum*, or Inferiour Heav'n, he says that according to the *Mosaick Physiology*, the Heav'ns, generated of the Abyssine, or Chaotick Waters, are divided only into two Orbs, call'd by the names of the Superiour and inferiour Heav'ns (tho others have made several Cælestial Orbs) and having spok'd of the Superiour Heav'n in the foregoing Chapter, he tells us here, that the Inferiour Heav'n, the work of the second day, is call'd by *Moses* the *Expansum*, and comprehends all the space from the Terraqueous Orb to the Empyreal Heav'n, or the Æther, tho with this distinction, that its superior part, which is far the greater is call'd Sidereal; the Inferiour, next the Earth, Aerial: and then he tells us how this inferiour Heav'n was fram'd: and as for the *Cælum Cælorum*, mention'd by *Moses*, call'd by *S. Paul* the *Third* Heav'n, he says, it's a Supra mundane Light, to which no Mortal can have access.

Treating of the Chaotick or Elementary Waters, he says that tho *Moses*, and the *Brachmans* and the *Druides*, long before him, said Water was the principle of all things, yet he thinks neither *Moses* nor the others understood it to be true or natural Water, but only *Metaphysical*, viz. that immense Multitude of Chaotick particles, of which all things were made in the beginning; which when they were moved by God, presented an appearance, as it were, of waters; nor is the nature of water, speaking Philosophically, any thing but a multitude of round and smooth Particles circulating about their Center: and he produces many arguments for making out what he has here laid down.

Treating of the Chaotical and Elementary Earth, he tells us of the great delight Nature takes in changing all things, and making again the like. This, he says, can be perform'd in all Elements, even by the Industry of
Art:

Art: So not only the Solar Fire, every where diffus'd in the rays of the Sun, but likewise the Kitchen Flame may be made Earth by Nature and the help of Art; this the burning of Brick in a Brickkill, and the Calcination of Antimony by the rays of the Sun, evidently shew, since upon burning (tho many parts fly away in steams and smoak) they get a considerable increase and weight, the fiery particles being detain'd in the Burnt thing, and so turn'd into an Earthly Nature. Nor is the Conversion of the Solar Fire into Earth unknown to skilful Chymists, who so prepare several dry things, that they magnetically attract the most fervent Rays of the Sun, and so retain them, that they get an egregious and dry weight: and the *Hermetick Sage* owe a great part of their *Natural Tincture* to the flame of Fire. Again, he tells us, the Earth itself (but first turn'd into Salt) can be wholly turn'd into Water; and the most pure Water, by a very strong and tedious distillation, without any addition, or scarce any diminution, may be made a white Earth. Nor does he doubt but the Air also, as well by other ways, as by a violent agitation and concussion of its parts (such as is made by the Water, and a discharging Guns, especially of those which are charg'd with Air alone vehemently compress'd) may be so broken and attenuated, that its broken fine Particles, being joined and affixt anew afterward, either to themselves, or to other particles, may make either Fiery, or Watery, or perhaps Earthly concretions, which being now become heavy, the *Elastick force* of the Air drives to the Earth.

Treating of the *Ægyptian Israelites*, to shew that they were not so stupidly Ignorant, as some pretend they were, and incapable of a Philosophical Instruction from *Moses*, he says it's known, all the posterity of *Israel* were call'd the Sons and House of *Israel*, and so the posterity of *Abraham* were call'd his house and Sons, whom he commanded to keep the ways of *Jehovah*, which were that secret path of wisdom, Which is the knowledge of divine

and humane things, and of the Causes in which these things are contain'd; wherefore we may believe that *Abraham* train'd his House, which grew up to a People, or Nation, in divine, Moral, and Natural Knowledge. *Eupolemus* testifies that *Abraham* was most familiarly conversant with the *Heliopolitan Priests* in *Ægypt*, and taught them those Sciences he brought with him especially the Cælestial Science, *Astrology*. Vales *Jacob* had been well skil'd in Nature, and well seen in the ways of raising and fortifying the Imagination, and had also known the efficacy and property of the rods he us'd, and had well consider'd the powers of the Stars and fit Seasons, or he had not provided to himself so many spotted and ring-streak'd Sheep. The same Learning was in his Children, continued in vigour among their posterity: So that *Theophrastus* says the *Jews* were naturally Philosophers, they were so train'd to it from their youth. Many more arguments he produces, for proving the continuance of good Learning amongst the *Hebrews*, and that it was suppress'd by their Slavery in *Ægypt*.

Treating concerning *Moses*, he says there were but six men betwixt him and *Adam*, viz. *Methusalem*, *Noah*, *Sem*, *Isaac*, *Joseph* and *Amram*, *Moses's* Father; so that if we allow not *Moses* to have receiv'd his knowledge by inspiration from God, we cannot doubt but he receiv'd by Tradition whatsoever there was of Learning among the *Antediluvian fathers*, and to have learnt the origine of the Universe. He says, it's well known *Astrology* and *Chymistry* flourish in *Ægypt* in the time of *Moses*, by which the Inward natures of Cælestial and Terrestrial things are made known, his Skill in Chymistry appear'd by his reducing the *Golden Calf* to a powder, and dissolving it in common-water: And he says there is a ready method, known only to Philosophers, by which method Gold, having a secret Powder put into it, is presently made a Powder dissolvable in Water, and he conceives this way was used by *Moses*. If it be objected, it's no way likely that *Moses* turn'd the *Golden Calf* into Powder by Chymistry, but as it's

exprefsly said) by burning; and that it's not probable *Moses* knew that Art, of which no mention is made in Sacred or Prophane Writers, it being a new Invention which no man mention'd before *Julius Firmicus*, who writ about the time of the Emperor *Constantine*. To this he answers, He owns no exprefs mention is made of it in the *Scriptures*, but he thinks they enforce us by a necessity of Consequence to believe that *Moses* sometimes did something great by that Science. And he says it's clearly prov'd, the Science of *Chymistry* was much more ancient than *Moses*, by those many things which are said of *Tubal Cain* or *Vulcan*; since when *Moses* said he was a master of every Artifice in Iron and Brass, all the ancient Sages understood it of his Skill in Chymistry. Hence the *Ægyptians*, in that Temple which at *Memphis* was dedicated to *Vulcan*, erected a School of Chymistry, which there long flourish'd, as we are told by *Zozimus*, *Panopolitus*, *Eusebius*, *Synefius*, and others. And *Abulpharagius* tells us, he found in ancient Records, that in *Ægypt*, after the deluge, they were Learned in many Sciences, and especially in the Sciences of *Chymistry*, *Talismans*, and *Burning-Glasses*, He adds one argument for the Antiquity of *Chymistry*, from *Gen. 6.* where *Jehovah* commands *Noah* to make a clear light for the use of the Ark, which he desires leave of the Learned to believe, was a splendour of a Fiery and Sulphureous Liquor prepared by the Artifice of *Noah*, and put in Vessels of the *Lapis specularis*, or of *Crystal*, or, haply, of *Glass*, and hung in such places of the *Ark*, to enlighten all the Cells of the animals: the subtle *effluvia* of the Liquor also supported and kept in health the Animals without that gross food, which might otherwise have been necessary for them, and would have requir'd more room for stowage than may well be accounted for, according to those dimensions we have of the *Ark*: And this he endeavours to make out by many suggestions.