The Age of Reason.

This deluxe copy of The Age of Reason is embossed, and all edges of the pages are gilded. There is no Table of Contents included, so we are here creating a link to the few Headings in the book.

Table of Contents.

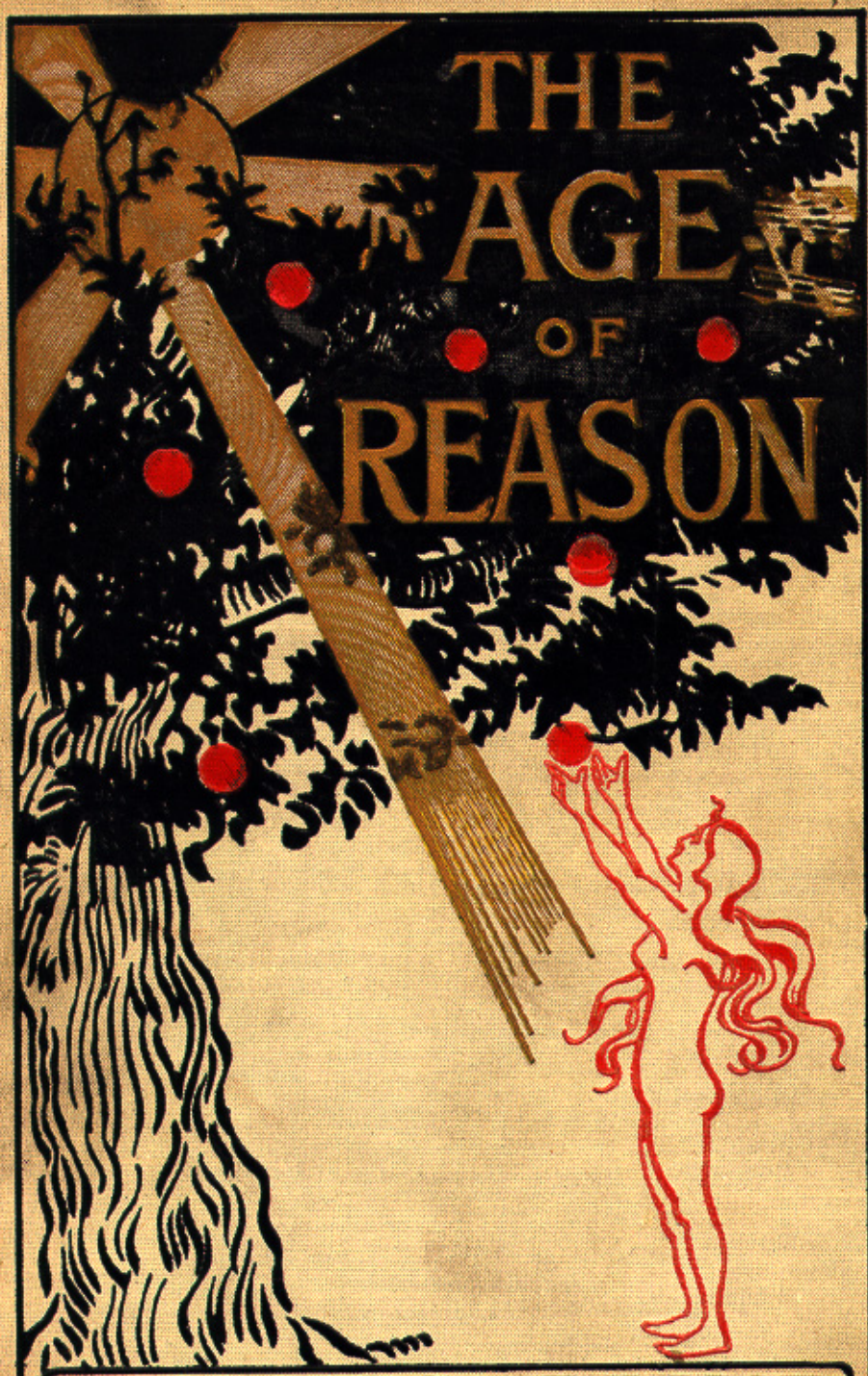
The Age of Reason is considered a definitive work on the religion of Deism – the religion of many of America's Founding Fathers. The book is a manly and honest statement of Deism, and points out many errors and absurdities of the Bible and the reasons the old belief must be disestablished and rejected. It is often claimed that Mr. Paine was an Atheist, but he says very clearly in the Age of Reason that he believed in a higher and greater God than the Christians believed in, he believed in the God of Deism.

The First Part of The Age of Reason was given out to be published when Thomas Paine thought death was at hand. He was under arrest and on his way to prison during the 'Reign of Terror' of the French Revolution. Almost all who were arrested during that time went to the Guillotine, and Thomas Paine expected to soon meet that end. And so Mr. Paine thought The Age of Reason was to be the final work of his life. His 'Common Sense' had freed the American Colonies from England; his 'The Crises' series had been indispensable to the Colonies in winning the American Revolution; In answer to Edmund Burke's attack on the French Revolution, Thomas Paine stated for all time 'The Rights of Man.' And so to his other major works he added what was, perhaps, his greatest work – 'The Age of Reason' – to free mankind from the greatest evil of all – Christianity.

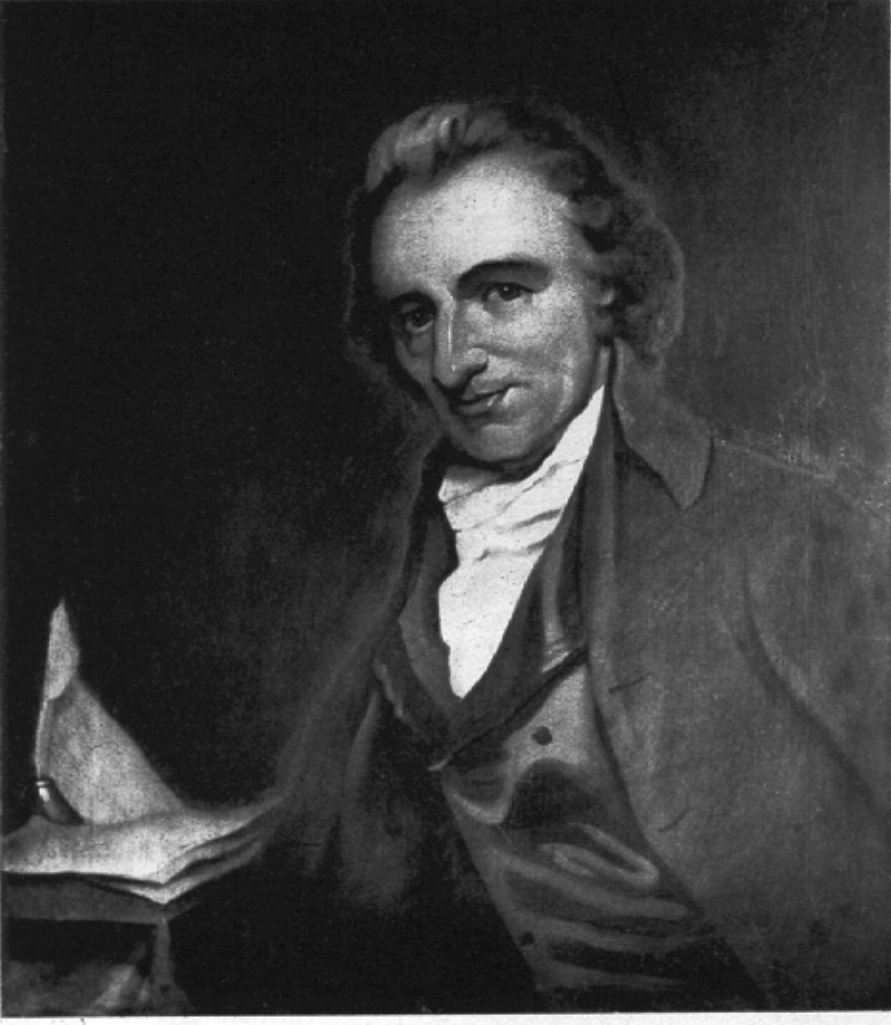
Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom

Bank of Wisdom
P.O. Box 926
Louisville, KY 40201
U.S.A.

THE AGE OF REASON



THOMAS PAINE



Thomas Paine

THE

AGE OF REASON

BEING

AN INVESTIGATION OF TRUE AND FABULOUS THEOLOGY

BY

THOMAS PAINE, M. A.

A PIONEER OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM

Reproduced in electronic form
1998
Bank of Wisdom
P.O. Box 926
Louisville, KY 40201
U.S.A.

Reproduced in electronic form
1998
Bank of Wisdom
P.O. Box 926
Louisville, KY 40201
U.S.A.

The purpose of the Bank of Wisdom
is to again make the United States the
Free Marketplace of Ideas that the
American Founding Fathers
originally meant this Nation to be.
Emmett F. Fields
1898.

Pictures.

PREFACE.

In the London Athenæum for August 27, 1898, Dr. Moncure D. Conway, the biographer of Thomas Paine and editor of his works, wrote as follows:

"A strange and probably unique copy of Paine's AGE OF REASON, Part I., has been found in New York. It is substantially the first Paris edition, printed by Barrois at the close of January, 1794; but in the middle of p. 77, where the religious essay ends, a small blank space is followed by the author's narrative of the incidents of his arrest. This amounts to more than two pages, in the same type and spacing as the rest of the volume. Then on the next page is begun a 'Postscript' —an extended reply to Bourdon de l'Oise, who had denounced him in the Convention on Christmas Day. These additions bear intrinsic evidence of having been written soon after Paine's imprisonment (December 29, 1793). The American minister in Paris, in a letter to Jefferson, dated January 21, 1794, reports Paine as at work in prison on a pamphlet—no doubt these additions, as the entire manuscript of THE AGE OF REASON was left complete in the hands of Joel Barlow before the author entered the Luxembourg. It appears probable that the additions belonged to the work as Paine intended it to appear, but were suppressed after this one example was printed. If there are or were other copies it appears unaccountable that none of Paine's contemporary editors and biographers, such as his friends Rick-

man in London and Fellows in New York, should have known anything of these additions and facts, and that I myself should never have discovered the existence of such a work while searching in the chief libraries and archives of Paris, London, and America. The pamphlet, which was discovered by Mr. [G. E.] Macdonald, of The Truth Seeker, is moldy, stained, and lined with neatly written marginal replies to Paine's heresies, but contains no intimation of its history. The marginal notes, which look old enough to be contemporary, are mostly in ink, but a few were penciled, and these are not easy to read; but they are all religious except the last on p. 77, which, as well as I can make out, says that what follows is unusual. The nature of the additions suggests a conjecture as to the cause of their suppression with which I shall follow them. I copy the whole of the first. [See pp. 64–66 of this volume.]

"The kindness shown Paine by the commissioners who arrested him was no doubt inspired by those who ordered his arrest. No Frenchman had any ill feeling toward Paine, and his arrest was solely due to the American Minister's determination that the author should not return to America and publish there his testimonies concerning affairs in France.

"The 'Postscript' reveals the imprisoned author's unconsciousness of any offense. He had no suspicion that his proposal to return to America and his arrest had anything to do with each other, though this was well known to the British Spy, who noted in his diary that the United States Minister was too shrewd to allow 'any such fish to go over and swim in his waters.' Paine takes seriously the mere pretext set forth by Bourdon de l'Oise:

"'The matters contained in this Postscript would not have appeared, at least at this time, had it not been for the extraordinary circumstance of my being put into a state of arrestation, and deprived of my liberty, by the Committee of Surety-General.

"'A motion was made in the convention to exclude foreigners from the convention. Bourdon de l'Oise said, 'We have heard a great deal of the patriotism of Thomas Paine; but it is said (*on dit*) that he intrigues with an ancient [*sic*] agent of the office of foreign affairs.'

"I wish that Bourdon de l'Oise had been prudent enough to have informed himself better of things than he has done, before he said anything about me. It ought to have occurred to him, that I have a reputation in the world of more years standing than he has of months. It is more than eighteen years since I proposed the independence and the establishment of the American Republic. He should also have recollected that as I am a citizen of a country in alliance with France, it might be in my power to render some services to France which himself could not. But since he has dragged me into an explanation of what it would have been better should not yet be made public, I will state the whole as concisely, but at the same time as prudently, as I can.

"I know but one person in the office of foreign affairs. He is adjoint in the American department of that office He is married to a citizenne of the United States of America, and consequently my acquaintance with him was very natural. [Paine's reference is to Louis Otto, who married Miss Livingston of New York.] Thus much by way of preface. I now come to the point.

"I met Barrère, of the Committee of Public Safety, one day on the Boulevards. I believe it was in August last. He asked me something in French, which I did not understand, and we went together to the office of foreign affairs. The agent in the American department served as interpreter. Barrère then asked me 'if I could furnish him with the plan of constitution I had presented to the Committee of Constitution.' The plan, he said, contained some things he wished had been adopted. (Barrère and myself were both members of the Committee of Constitution.) I told him that I could, and that I would send the plan to him the next morning, which I did; and it is still in his possession.

"Barrère then asked me my opinion about sending commissioners from the Convention to the Congress of the United States of America. I told him that I thought it would be very proper. But as verbal interpretation was tedious, I offered to give him my opinion in writing, and leave it at the office of foreign affairs to be translated for him. Barrère thanked me, and desired that I would; and said also that he should be glad of any information or observations I could give him. He then asked me if an hundred shiploads of flour could be procured from America? I told him that it could; and that I would give him an account of the flour, grain, Indian corn, and rice annually exported from America, by which he would see that an hundred shiploads was but a small quantity compared with the annual exports of that country.

"In two or three days after this I carried to the office of foreign affairs, to be translated for Barrère, an account of the annual quantity of American exports, distinguishing the several articles of flour, wheat, rye, Indian corn, and rice, amounting in the whole to upwards of twelve hundred shiploads, allowing each ship to carry two thousand barrels of flour, each barrel weighing 184 pounds French.

"I then gave, as I had promised, my opinion, in writing, on the subject of sending commissioners from the Convention to Congress. I introduced the matter by saying that I intended to return to America the latter end of the year [1793]; that any service I could render to France, when I arrived in America, I would do voluntarily and without any recompense; but that it would be inconsistent I should be

one of the commissioners; for though my fellow-citizens of America might be pleased at my being elected a member of the Convention, they would not like to see me return among them in any other character than as one of themselves.

"I then communicated to Barrère such matters respecting America as might be proper for the commissioners to know. After this I gave him an account of the different parties in England for and against the war with France. I then entered extensively into the confederacy of foreign powers formed against France, and showed, from a variety of reasons and circumstances, that the confederacy could not long hold together, and that the parties would quarrel among themselves.

"I concluded my correspondence, which extended to upwards of twenty pages, with giving to Barrère my opinion upon the internal affairs of France, and the best measures to be adopted I told him very freely, and that also in the most affectionate manner, that liberty and the revolution were incomplete until the constitution was established and in practice.

"All these papers were translated, and sent to Barrère, and the originals were returned to me and are now in my possession. They were among the papers which the commissaries of the Committee of General Surety examined. The commissaries did me the justice to tell me, that everything they found in my papers (which took up almost the whole day to examine) showed me to be a man of good morals and good principles, and as such they gave the key of my apartments into my own care, and did not, as the public newspapers have said, put the seals upon my papers."

"Paine then refers to and quotes various papers that he had written for the benefit of the French republic, and copies his anonymous pamphlet printed at his own expense for circulation in America and in Paris. This pamphlet, 'A Citizen of the United States of America to the Citizens of Europe,' dated 'Philadelphia, July 28, 1793,' was found by me in the French archives, along with some of the other papers referred to, and printed in my edition of Paine's writings.

"It may be that Mr. Alger can cast more light on this pamphlet, but my own studies lead to the conclusion that the additions were expunged before any other copy was printed. The opening sentence of the second document quoted above, and the last sentence of its third paragraph, show Paine conscious of some imprudence in the revelations he is about to make, and this must have excited misgivings in shrewd and timid Barlow. Such a publication would never have been ventured by Barlow, who had entire charge of the prisoner's work,

without consultation with the American Minister, Gouverneur Morris, whose favors he (Barlow) would have done anything to conciliate, engaged as he was in questionable speculations; and Morris must have been overwhelmed had these statements of Paine overtaken his own representations of the case to Americans in Paris and in Philadelphia. To the influential Americans in Paris endeavoring to secure Paine's release, and to his government, Morris had declared that the French government claimed Paine as a French citizen, and imputed 'crimes' to him, and that his only escape from death depended on all keeping quiet about him. These additions, if published, would have shown that the commissaries found no fault in him or his papers, and did not place these under seal, as they testified to his constant services to France—also that his American citizenship was recognized. The French people, too, would have learned of Paine's services and joined the Americans in demanding his liberty. Morris could have had no difficulty in warning Barlow that, as his name appeared in the additions as Paine's editor, he would be held responsible for the revelations of documents and secrets of the Committee of Public Safety; and he (Barlow) was not a man to incur risks. Barlow had become a regularly naturalized French citizen, and Morris could not have protected him. Neither of the two had any religious principles that could be disturbed by THE AGE OF REASON, and no doubt this copy was brought to America by one or the other of them.

"It would be easy to persuade Paine that his life would be endangered by such a publication. At any rate, that it was never published is sufficiently proved by the fact that, a few months later, Paine elaborately went over the same facts about Bourdon de l'Oise, Otto, and Barrere, in a private letter to Monroe, the new American Minister, and sent him the pamphlet of July 28, 1793. This letter must have cost Paine great toil, for he was very ill at the time. But had this volume been in circulation Paine need only have referred Monroe to it."

The present edition of THE AGE OF REASON, so far as concerns Part I., is a reprint of this "strange and probably unique copy." For its publication there are two reasons, either of which would be sufficient if the other did not exist. (1) So constant has been the demand for THE AGE OF REASON that the stereotype plates from which it has been supplied by the Truth Seeker Company have been worn out. (2) The unique copy mentioned by Dr. Conway contains matter not to be found in later editions, all of which by comparison disclose variations from this text.

Two recent editions—one English, the other American—have appeared. The text of the former, according to the editor's Foreword, is "based directly upon that of Daniel Isaac Eaton's edition of 1795 (for the first Part)." This shows that Daniel Isaac Eaton's edition was not based on this "strange and probably unique copy," since the reprint contains some thirty-five more or less vital inaccuracies. Part II. of the recent English edition, when tested by the earlier American prints, shows a score of blunders so material as to destroy the meaning of whole sentences, and to suggest that Eaton may have followed the pirated work of Symonds.* (The editor tells us that both contain the same typographical errors, except that Eaton's has more of them.) The late American edition (Conway's) varies little from the Unique as to Part I., and has been used by the present

* The Symonds edition, published in London, October, 1795, was from a manuscript copy or printer's "proof" stolen by Paine's Paris printer (an Englishman), while his authorized edition was in press, and sold to H. D Symonds. The errors it contains are continued in some modern American editions which fact is taken as an indication that it reached this country ahead of the copies sent by Paine from Paris.

J. W. Jarvis, Pinx, 1805. *J. R. Ames, del.*

L'HOMME DES DEUX MONDES.

From the "Bible of Nature," a book published at Albany in 1842. Of this work only two copies seem to have been preserved, one in the State Library at Albany, another in the Library of Congress. The portrait of Paine is preceded by and connected with a picture of Liberty—a classic female bust, similarly framed in floral emblems—the two being illustrations of a poem entitled "Freedom's Wreath."

editor as a test of accuracy for Part II. The additional matter peculiar to the original copy of THE AGE OF REASON will be found on pages 64–66 of this volume and in Mr. Conway's letter quoted above from the Athenæum.

We are indebted to Paine's latest biographer and editor (Dr. Conway) for the information that on August 5, 1794, Francois Lanthenas, of Paris, in an appeal for the liberation of Paine, then in the Luxembourg prison, wrote as follows: "I deliver to Merlin de Thionville a copy of the last work of T. Payne [THE AGE OF REASON], formerly our colleague, and in custody since the decree excluding foreigners from national representation. This book was written by the author in the beginning of the year '93 (old style). I undertook its translation before the Revolution against the priests, and it was published in French about the same time. Couthon, to whom I sent it, seemed offended with me for having translated the work." This early publication, our authority remarks, seems to have been so effectually suppressed that no copy bearing that date, 1793, can be found in France or elsewhere. We surmise that the *fac simile* of the original title page presented in our present edition is a relic of the lost publication, whose fate the first English issue shared. Our grounds for this suspicion, whether tenable or not, are as follows: Paine being in prison and not readily accessible to his friend Joel Barlow, who saw THE AGE OF REASON through the press, nor to Barrois, Sr., who printed it, they may have had recourse to the French edition for a caption. One writing the page in English would hardly have inserted the word "of" between "and" and "fabulous," in line 6, as in that language it might be regarded as superfluous; whereas in the French, whose writers employ the particle

more freely, it would not. The word does not appear in that place in other editions, at least not in that from which Dr. Conway copies the "original title." In line 9 the word "cultivator" is the putting into English of the *cultivateur* of the French title page. (See Appendix.) "Secretary *for* foreign affairs," although it is also Paine's phrasing, is a departure from the nearly uniform "*of* foreign affairs" of the other prints. On the title page reproduced by Dr. Conway, and designated as original, the imprint is simply "Paris: Printed by Barrois." The Unique is more elaborate, giving us, "Paris, printed for Barrois, senior, Bookseller, Quai des Augustins, No. 19." Before so competent an authority as Dr. Conway had pronounced this a first edition, we had reached the same conclusion from the fact that Barrois, senior, implies a Barrois, junior; and as upon the death of a senior or a junior the survivor drops the suffix, the plain "Barrois" points to a date later than that when the publisher of THE AGE OF REASON subscribed himself "Barrois, senior." Without the other considerations discussed, this would appear to settle the priority of the edition the imprint and text of which we have reproduced. (See *fac simile.*)

The time when Paine composed the first part of his AGE OF REASON has become a matter for controversy. In setting forth the "system of the universe," Paine wrote (see pp. 49, 50): "That part of the universe that is called the solar system (meaning the system of worlds to which our earth belongs, and of which Sol, or in English language the Sun, is the center) consists, besides the Sun, of six distinct orbs, or planets, or worlds. . . . The names that the ancients gave to those six worlds, and which are still called by the same names,

are Mercury, Venus, this World that we call ours, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn." Owing to the omission from this list of "worlds" of the seventh planet, Uranus, discovered by Herschel in 1781, it is argued that the work was printed from a manuscript written before that date. This, again, by putting back the date of the composition to the lifetime of Franklin, has revived the legend that Franklin once wrote to Paine advising against its publication. While venturing no explanation of Paine's omission of the seventh planet from his list, except that the astronomical part may have been a fragment previously prepared, we may adduce some of the evidence going to show that Paine wrote the religious portion of Part I. of THE AGE OF REASON in 1793. In his preface to Part II. (see p. 69), he says: "I have mentioned in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON that it had long been my intention to publish my thoughts upon religion, but that I had originally reserved it to a later period in life, intending it to be the last work I should undertake. The circumstances, however, which existed in France in the latter end of the year 1793 determined me to delay it no longer." Then, detailing the disadvantages under which he labored, he states, "I *began* the former part of THE AGE OF REASON." He does not say that he resumed it. "I had, besides," he continues, "neither Bible nor Testament to refer to." An English Bible might be difficult to obtain in Paris in 1793, but not in America, where Paine must have been if he wrote the work prior to the discovery of Uranus. Finally, on page 59, in Part I., we come upon this conclusive passage: "There is *now* an exhibition in Paris of ghosts and spectres, which, though it is not imposed upon the spectators as a fact, has an

astonishing appearance." Those words must have been written in Paris.

The facts about the advisory letter said to have been written to Paine by Franklin are, briefly, that the letter identified by Sparks, Franklin's biographer, as the one referred to was first published by William Temple Franklin; that it is without date, direction, or signature, and that it bears internal evidence against the supposition that it was addressed to Thomas Paine. We may be assured that had Franklin, whom he highly esteemed, sent him such a letter, he would have made allusion to the fact and given at length his reasons for not following the advice which it contained.*

Part II. of THE AGE OF REASON, said to have been begun by the author while in the Luxembourg prison, was completed at the house of James Monroe, then (1794–5) United States Minister to France. Says Conway: "He was found by Monroe [who effected his liberation] more dead than alive from semi-starvation, cold, and an abscess contracted in prison, and taken to the Minister's own residence. It was not supposed that he could survive, and he owed his life to the tender care of Mr. and Mrs. Monroe. It was while thus a prisoner in his room, with death still hovering over him, that Paine wrote Part Second of THE AGE OF REASON." The work was published in Paris and London in 1795. Its publica-

* Paine sent the first edition of the second part of THE AGE OF REASON, published in Paris, to America in the care of a descendant of Franklin. Writing to Col. John Fellows of New York (the letter being dated Paris, Jan. 20, 1797) Paine says: "As Dr. Franklin has been my intimate friend for thirty years past you will naturally see the reason of my continuing the connection with his grandson. I printed here [Paris] about fifteen thousand of the second part of THE AGE OF REASON, which I sent to Mr. F[ranklin] Bache."

tion was followed in the latter place by prosecutions for blasphemy. The Rev. Richard Watson, D.D., LL.D., bishop of Llandaff, at once replied to it in his now almost forgotten "Apology for the Bible," but the officers of the Vice Society thought they knew of a better argument, and appealed to the law. A bookseller named Williams was sentenced to a year's imprisonment. Later the publisher, D. I. Eaton, suffered one and a half year's imprisonment, with an hour in the pillory once a month. Between 1819 and 1824 Richard Carlile, members of his family, and as many as eight of his employees were at one time brought to Newgate in the endeavor to suppress the work.*

This ended the series of prosecutions for the sale of the book in England, and there has since been no legal objection to its circulation, except the largely ineffectual efforts of certain Canadian customs officials to prevent its importation into the dominion. Like religious doctrines and myths discredited in centres of culture, the endeavor to repress heresy by law is found at the last upon the verge of enlightenment.

The punctuation and spelling of the original is not preserved in this reprint. While Paine's conception of the value of points might be of interest, we have no reason to suppose that the works printed in Paris afford

---

* The reader who is curious to know what was deemed fit to evoke "the high displeasure of Almighty God" a hundred years ago may find the passages upon which indictments were based as follows: Page 18, par. 1, from "When we" to "mankind"; p. 21, all of last paragraph; p. 74, last par. from "To charge" to "choice"; p. 88, second par. entire; p. 138, par. 3 and 4, from "As it is" to "overshadow thee"; p. 153, par. 2, from "I have now" to "those books"; p. 170, whole of par. 2 from "Whence" to "other"; p. 171, all of par. 2.

us examples of his use of them. Inspection of his manuscript raises the suspicion that what some of his editors have been careful to follow may be only the eccentricities or "style" of his printers.* In the matter of spelling, we have made the necessary corrections, and have substituted *a* for "an" before such words as hundred, Hebrew, history, and universal. The peculiarity of Paine's orthography, or rather of the orthography of his day, is shown in the words "aukward," "chuse," "croud" (for crowd), "desart" (for desert), "parjury" (for perjury), "prophane," "shew," "stile" (for style), and "tye" (for tie). It is not believed that anything is lost by giving these words here as Paine may have written them instead of spreading them throughout the book. As for grammar, Paine's system answered every call upon it, and never left his meaning obscure.

Paine made some mistakes, as when he says (p. 22) that the parents of Jesus were unable to pay for a bed on the night of the nativity, and when (p. 147), misled by the chapter heading of Luke vii, he insinuates against the character of Mary Magdalene; but in view of the state of biblical criticism in his day, it is a wonder that he did not make more. He anticipated the Higher Critics

* This is verbatim from a letter written by Paine to Hon Richard Henry Lee: "I wrote you last Tuesday 21st Inst, including a Copy of the King's speech, since which nothing material has happened at Camp. Genl McDougal was sent Wednesday night 22d to attack a Party of the Enemy who lay over the Schuylkill at Grey's Ferry where they have a Bridge. Genls Greene & Sullivan went down to make a diversion below German Town at the same Time. I was with this last Party but as the Enemy withdrew their Detachment We had only our Labor for our Pains." Haste would modify the punctuation and excuse the abbreviations in the foregoing, which was written in camp, but only habit can account for the excess of capital letters.

of the present century to a surprising degree. In the early part of 1895 there appeared in the United Presbyterian Magazine, an English publication, two papers entitled "A Forgotten Higher Critic." They were written by Dr. Thomas Whitelaw, of Kilmarnock, who gives extracts from the works of this author, and shows that his conclusions were similar to those of the critics of the present day who regard themselves as Christians. At the close of the second paper it is revealed to his Presbyterian readers that this Higher Critic was no other than Thomas Paine, and that the extracts were from THE AGE OF REASON. In the same year, the New York Truth related this anecdote, the scene being a Baptist Congress in Detroit:

"President Harper and President Andrews of Brown University, with others, had been advocating the methods of modern Higher Criticism, and saying that the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah were written by some other man, when Prof. Howard Osgood, of Rochester, arose to reply. He said: 'I have here an article written almost exactly one hundred years ago. I will read it and then tell you the name of the author.' He read a criticism on the Bible and especially on Isaiah, advocating a double authorship of the latter, in almost exactly the language of Harper and his friends. He made a few comments upon the clearness of the ideas of the author, and showed his teachings to be identical with modern Higher Criticism. He then exclaimed after a long pause, 'The author of this paper was Thomas Paine.' The effect was wonderful. There was a look of surprise on the faces of the critics, and then, as the applause rang out, they looked as though they would like to escape."

But there have been instances where the author did not get the credit due him. On Jan. 24, 1897, the Rev.

Dr. Lyman Abbott, the successor of Henry Ward Beecher in Plymouth pulpit, preached a sermon on the book of Jonah, leading to a newspaper discussion in which Dr. Abbott said that the book "was written as a piece of satirical fiction, to satirize the narrowness of certain Jewish prophets." The language of Paine, one hundred years earlier, is that "it has been written as a fable, to expose the nonsense and satirize the vicious and malignant character of a Bible prophet or a predicting priest" (p. 134). In a sermon delivered on May 16, following, Dr. Abbott declared that the theological writings of Paine were "now repudiated by all unbelievers, unless possibly Robert Ingersoll." The reader will compare the Jonah of Dr. Abbott with that of Paine and judge how far Paine's conclusions are repudiated. We cannot multiply examples of our author's anticipation of the Higher Critics without overburdening this preface, but having read what Paine says about the book of Isaiah at pp. 117–120 of this volume, we will listen to the Rev. Canon T. K. Cheyne, Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scriptures at Oxford University, who says (see "Isaiah," Polychrome Bible):

"That portion of the Old Testament which is known as the book of Isaiah was, in fact, written by at least three writers—and possibly many more—who lived at different times and in different places. The passages in the accepted version which prophesy the coming of Jesus Christ have been misinterpreted. Their real meaning has hitherto not been understood."

Professor Cheyne presents what he considers to be proof that this prophecy of Isaiah bore no reference to the coming of the Christian messiah, and expresses the belief that the famous passage about the ideal king

(ix, 1–16), was not written by either of "the two Isaiahs," but was interpolated after the exile.

In 1891 the Christian Register indulged in the following reflections:

"Again and again we find that a man who is ostracized or excommunicated in one age practically reappears in another. The process of transmigration of souls, or reincarnation, goes on whenever some great truth or idea needs embodiment. So it is that Thomas Paine, though stigmatized and set aside as an Infidel, finds reincarnation in the modern scientific Biblical critic. Paine pointed out the contradictions in the Bible which rendered impossible the claim that it is an infallible book. He lived too far in advance of his age. The spirit of modern scientific criticism had not yet come. Paine had the destructive method, not the reconstructive. He showed what the Bible was not, but failed to show what it really is. And now it is interesting to find that, in a different spirit and with different tools, and bound by certain traditions from which Paine was free, the professors in our orthodox theological seminaries are doing again the work which Paine did, and like him, in the interests of honesty and truth. The apologies which his work called forth would now be set aside by the candid Biblical critic as utterly puerile and insufficient. The contradictions of the Bible must be acknowledged by the modern investigator, and the theory which denied their possibility must be set aside."

Hereupon the Presbyterian Observer (June 25, 1891) viciously remarks:

"This is canonizing Paine with a vengeance. He is a saint if the Register's judgment is to be accepted, and an apostle; and, by the wonderful transmigration of souls, or reincarnation, we have a veritable apostolic succession. Let those who will boast such ancestry.

We are hardly prepared to believe that the leaders of the present movement in destructive criticism will care to be thus patted on the back and told that they are *doing again the work which Paine did.* If Paine has gained light since he passed into eternity a miserable blaspheming Infidel, he would probably admit that his work is being done more insidiously, but none the less effectually, wherever the inerrancy of scripture is attacked under the guise of theological training in orthodox theological seminaries. He would admit the rough and somewhat barbarous nature of his own methods of warfare, and commend the more modern and more scientific ones of the present day. As for us, over the classrooms of some of these professors, we shall henceforth mentally see the sign, put there by the Register: SUCCESSORS TO T. PAINE."

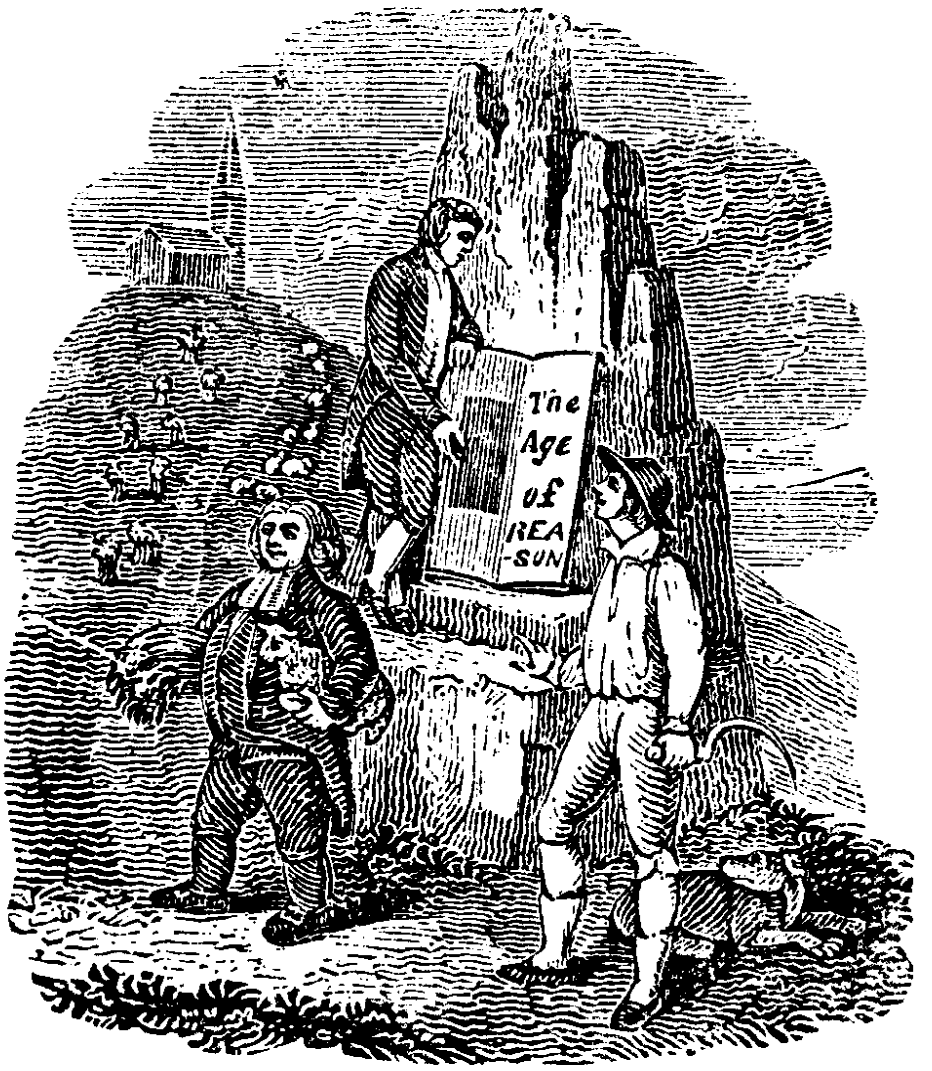
To summarize the conclusions of these Higher Critics, or of the Rationalistic school, is practically to rewrite Paine. When our author said (p. 15) that the church mythologists, in establishing their system, "collected all the writings they could find, and managed them as they pleased," and that "it is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear under the Old and New Testament are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them, or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up," he stated what every duly informed and candid person admits, except that the uncertainty has disappeared and we know that the church mythologists did add to, alter, abridge, and dress up the books of both the Old and New Tastaments. Witness this from the Rev. Alex. Roberts, D.D., a member of the English company of scripture revisers: "While the varieties of reading in the New Testament were reckoned at about 30,000 in the last century, they are generally

referred to as amounting to no less than 150,000 at the present day." This in the New Testament alone! The Old Testament has recently been newly translated by the most eminent Biblical scholars of Europe and America, and printed on variously colored backgrounds in order to show the different sources from which the books have been made up and to exhibit their composite structure. The work has been happily termed the Rainbow Bible, on account of the great number of colors employed, while the resources of the typographic art are exhausted to find critical marks to denote variations, omissions, and corruptions of the text.

Paine, applying his method of judging a book by its internal evidence, which is the method of the Higher Critics, observes regarding Genesis that it has the "appearance of being a tradition"—an opinion now so near universal among scholars that to adduce evidence here in its support would be absurd. Paine's dictum that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch is affirmed unanimously by the Rationalistic school of theologians. Paine tells us (p. 18) that some of the prophetic books of the Old Testament "are the works of the Jewish poets, and itinerant preachers, who mixed poetry, anecdote, and devotion together; and those works still retain the air and style of poetry, though in translation." As if to show that a hint was not lost upon them, the Old Testament Revision Company, sitting in the Jerusalem Chamber, Westminster Abbey, during the last quarter of this century, recast large portions of the prophetical writings into the form of blank verse, and printed the Lamentations of Jeremiah as poetry throughout. The Rev. Charles A. Briggs, president of Union Theological Seminary (Presbyte-

rian), carries criticism even farther in this direction than Paine; asserting that the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Lamentations, Solomon's Song, Ecclesiastes, Job, Esther, Ruth, and Jonah are mere "works of the imagination." The Psalms are a collection of lyric poetry; the Proverbs are poems of wisdom; Lamentations is a collection of dirges; the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes are pieces of composite poetry, and Job is a didactic drama, wholly the product of the human fancy. THE AGE OF REASON has little to complain of from the representative clergy of to-day. They are doing more to verify the truthfulness of its statements than they are accomplishing in the way of vindicating the veracity of the scriptures.

Of miracles Paine says: "Of all the modes of evidence that were ever intended to obtain belief to any system or opinion to which the name of religion has been given, that of miracle, however successful the imposition may have been, is the most inconsistent. . . . It is also the most equivocal sort of evidence that can be set up, for the belief is not to depend upon the thing called a miracle, but upon the credit of the reporter who says that he saw it. . . . In every point of view in which those things called miracles can be placed and considered, the reality of them is improbable, and their existence unnecessary. They would not, as before observed, answer any useful purpose, even if they were true, for it is more difficult to obtain belief to a miracle than to a principle evidently moral without any miracle. Moral principle speaks universally for itself. Miracle could be but a thing of the moment, and seen but by a few; after this it requires a transfer of faith from God to man to believe a miracle upon



From an elegant pocket edition of Paine's theological works (London: R. Carlile, 1822), being a picture of Paine as a Moses in evening dress, unfolding the two tablets of his AGE OF REASON to a farmer from whom the Bishop of Llandaff (who replied to this work) has taken a sheaf and a lamb which he is carrying to the church at the top of the hill.

man's report. Instead, therefore, of admitting the recitals of miracles as evidence of any system of religion being true, they ought to be considered as symptoms of its being fabulous" (pp. 59, 61). For saying these things Paine has been denounced and damned for a hundred years, his character assailed, and his scholarship impeached. But to-day his position is that occupied by the Rationalistic school of biblical interpreters known as the Higher Critics. Dr. H. Oort, professor of Oriental languages at Amsterdam, one of the authors of the "Bible for Learners," says as to miracles: "Our increased knowledge of Nature has gradually undermined the belief in the possibility of miracles, and the time is not far distant when, in the mind of every man of any culture, all accounts of miracles will be banished together to their proper region—that of legend" (The Bible for Learners, i, 273). Professor Baden Powell illustrates the position of the Protestant church by remarking, "At the present day, it is not a miracle, but the narrative of a miracle, to which faith is accorded," and the Rev. J. W. Chadwick, another expounder of the Higher Criticism, says "miracle is the negative of law."

These parallels might be pursued to many other books and narratives of the Bible, and the closer the comparison is drawn the clearer does the truth emerge that Paine outlined the work of the biblical critics for a century to come. There are ministers now occupying pulpits in churches of orthodox denomination who have exceeded him in the destructive nature of their analysis of holy writ, and who still hold, or profess to, that the book is the inspired word of God. They have his critical eye, but lack his candor in announcing the conclusion to

which their investigations tend as strongly as his own —to wit, the human origin of the religious system founded on the Old and New Testaments. Were they to say, "We know this composition to be fabulous, but believe it to be true," they would be guilty of no greater inconsistency than they have shown in insisting upon its inspiration while so dealing with its authorship and its statements of fact as to totally discredit both. Can they hope that good will result? "It is impossible," observes Paine, "to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society."

CHRONOLOGICAL NOTES OF PAINE'S LIFE.

1736–7. Born January 29 at Thetford, England, of Joseph Paine and Frances Cocke.
1756. Enlisted on board the King of Prussia, privateer.
1758. Employed as stay maker at Dover.
1759. Established himself at Sandwich, Kent, as master-staymaker. Married, September 27, Mary Lambert Is said to have collected a congregation and preached as an independent or Methodist.
1760. His wife died. He abandoned staymaking.
1761. Passed some months studying in London. In July returned to Thetford.
1762. Appointed to gauge brewers' casks at Grantham.
1764. As officer of excise, set to watch smugglers at Alford.
1765. Discharged from office, August 27.
1766. July 4, the excise board ordered that he be reinstated. Taught English in Noble's Academy, London.
1767. January, employed in Gardiner's school, Kensington. May 15, reappointed excise officer, stationed at Grampound, Cornwall; declined.
1768. February 19, appointed excise officer at Lewes; accepted.
1771. Married, March 26, Elizabeth Ollive. Became a grocer and tobacconist.
1772. Wrote the "Case of the Officers of Excise."
1773. Spent much time in London, trying to get before Parliament a measure for the relief of excisemen. Cultivated the acquaintance of Benjamin Franklin and Oliver Goldsmith.
1774. Discharged, April 8, from the excise. April 14, effects sold at auction. June 4, separated from Mrs. Paine. October, left England. November, arrived in America.
1775. Contributed to Pennsylvania Magazine and became its editor (for eighteen months). Wrote advocating the extension of the principles of independence to enslaved negroes, recommending international arbitration, opposing dueling, suggesting more rational ideas of marriage and divorce, proposing international copyright, demanding justice for woman. Wrote "Common Sense."
1776. January 10, "Common Sense" published, Philadelphia. Enlisted in a Pennsylvania division of the Flying Camp; assigned to service at Amboy and Bergen; reenlisted at Fort Lee. Began the "Crisis" at Newark in November. December 19, "Crisis" printed in Philadelphia.
1777. Appointed, January 21, by the Council of Safety, Philadelphia, secretary to committee sent by Congress to treat with Indians at Easton, Pa. April 17, appointed by Congress Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs.
1778. Resided at Yorktown and Lancaster, Pa.; served as Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs and as military correspondent of Pennsylvania Council, with Washington's army. Wrote numbers of the "Crisis."

1779. January 7, resigned as Secretary of Committee of Foreign Affairs. Nov. 2, elected Clerk of the Pennsylvania Assembly.
1780. Headed a subscription (June) with $500 for the relief of Washington's army. July 4, received the degree of Master of Arts from the University of Pennsylvania.
1781. February, left America with Col. John Laurens to raise funds in France for the expenses of the Revolutionary war. Returned with $500,000 in silver and a shipload of military stores.
1782. Resided in Philadelphia; visited Bordentown, N. J., and Providence, R. I.
1783. Resided in Bordentown. Did much writing.
1784. New York presented Paine with the farm at New Rochelle, 277 acres. Pennsylvania Assembly gave him £500.
1785. Visited and resided in New York, where Congress sat. Worked at invention and model of his iron bridge.
1786. Wrote "Dissertations on Government, the Affairs of the Bank, and Paper Money" (February), averting the destruction of the Bank of North America, Philadelphia, which had grown out of the subscription he headed in 1780 for the relief of Washington's army.
1787. Sailed in April for Europe, visiting Paris, traveled to London and thence to Thetford.
1788-9. His iron bridge erected in England. Returned to Paris.
1790. Left Paris, March 17, to look after his bridge at Yorkshire. Sent Washington key of the Bastile from Lafayette.
1791. Wrote the "Rights of Man," London. Revisited Paris; returned to London, living with Clio Rickman.
1792. May 21, summoned to Court of King's Bench to answer for "Rights of Man." Elected to French Convention. Sept. 19, reached Paris. Himself and works outlawed in England.
1793. Jan. 15, as member of the French Convention voted against the death of Louis XVI. Wrote Part I. of the "Age of Reason." Dec. 29, arrested and placed in Luxembourg prison.
1794. Part I. of "Age of Reason" published. November 4, released from Luxembourg. December 7, restored to Convention.
1795. Part II. of the "Age of Reason" written in Paris.
1796. "Age of Reason" published and prosecuted in England.
1797-1801. Resided in Paris with the Bonnevilles.
1802. September 1, began voyage homeward to America. October 30, landed at Baltimore. Resided in Bordentown, N. J.
1803. In New York much of the time. Madam Bonneville came from France and was domiciled in Paine's house at Bordentown.
1804. Removed to his farm in New Rochelle.
1805. Attempt made upon his life at New Rochelle. In April made a brief stay in New York. Passed the winter in New York, joining Palmer's theistic movement and boarding with Carver.
1806. Went back to New Rochelle in failing health. His vote rejected on the ground that he was not an American citizen.
1807. Wrote "Essay on Dream" at New Rochelle. His last work.
1808. Lived in New York, lodging at 63 Partition street; removed to Herring (now Bleecker) street.
1809. January 18, wrote and signed his will; was removed to 59 Grove street, where he died, June 8. Buried June 10.

THE AGE OF REASON.
PART I.

[Facsimile of original Title Page.]

THE

AGE OF REASON.

BEING AN

INVESTIGATION

OF

TRUE AND OF FABULOUS

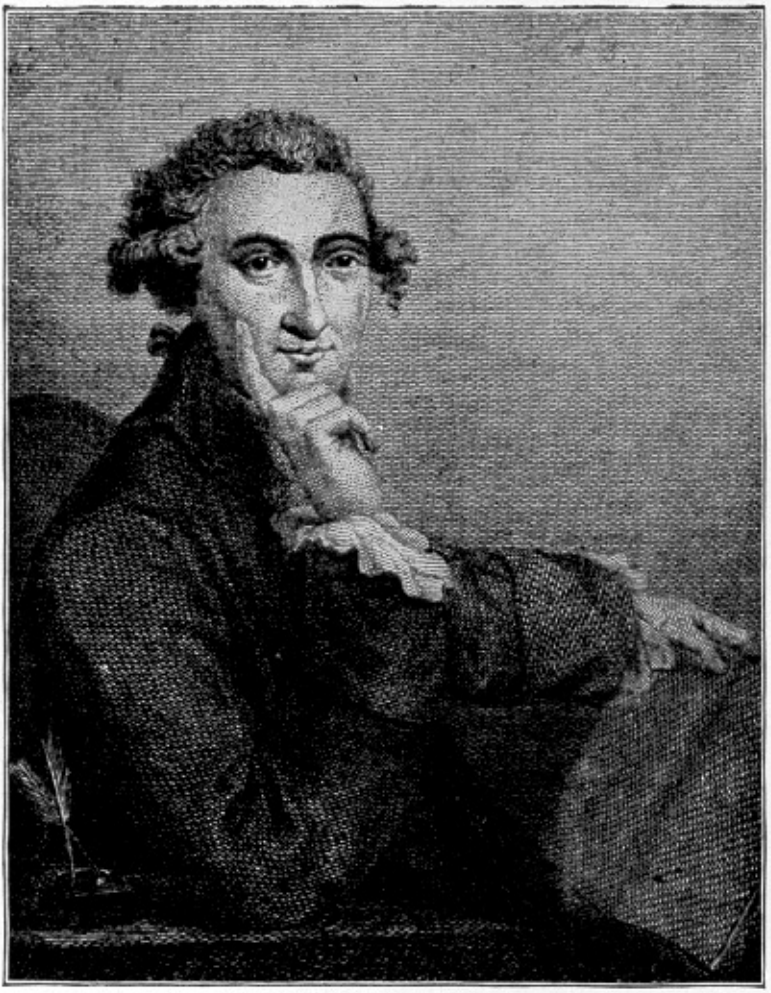
THEOLOGY.

By THOMAS PAINE,

CITIZEN AND CULTIVATOR OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA; — SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO CONGRESS IN THE AMERICAN WAR; — AND AUTHOR OF THE WORKS ENTITLED, 'COMMON SENSE, AND RIGHTS OF MAN.'

Paris, printed for Barrois, ſenior, Bookſeller, Quai des Auguſtins, N°. 19.

Second year of the French Republic, one and indiviſible.



THE PEALE PORTRAIT OF PAINE (1777).

The original of this portrait by Charles Willson Peale was painted for Paine's friend, Col. John Laurens, and was one of a collection of paintings on exhibition at Peale's Museum in Philadelphia, 1803. In 1854 it was sold and came into the possession of T B. MacDonough, the actor, and was by him presented to his brother, John, also an actor, who sold it to Joseph Jefferson. When Jefferson's house at Buzzard's Bay was burned some years ago, the painting was destroyed. Mr. Jefferson, who is the eminent actor, intended to present it to the Paine Memorial Society of Boston. "But," wrote Mr. Jefferson, "the cruel fire roasted the splendid Infidel, so I presume the saints are satisfied"

TO MY

FELLOW-CITIZENS

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

I PUT the following work under your protection. It contains my opinions upon Religion. You will do me the justice to remember, that I have always strenuously supported the Right of every Man to his own opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it.

The most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is Reason. I have never used any other, and I trust I never shall.

Your affectionate friend and fellow-citizen,

THOMAS PAINE.

Luxembourg, 8th Pluviose,
Second Year of the French Republic, one and indivisible.
January 27, O. S. 1794.

THE AGE OF REASON.

BEING

AN INVESTIGATION

OF

TRUE AND OF FABULOUS THEOLOGY.

[PART FIRST.]

It has been my intention, for several years past, to publish my thoughts upon Religion. I am well aware of the difficulties that attend the subject; and, from that consideration, had reserved it to a more advanced period of life. I intended it to be the last offering I should make to my fellow-citizens of all nations; and that at a time when the purity of the motive that induced me to it could not admit of a question, even by those who might disapprove the work.

The circumstance that has now taken place in France, of the total abolition of the whole national order of priesthood and of everything appertaining to compulsive systems of religion and compulsive articles of faith, has not only precipitated my intention, but rendered a work of this kind exceedingly necessary; lest, in the general wreck of superstition, of false systems of government, and false theology, we lose sight of morality, of humanity, and of the theology that is true.

As several of my colleagues, and others of my fellow-citizens of France, have given me the example of making their voluntary and individual profession of faith, I also will make mine; and I do this with all that sincerity and frankness with which the mind of man communicates with itself.

I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life.

I believe the equality of man, and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy.

But, lest it should be supposed that I believe many other things in addition to these, I shall, in the progress of this work, declare the things I do not believe, and my reasons for not believing them.

I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church.

All national institutions of churches—whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish—appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind and monopolize power and profit.

I do not mean by this declaration to condemn those who believe otherwise. They have the same right to their belief as I have to mine. But it is necessary to the happiness of man, that he be mentally faithful to himself. Infidelity does not consist in believing or in disbelieving; it consists in professing to believe what he does not believe.

It is impossible to calculate the moral mischief, if I may so express it, that mental lying has produced in society. When a man has so far corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind, as to subscribe his professional belief to things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime. He takes up the trade of a priest for the sake of gain, and, in order to *qualify* himself for that trade, he begins with a perjury. Can we conceive anything more destructive to morality than this?

Soon after I had published the pamphlet, COMMON SENSE, in America, I saw the exceeding probability that a Revolution in the System of Government would be followed by a revolution in the system of religion. The adulterous connection of church and state,

wherever it had taken place—whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish—had so effectually prohibited, by pains and penalties, every discussion upon established creeds and upon first principles of religion, that until the system of government should be changed those subjects could not be brought fairly and openly before the world, but that whenever this should be done, a revolution in the system of religion would follow. Human inventions and priestcraft would be detected, and man would return to the pure, unmixed, and unadulterated belief of one God, and no more.

Every national church or religion has established itself by pretending some special mission from God, communicated to certain individuals. The Jews have their Moses; the Christians their Jesus Christ, their apostles and saints; and the Turks their Mahomet—as if the way to God was not open to every man alike.

Each of those churches show certain books which they call *revelation*, or the word of God. The Jews say that their word of God was given by God to Moses face to face; the Christians say that their word of God came by divine inspiration; and the Turks say that their word of God (the Koran) was brought by an angel from heaven. Each of those churches accuse the other of unbelief; and, for my own part, I disbelieve them all.

As it is necessary to affix right ideas to words, I will, before I proceed further into the subject, offer some observations on the word *revelation*. Revelation, when applied to religion, means something communicated *immediately* from God to man.

No one will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty to make such a communication, if he pleases. But admitting, for the sake of a case, that something has been revealed to a certain person, and not revealed to any other person, it is revelation to that person only. When he tells it to a second person, a second to a third, a third to a fourth, and so on, it ceases to be a revelation to all those persons. It is a revelation to the first person only, and *hearsay* to every other; and, consequently, they are not obliged to believe it.

It is a contradiction in terms and ideas to call anything a revelation that comes to us at second-hand, either verbally or in writing. Revelation is necessarily limited to the first communication—after this, it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner, for it was not a revelation to *me*, and I have only his word for it that it was made to *him*.

When Moses told the children of Israel that he received the two tables of the commandments from the hand of God, they were not obliged to believe him, because they had no other authority for it than his telling them so; and I have no other authority for it than some historian telling me so. The commandments carry no internal evidence of divinity with them. They contain some good moral precepts, such as any man qualified to be a lawgiver, or a legislator, could produce himself, without having recourse to supernatural intervention.*

When I am told that the Koran was written in heaven, and brought to Mahomet by an angel, the account comes to near the same kind of hearsay evidence and second-hand authority as the former. I did not see the angel myself, and therefore I have a right not to believe it.

When also I am told that a woman called the Virgin Mary said, or gave out, that she was with child without any cohabitation with a man, and that her betrothed husband, Joseph, said that an angel told him so, I have a right to believe them or not; such a circumstance required a much stronger evidence than their bare word for it; but we have not even this; for neither Joseph nor Mary wrote any such matter themselves. It is only reported by others that *they said so*. It is hearsay

* It is, however, necessary to except the declaration which says that God *visits the sins of the fathers upon the children*. This is contrary to every principle of moral justice.

upon hearsay, and I do not choose to rest my belief upon such evidence.

It is, however, not difficult to account for the credit that was given to the story of Jesus Christ being the son of God. He was born at a time when the heathen mythology had still some fashion and repute in the world, and that mythology had prepared the people for the belief of such a story. Almost all the extraordinary men that lived under the heathen mythology were reputed to be the sons of some of their gods. It was not a new thing, at that time, to believe a man to have been celestially begotten; the intercourse of gods with women was then a matter of familiar opinion. Their Jupiter, according to their accounts, had cohabited with hundreds; the story therefore had nothing in it either new, wonderful, or obscene; it was conformable to the opinions that then prevailed among the people called Gentiles, or mythologists, and it was those people only that believed it. The Jews, who had kept strictly to the belief of one God and no more, and who had always rejected the heathen mythology, never credited the story.

It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian church sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology. A direct incorporation took place, in the first instance, by making the reputed founder to be celestially begotten. The trinity of gods that then followed was no other than a reduction of the former plurality, which was about twenty or thirty thousand. The statue of Mary succeeded the statue of Diana of Ephesus. The deification of heroes changed into the canonization of saints. The mythologists had gods for everything; the Christian mythologists had saints for everything. The church became as crowded with the one as the pantheon had been with the other, and Rome was the place of both. The Christian theory is little else than the idolatry of the ancient mythologists, accommodated to the purposes of power and revenue; and it yet remains to reason and philosophy to abolish the amphibious fraud.

Nothing that is here said can apply, even with the most distant disrespect, to the *real* character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and amiable man. The morality that he preached and practiced was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality had been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before; by the Quakers since, and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any.

Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or anything else. Not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people; and as to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians, having brought him into the world in supernatural manner, were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story must have fallen to the ground.

The wretched contrivance with which this latter part is told exceeds everything that went before it. The first part, that of the miraculous conception, was not a thing that admitted of publicity; and therefore the tellers of this part of the story had this advantage, that though they might not be credited they could not be detected. They could not be expected to prove it, because it was not one of those things that admitted of proof, and it was impossible that the person of whom it was told could prove it himself.

But the resurrection of a dead person from the grave, and his ascension through the air, is a thing very different, as to the evidence it admits of, to the invisible conception of a child in the womb. The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to have taken place, admitted of public and ocular demonstration, like that of the ascension of a balloon, or the sun at noonday, to all Jerusalem at least. A thing which everybody is required to believe, requires that the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all, and universal; and as the public visibility of this last related act was the only evidence that

could give sanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground because that evidence never was given. Instead of this, a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say they *saw it*, and all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it. But it appears that Thomas did not believe the resurrection; and, as they say, would not believe without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. *So neither will I;* and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas.

It is in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise this matter. The story, so far as relates to the supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it. Who were the authors of it is as impossible for us now to know as it is for us to be assured that the books in which the account is related were written by the persons whose names they bear. The best surviving evidence we now have respecting this affair is the Jews. They are regularly descended from the people who lived in the times this resurrection and ascension is said to have happened, and they say, *it is not true.* It has long appeared to me a strange inconsistency to cite the Jews as a proof of the truth of the story. It is the same as if a man were to say, "I will prove the truth of what I have told you by producing the people who say it is false."

That such a person as Jesus Christ existed, and that he was crucified—which was the mode of execution at that day—are historical relations strictly within the limits of probability. He preached most excellent morality, and the equality of man; but he preached also against the corruptions and avarice of the Jewish priests; and this brought upon him the hatred and vengeance of the whole order of priesthood. The accusation which those priests brought against him was that of sedition and conspiracy against the Roman government, to which the Jews were then subject and tributary; and it is not improbable that the Roman government might have some secret apprehension of the

effects of his doctrine as well as the Jewish priests; neither is it improbable that Jesus Christ had in contemplation the delivery of the Jewish nation from the bondage of the Romans. Between the two, however, this virtuous reformer and revolutionist lost his life.

It is upon this plain narrative of facts, together with another case I am going to mention, that the Christian mythologists, calling themselves the Christian church, have erected their fable, which for absurdity and extravagance is not exceeded by anything that is to be found in the mythology of the ancients.

The ancient mythologists tell that the race of Giants made war against Jupiter, and that one of them threw a hundred rocks against him at one throw; that Jupiter defeated him with thunder, and confined him afterwards under Mount Etna; and that every time the Giant turns himself, Mount Etna belches fire. It is here easy to see that the circumstance of the mountain, that of its being a volcano, suggested the idea of the fable; and that the fable is made to fit and wind itself up with that circumstance.

The Christian mythologists tell that their Satan made war against the Almighty, who defeated him, and confined him afterwards, not under a mountain, but in a pit. It is here easy to see that the first fable suggested the idea of the second; for the fable of Jupiter and the Giants was told many hundred years before that of Satan.

Thus far the ancient and the Christian mythologists differ very little from each other. But the latter have contrived to carry the matter much farther. They have contrived to connect the fabulous part of the story of Jesus Christ with the fable originating from Mount Etna; and, in order to make all the parts of the story tie together, they have taken to their aid the traditions of the Jews; for the Christian mythology is made up partly from the ancient mythology and partly from the Jewish traditions.

The Christian mythologists, after having confined Satan in a pit, were obliged to let him out again, to

bring on the sequel of the fable. He is then introduced into the garden of Eden in the shape of a snake or a serpent, and in that shape he enters into familiar conversation with Eve, who is no way surprised to hear a snake talk; and the issue of this *tete-a-tete* is, that he persuades her to eat an apple, and the eating of that apple damns all mankind.

After giving Satan this triumph over the whole creation, one would have supposed that the church mythologists would have been kind enough to send him back again to the pit; or, if they had not done this, that they would have put a mountain upon him (for they say that their faith can remove a mountain), or have put him *under* a mountain, as the former mythologists had done, to prevent his getting again among the women and doing more mischief. But instead of this, they leave him at large, without even obliging him to give his parole—the secret of which is, that they could not do without him; and after being at the trouble of making him, they bribed him to stay. They promised him ALL the Jews, ALL the Turks by anticipation, nine-tenths of the world beside, and Mahomet into the bargain. After this, who can doubt the bountifulness of the Christian mythology?

Having thus made an insurrection and a battle in heaven, in which none of the combatants could be either killed or wounded—put Satan into the pit—let him out again—given him a triumph over the whole creation—damned all mankind by the eating of an apple, these Christian mythologists bring the two ends of their fable together. They represent this virtuous and amiable man, Jesus Christ, to be at once both God and man, and also the Son of God, celestially begotten, on purpose to be sacrificed, because they say that Eve in her longing had eaten an apple.

Putting aside everything that might excite laughter by its absurdity, or detestation by its profaneness, and confining ourselves merely to an examination of the parts, it is impossible to conceive a story more derogatory to the Almighty, more inconsistent with his wis-

dom, more contradictory to his power, than this story is. In order to make for it a foundation to rise upon, the inventors were under the necessity of giving to the being whom they call Satan a power equally as great, if not greater than they attribute to the Almighty. They have not only given him the power of liberating himself from the pit, after what they call his fall, but they have made that power increase afterwards to infinity. Before this fall they represent him only as an angel of limited existence, as they represent the rest. After his fall he becomes, by their account, omnipresent. He exists everywhere, and at the same time. He occupies the whole immensity of space.

Not content with this deification of Satan, they represent him as defeating, by stratagem, in the shape of an animal of the creation, all the power and wisdom of the Almighty. They represent him as having compelled the Almighty to the *direct necessity* either of surrendering the whole of the creation to the government and sovereignty of this Satan or of capitulating for its redemption by coming down upon earth and exhibiting himself upon a cross in the shape of a man.

Had the inventors of this story told it the contrary way—that is, had they represented the Almighty as compelling Satan to exhibit *himself* on a cross in the shape of a snake, as a punishment for his new transgression—the story would have been less absurd—less contradictory. But, instead of this, they make the transgressor triumph and the Almighty fall.

That many good men have believed this strange fable, and lived very good lives under that belief (for credulity is not a crime), is what I have no doubt of. In the first place, they were educated to believe it, and they would have believed anything else in the same manner. There are also many who have been so enthusiastically enraptured by what they conceived to be the infinite love of God to man in making a sacrifice of himself, that the vehemence of the idea has forbidden and deterred them from examining into the absurdity and profaneness of the story. The more unnatural

PAINE AS A MEMBER OF THE FRENCH ASSEMBLY.

The above likeness of Paine is called the Bonneville picture. Our copy is from an engraving in the possession of Mr. J. B. Elliott of Philadelphia. On the back is written: "The original portrait from which this was taken was painted by Wilson Peale of Phila., and was painted in the year 1776. Paine was then about 40 years of age. My authority for this statement is his [[Peale's] granddaughter, Miss Mary Peale, who is also an artist, and has her studio in Phila." The engraving was produced in France, and inscribed, "Peint par Ped [Peale ?], dessine par F. Bonneville, grave par Sandoz." Paine is here represented in the costume of a member of the French Assembly, with which he was invested by Bonneville.

anything is, the more is it capable of becoming the object of dismal admiration.

But if objects for gratitude and admiration are our desire, do they not present themselves every hour to our eyes? Do we not see a fair creation prepared to receive us the instant we were born—a world furnished to our hands that cost us nothing? Is it we that light up the sun, that pour down the rain, and fill the earth with abundance? Whether we sleep or wake the vast machinery of the universe still goes on. Are these things, and the blessings they indicate in future, nothing to us? Can our gross feelings be excited by no other subjects than tragedy and suicide? Or is the gloomy pride of man become so intolerable that nothing can flatter it but a sacrifice of the Creator?

I know that this bold investigation will alarm many, but it would be paying too great a compliment to their credulity to forbear it upon that account. The times and the subject demand it to be done. The suspicion that the theory of what is called the Christian church is fabulous is becoming very extensive in all countries; and it will be a consolation to men staggering under that suspicion, and doubting what to believe and what to disbelieve, to see the subject freely investigated. I therefore pass on to an examination of the books called the Old and the New Testament.

These books, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation (which, by the bye, is a book of riddles that requires a revelation to explain it), are, we are told, the word of God. It is, therefore, proper for us to know who told us so, that we may know what credit to give to the report. The answer to this question is, that nobody can tell, except that we tell one another so. The case, however, historically, appears to be as follows:

When the church mythologists established their system they collected all the writings they could find, and managed them as they pleased. It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear under the name of the Old and the New Testament are in the same state in which those col-

lectors say they found them; or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.

Be this as it may, they decided by *vote* which of the books, out of the collection they had made, should be the WORD OF GOD, and which should not. They rejected several; they voted others to be doubtful, such as the books called the Apocrypha; and those books which had a majority of votes were voted to be the word of God. Had they voted otherwise, all the people, since calling themselves Christians, had believed otherwise—for the belief of the one comes from the vote of the other. Who the people were that did all this, we know nothing of; they called themselves by the general name of the church; and this is all we know of the matter.

As we have no other external evidence or authority for believing those books to be the word of God than what I have mentioned, which is no evidence or authority at all, I come, in the next place, to examine the internal evidence contained in the books themselves.

In the former part of this Essay I have spoken of revelation. I now proceed further with that subject, for the purpose of applying it to the books in question.

Revelation is a communication of something which the person to whom that thing is revealed did not know before. For if I have done a thing, or seen it done, it needs no revelation to tell me I have done it, or seen it, nor to enable me to tell it, or to write it.

Revelation, therefore, cannot be applied to anything done upon earth of which man is himself the actor or the witness; and consequently all the historical and anecdotal part of the Bible, which is almost the whole of it, is not within the meaning and compass of the word revelation, and, therefore, is not the word of God.

When Samson ran off with the gate-posts of Gaza, if he ever did so (and whether he did or not is nothing to us), or when he visited his Delilah, or caught his foxes, or did anything else, what has revelation to do with these things? If they were facts, he could tell them himself; or his secretary, if he kept one, could

write them, if they were worth either telling or writing; and if they were fictions, revelation could not make them true; and whether true or not, we are neither the better nor the wiser for knowing them. When we contemplate the immensity of that Being who directs and governs the incomprehensible WHOLE, of which the utmost ken of human sight can discover but a part, we ought to feel ashamed at calling such paltry stories the word of God.

As to the account of the creation, with which the book of Genesis opens, it has all the appearance of being a tradition which the Israelites had among them before they came into Egypt; and after their departure from that country they put it at the head of their history, without telling—as it is most probable they did not know—how they came by it. The manner in which the account opens shows it to be traditionary. It begins abruptly. It is nobody that speaks. It is nobody that hears. It is addressed to nobody. It has neither first, second, nor third person. It has every criterion of being a tradition. It has no voucher. Moses does not take it upon himself by introducing it with the formality that he uses on other occasions, such as that of saying, "*The Lord spake unto Moses, saying.*"

Why it has been called the Mosaic account of the creation I am at a loss to conceive. Moses, I believe, was too good a judge of such subjects to put his name to that account. He had been educated among the Egyptians, who were a people as well skilled in science, and particularly in astronomy, as any people of their day; and the silence and caution that Moses observes, in not authenticating the account, is a good negative evidence that he neither told it nor believed it. The case is that every nation of people has been world-makers, and the Israelites had as much right to set up the trade of world-making as any of the rest; and as Moses was not an Israelite, he might not choose to contradict the tradition. The account, however, is harmless; and this is more than can be said for many other parts of the Bible.

When we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness with which more than half the Bible is filled, it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the word of God. It is a history of wickedness, that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and, for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest everything that is cruel.

We scarcely meet with anything, a few phrases excepted, but what deserves either our abhorrence or our contempt, till we come to the miscellaneous parts of the Bible. In the anonymous publications, the Psalms and the book of Job—more particularly in the latter—we find a great deal of elevated sentiment reverentially expressed of the power and benignity of the Almighty; but they stand on no higher rank than many other compositions on similar subjects, as well before that time as since.

The Proverbs, which are said to be Solomon's, though most probably a collection (because they discover a knowledge of life which his situation excluded him from knowing), are an instructive table of ethics. They are inferior in keenness to the proverbs of the Spaniards, and not more wise and economical than those of the American Franklin.

All the remaining parts of the Bible, generally known by the name of the Prophets, are the works of the Jewish poets and itinerant preachers, who mixed poetry, anecdote, and devotion together; and those works still retain the air and style of poetry, though in translation.*

---

* As there are many readers who do not see that a composition is poetry unless it be in rhyme, it is for their information that I add this note.

Poetry consists principally in two things: imagery and composition. The composition of poetry differs from that of prose in the manner of mixing long and short syllables together. Take a long syllable out of a line of poetry and put a short one in the room of it, or put a long syllable where a short one should be, and that line will lose its poetical harmony. It will have an effect upon the line like that of misplacing a note in a song.

The imagery in these books, called the prophets, appertains

There is not throughout the whole book called the Bible any word that describes to us what we call a poet, nor any word that describes what we call poetry. The case is, that the word *prophet*, to which latter times have fixed a new idea, was the Bible word for poet, and the word *prophesying* meant the art of making poetry. It also meant the art of playing poetry to a tune upon any instrument of music.

We read of prophesying with pipes, tabrets, and horns—of prophesying with harps, with psalteries, with cymbals, and with every other instrument of music then in fashion. Were we now to speak of prophesying with a fiddle, or with a pipe and tabor, the expression would have no meaning, or would appear ridiculous, and to some people contemptuous, because we have changed the meaning of the word.

We are told of Saul being among the *prophets*, and also that he prophesied; but we are not told what *they prophesied*, nor what *he prophesied*. The case is, there was nothing to tell; for these prophets were a company of musicians and poets, and Saul joined in the concert; and this was called *prophesying*.

The account given of this affair in the book called Samuel is, that Saul met a *company* of prophets—a whole company of them! coming down with a psaltery,

---

altogether to poetry. It is fictitious, and often extravagant, and not admissible in any other kind of writing than poetry.

To show that these writings are composed in poetical numbers, I will take ten syllables as they stand in the book and make a line of the same number of syllables (heroic measure) that shall rhyme with the last word. It will then be seen that the composition of these books is poetical measure. The instance I shall produce is from Isaiah:

> "*Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth!*"
> 'Tis God himself that calls attention forth.

Another instance I shall quote is from the mournful Jeremiah, to which I shall add two other lines, for the purpose of carrying out the figure and showing the intention of the poet:

> "*Oh! that mine head were waters, and mine eyes*"
> Were fountains flowing like the liquid skies;
> Then would I give the mighty flood release,
> And weep a deluge for the human race.

a tabret, a pipe, and a harp, and that they prophesied, and that he prophesied with them. But it appears afterwards that Saul prophesied badly; that is, he performed his part badly; for it is said that "an *evil spirit from God*" * came upon Saul, and he prophesied.

Now, were there no other passage in the book called the Bible than this to demonstrate to us that we have lost the original meaning of the word *prophesy* and substituted another meaning in its place, this alone would be sufficient; for it is impossible to use and apply the word *prophesy* in the place it is here used and applied, if we give to it the sense which latter times have affixed to it. The manner in which it is here used strips it of all religious meaning and shows that a man might then be a prophet, or he might *prophesy*, as he may now be a poet or musician, without any regard to the morality or immorality of his character. The word was originally a term of science, promiscuously applied to poetry and to music, and not restricted to any subject upon which poetry and music might be exercised.

Deborah and Barak are called prophets, not because they predicted anything, but because they composed the poem or song that bears their name in celebration of an act already done. David is ranked among the prophets, for he was a musician, and was also reputed to be (though perhaps very erroneously) the author of the Psalms. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are not called prophets; it does not appear from any accounts we have that they could either sing, play music, or make poetry.

We are told of the greater and the lesser prophets. They might as well tell us of the greater and the lesser God; for there cannot be degrees in prophesying consistently with its modern sense. But there are degrees in poetry, and therefore the phrase is reconcilable to

* As those men who call themselves divines and commentators are very fond of puzzling one another, I leave them to contest the meaning of the first part of the phrase, that of an *evil spirit from God*, and keep to my text—keep to the meaning of the word prophesy.

the case when we understand by it the greater and the lesser poets.

It is altogether unnecessary, after this, to offer any observations upon what those men, styled prophets, have written. The axe goes at once to the root by showing that the original meaning of the word has been mistaken, and consequently all the inferences that have been drawn from those books, the devotional respect that has been paid to them, and the labored commentaries that have been written upon them, under that mistaken meaning, are not worth disputing about. In many things, however, the writings of the Jewish poets deserve a better fate than that of being bound up, as they now are, with the trash that accompanies them under the abused name of the word of God.

If we permit ourselves to conceive right ideas of things, we must necessarily affix the idea, not only of unchangeableness, but of the utter impossibility of any change taking place, by any means or accident whatever, in that which we would honor with the name of the word of God; and therefore the word of God can not exist in any written or human language.

The continually progressive change to which the meaning of words is subject, the want of a universal language, which renders translations necessary, the errors to which translations are again subject, the mistakes of copyists and printers, together with the possibility of alteration, are of themselves evidences that human language, whether in speech or in print, cannot be the vehicle of the word of God. The word of God exists in something else.

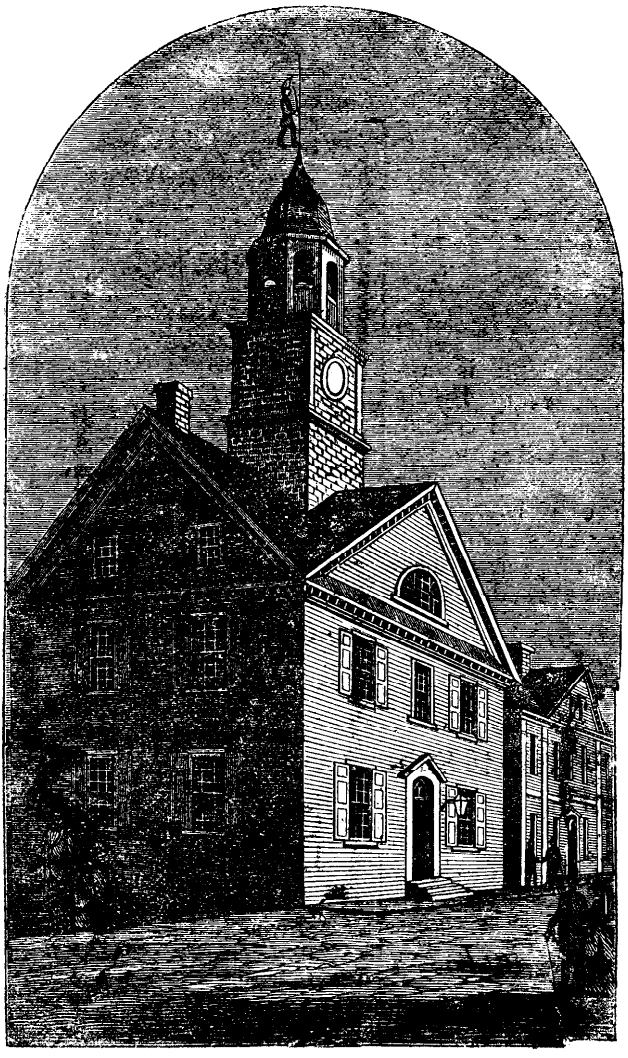
Did the book called the Bible excel in purity of ideas and expression all the books now extant in the world, I would not take it for my rule of faith as being the word of God, because the possibility would nevertheless exist of my being imposed upon. But when I see throughout the greater part of this book scarcely anything but a history of the grossest vices, and a collection of the most paltry and contemptible tales, I can not dishonor my Creator by calling it by his name.

Thus much for the Bible; I now go on to the book called the New Testament. The *new* Testament! That is, the *new* will—as if there could be two wills of the Creator.

Had it been the object or the intention of Jesus Christ to establish a new religion, he would undoubtedly have written the system himself, or *procured it to be written* in his lifetime. But there is no publication extant authenticated with his name. All the books called the New Testament were written after his death. He was a Jew by birth and profession; and he was the son of God in like manner that every other person is; for the Creator is the Father of All.

The first four books, called Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, do not give a history of the life of Jesus Christ, but only detached anecdotes of him. It appears from these books that the whole time of his being a preacher was not more than eighteen months; and it was only during this short time that those men became acquainted with him. They make mention of him at the age of twelve years, sitting, they say, among the Jewish doctors, asking and answering them questions. As this was several years before their acquaintance with him began, it is most probable they had this anecdote from his parents. From this time there is no account of him for about sixteen years. Where he lived, or how he employed himself during this interval, is not known. Most probably he was working at his father's trade, which was that of a carpenter. It does not appear that he had any school education, and the probability is that he could not write, for his parents were extremely poor, as appears from their not being able to pay for a bed when he was born.

It is somewhat curious that the three persons whose names are the most universally recorded were of very obscure parentage. Moses was a foundling, Jesus Christ was born in a stable, and Mahomet was a mule driver. The first and the last of these men were founders of different systems of religion; but Jesus Christ founded no new system. He called men to the practice



OLD COURT HOUSE, YORK, PA. — 1754-1840

Occupied by the Continental Congress in 1777-8, to whose counsels Paine was admitted.

of moral virtues, and the belief of one God. The great trait in his character is philanthropy.

The manner in which he was apprehended shows that he was not much known at that time; and it shows also that the meetings he then held with his followers were in secret; and that he had given over or suspended preaching publicly. Judas could no otherwise betray him than by giving information where he was, and pointing him out to the officers that went to arrest him; and the reason for employing and paying Judas to do this could arise only from the causes already mentioned —that of his not being much known, and living concealed.

The idea of his concealment not only agrees very ill with his reputed divinity, but associates with it something of pusillanimity; and his being betrayed, or in other words, his being apprehended on the information of one of his followers, shows that he did not intend to be apprehended, and consequently that he did not intend to be crucified.

The Christian mythologists tell us that Christ died for the sins of the world, and that he came on *purpose to die.* Would it not then have been the same if he had died of a fever or of the small-pox, of old age, or of anything else?

The declaratory sentence which they say was passed upon Adam, in case he ate of the apple, was not that *thou shalt surely be crucified,* but, *thou shalt surely die* —the sentence was death, and not the manner of dying. Crucifixion, therefore, or any other particular manner of dying made no part of the sentence that Adam was to suffer; and consequently, even upon their own tactics, it could make no part of the sentence Christ was to suffer in the room of Adam. A fever would have done as well as a cross, if there was any occasion for either.

This sentence of death which, they tell us, was thus passed upon Adam, must either have meant dying naturally—that is, ceasing to live—or have meant what these mythologists call damnation; and consequently, the act of dying on the part of Jesus Christ must, according to

their system, apply as a prevention to one or other of these two *things* happening to Adam and to us.

That it does not prevent our dying is evident, because we all die; and if their accounts of longevity be true, men die faster since the crucifixion than before; and with respect to the second explanation (including with it the *natural death* of Jesus Christ as a substitute for the *eternal death or damnation* of all mankind), it is impertinently representing the Creator as coming off, or revoking the sentence, by a pun or quibble upon the word *death*. That manufacturer of quibbles, St. Paul, if he wrote the books that bear his name, has helped this quibble on by making another quibble upon the word *Adam*. He makes there to be two Adams—the one who sins in fact, and suffers by proxy; the other who sins by proxy, and suffers in fact. A religion thus interlarded with quibble, subterfuge, and pun has a tendency to instruct its professors in the practice of these arts. They acquire the habit without being aware of the cause.

If Jesus Christ was the Being which those mythologists tell us he was, and if he came into this world to *suffer*, which is a word they sometimes use instead of *to die*, the only real suffering he could have endured would have been *to live*. His existence here was a state of exilement or transportation from Heaven, and the way back to his original country was to die. In fine, everything in this strange system is the reverse of what it pretends to be. It is the reverse of truth, and I become so tired with examining into its inconsistencies and absurdities that I hasten to the conclusion of it, in order to proceed to something better.

How much, or what parts, of the books called the New Testament were written by the persons whose names they bear is what we can know nothing of; neither are we certain in what language they were originally written. The matters they now contain may be classed under two heads—anecdote and epistolary correspondence.

The four books already mentioned—Matthew, Mark,

Luke, and John—are altogether anecdotal. They relate events after they had taken place. They tell what Jesus Christ did and said, and what others did and said to him; and in several instances they relate the same event differently. Revelation is necessarily out of the question with respect to those books; not only because of the disagreement of the writers, but because revelation cannot be applied to the relating of facts by the person who saw them done, nor to the relating or recording of any discourse or conversation by those who heard it. The book called the Acts of the Apostles (an anonymous work) belongs also to the anecdotal part.

All the other parts of the New Testament, except the book of enigmas called Revelation, are a collection of letters under the name of epistles; and the forgery of letters has been such a common practice in the world, that the probability is at least equal whether they are genuine or forged. One thing, however, is much less equivocal, which is, that out of the matters contained in those books, together with the assistance of some old stories, the church has set up a system of religion very contradictory to the character of the person whose name it bears. It has set up a religion of pomp and of revenue in pretended imitation of a person whose life was humility and poverty.

The invention of a purgatory, and of the releasing of souls therefrom by prayers bought of the church with money; the selling of pardons, dispensations, and indulgences are revenue laws, without bearing that name or carrying that appearance. But the case nevertheless is, that those things derive their origin from the proxyism of the crucifixion, and the theory deduced therefrom, which was that one person could stand in the place of another, and could perform meritorious services for him. The probability, therefore, is that the whole theory or doctrine of what is called the redemption (which is said to have been accomplished by the act of one person in the room of another) was originally fabricated on purpose to bring forward and build all those secondary and pecuniary redemptions upon; and that the

passages in the books upon which the idea or theory of redemption is built, have been manufactured and fabricated for that purpose. Why are we to give this church credit when she tells us that those books are genuine in every part, any more than we give her credit for everything else she has told us; or for the miracles she says she has performed? That she *could* fabricate writings is certain, because she could write; and the composition of the writings in question is of that kind that anybody might do it; and that she *did* fabricate them is not more inconsistent with probability than that she should tell us, as she has done, that she could and did work miracles.

Since, then, no external evidence can, at this long distance of time, be produced to prove whether the church fabricated the doctrine called redemption or not (for such evidence, whether for or against, would be subject to the same suspicion of being fabricated), the case can only be referred to the internal evidence which the thing carries of itself; and this affords a very strong presumption of its being a fabrication. For the internal evidence is that the theory or doctrine of redemption has for its basis an idea of pecuniary justice, and not that of moral justice.

If I owe a person money, and cannot pay him, and he threatens to put me in prison, another person can take the debt upon himself and pay it for me; but if I have committed a crime every circumstance of the case is changed. Moral justice cannot take the innocent for the guilty, even if the innocent would offer itself. To suppose justice to do this is to destroy the principle of its existence, which is the thing itself. It is then no longer justice. It is indiscriminate revenge.

This single reflection will show that the doctrine of redemption is founded on a mere pecuniary idea corresponding to that of a debt which another person might pay; and as this pecuniary idea corresponds again with the system of second redemptions obtained through the means of money given to the church for pardons, the probability is that the same person fabricated both the

one and the other of those theories; and that, in truth, there is no such thing as redemption; that it is fabulous and that man stands in the same relative condition with his Maker he ever did stand since man existed; and that it is his greatest consolation to think so.

Let him believe this, and he will live more consistently and morally than by any other system. It is by his being taught to contemplate himself as an outlaw, as an outcast, as a beggar, as a mumper, as one thrown, as it were, on a dunghill at an immense distance from his Creator, and who must make his approaches by creeping and cringing to intermediate beings, that he conceives either a contemptuous disregard for everything under the name of religion, or becomes indifferent, or turns what he calls devout. In the latter case, he consumes his life in grief or the affectation of it. His prayers are reproaches. His humility is ingratitude. He calls himself a worm, and the fertile earth a dunghill, and all the blessings of life by the thankless name of vanities. He despises the choicest gift of God to man, the GIFT OF REASON; and having endeavored to force upon himself the belief of a system against which reason revolts, he ungratefully calls it *human reason*, as if man could give reason to himself.

Yet, with all this strange appearance of humility, and this contempt for human reason, he ventures into the boldest presumptions. He finds fault with everything. His selfishness is never satisfied; his ingratitude is never at an end. He takes on himself to direct the Almighty what to do, even in the government of the universe. He prays dictatorially. When it is sunshine, he prays for rain; and when it is rain, he prays for sunshine. He follows the same idea in everything that he prays for; for what is the amount of all his prayers but an attempt to make the Almighty change his mind and act otherwise than he does? It is as if he were to say: Thou knowest not so well as I.

But some perhaps will say: Are we to have no word of God—no revelation? I answer: Yes; there is a word of God; there is a revelation.

THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD; and it is in *this word*, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man.

Human language is local and changeable, and is therefore incapable of being used as the means of unchangeable and universal information. The idea that God sent Jesus Christ to publish, as they say, the glad tidings to all nations, from one end of the earth unto the other, is consistent only with the ignorance of those who knew nothing of the extent of the world, and who believed, as those world-saviors believed and continued to believe for several centuries (and that in contradiction to the discoveries of philosophers and the experience of navigators), that the earth was flat like a trencher, and that a man might walk to the end of it.

But how was Jesus Christ to make anything known to all nations? He could speak but one language, which was Hebrew; and there are in the world several hundred languages. Scarcely any two nations speak the same language, or understand each other; and as to translations, every man who knows anything of languages knows that it is impossible to translate from one language into another, not only without losing a great part of the original, but frequently of mistaking the sense; and, besides all this, the art of printing was wholly unknown at the time Christ lived.

It is always necessary that the means that are to accomplish any end be equal to the accomplishment of that end, or the end cannot be accomplished. It is in this that the difference between finite and infinite power and wisdom discovers itself. Man frequently fails in accomplishing his ends from a natural inability of the power to the purpose; and frequently from the want of wisdom to apply power properly. But it is impossible for infinite power and wisdom to fail as man faileth. The means it useth are always equal to the end; but human language, more especially as there is not a universal language, is incapable of being used as a universal means of unchangeable and uniform information; and

ENGRAVING FROM ROMNEY'S PAINE.

From an engraved likeness in the possession of W. H. Burr of Washington, D. C., who indentifies it as a copy of Romney's portrait of Paine from its close resemblance to copperplate engravings of that celebrated picture.

therefore it is not the means that God useth in manifesting himself universally to man.

It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of a *word of God* can unite. The Creation speaketh a universal language, independently of human speech or human languages, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever-existing original which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the Creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible Whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the scripture called the Creation.

The only idea man can affix to the name of God is that of a *first cause,* the cause of all things. And, incomprehensibly difficult as it is for man to conceive what a first cause is, he arrives at the belief of it from the tenfold greater difficulty of disbelieving it. It is difficult beyond description to conceive that space can have no end; but it is more difficult to conceive an end. It is difficult beyond the power of man to conceive an eternal duration of what we call time; but it is more impossible to conceive a time when there shall be no time. In like manner of reasoning, every thing we behold carries in itself the internal evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence

to himself that he did not make himself; neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather, nor any of his race; neither could any tree, plant, or animal make itself; and it is the conviction arising from this evidence that carries us on, as it were, by necessity, to the belief of a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause, man calls God.

It is only by the exercise of reason that man can discover God. Take away that reason and he would be incapable of understanding any thing; and, in this case, it would be just as consistent to read even the book called the Bible to a horse as to a man. How then is it that those people pretend to reject reason?

Almost the only parts in the book called the Bible that convey to us any idea of God are some chapters in Job, and the nineteenth Psalm; I recollect no other. Those parts are true *deistical* compositions; for they treat of the *Deity* through his works. They take the book of Creation as the word of God; they refer to no other book; and all the inferences they make are drawn from that volume.

I insert in this place the nineteenth Psalm, as paraphrased into English verse by Addison. I recollect not the prose, and where I write this I have not the opportunity of seeing it:

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great original proclaim.

The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth;

Whilst all the stars that round her burn
And all the planets, in their turn,

Confirm the tidings as they roll
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round this dark terrestrial ball;
What though no real voice, nor sound,
Amidst their radiant orbs be found,

In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
THE HAND THAT MADE US IS DIVINE.

What more does man want to know than that the hand or power that made these things is divine, is omnipotent? Let him believe this with the force it is impossible to repel, if he permits his reason to act, and his rule of moral life will follow of course.

The allusions in Job have, all of them, the same tendency with this Psalm; that of deducing or proving a truth, that would otherwise be unknown, from truths already known.

I recollect not enough of the passages in Job to insert them correctly; but there is one that occurs to me that is applicable to the subject I am speaking upon: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"

I know not how the printers have pointed this passage, for I keep no Bible; but it contains two distinct questions that admit of distinct answers.

First—Canst thou by *searching* find out God? Yes; because, in the first place, I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence; and by *searching* into the nature of other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is that I know, by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God.

Secondly—Canst thou find out the Almighty to *perfection?* No; not only because the power and wisdom he has manifested in the structure of the Creation that I behold is to me incomprehensible; but because even this manifestation, great as it is, is probably but a

small display of that immensity of power and wisdom by which millions of other worlds, to me invisible by their distance, were created and continue to exist.

It is evident that both these questions were put to the reason of the person to whom they are supposed to have been addressed; and it is only by admitting the first question to be answered affirmatively that the second could follow. It would have been unnecessary, and even absurd, to have put a second question more difficult than the first, if the first question had been answered negatively. The two questions have different objects; the first refers to the existence of God, the second to his attributes. Reason can discover the one, but it falls infinitely short in discovering the whole of the other.

I recollect not a single passage in all the writings ascribed to the men called apostles that conveys any idea of what God is. Those writings are chiefly controversial; and the gloominess of the subject they dwell upon, that of a man dying in agony on a cross, is better suited to the gloomy genius of a monk in a cell, by whom it is not impossible they were written, than to any man breathing the open air of the Creation. The only passage that occurs to me, that has any reference to the works of God, by which only his power and wisdom can be known, is related to have been spoken by Jesus Christ as a remedy against distrustful care. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." This, however, is far inferior to the allusions in Job and in the nineteenth Psalm; but it is similar in idea, and the modesty of the imagery is correspondent to the modesty of the man.

As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of atheism—a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of manism, with but little deism, and is as near to atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker an opaque body, which it calls a Redeemer,

as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun; and it produces by this means a religious or an irreligious eclipse of light. It has put the whole orb of reason into shade.

The effect of this obscurity has been that of turning everything upside down, and representing it in reverse; and, among the revolutions it has thus magically produced, it has made a revolution in theology.

That which is now called natural philosophy, embracing the whole circle of science, of which astronomy occupies the chief place, is the study of the works of God, and of the power and wisdom of God in his works, and is the true theology.

As to the theology that is now studied in its place, it is the study of human opinions and of human fancies *concerning* God. It is not the study of God himself in the works that he has made, but in the works or writings that man has made; and it is not among the least of the mischiefs that the Christian system has done to the world, that it has abandoned the original and beautiful system of theology, like a beautiful innocent, to distress and reproach, to make room for the hag of superstition.

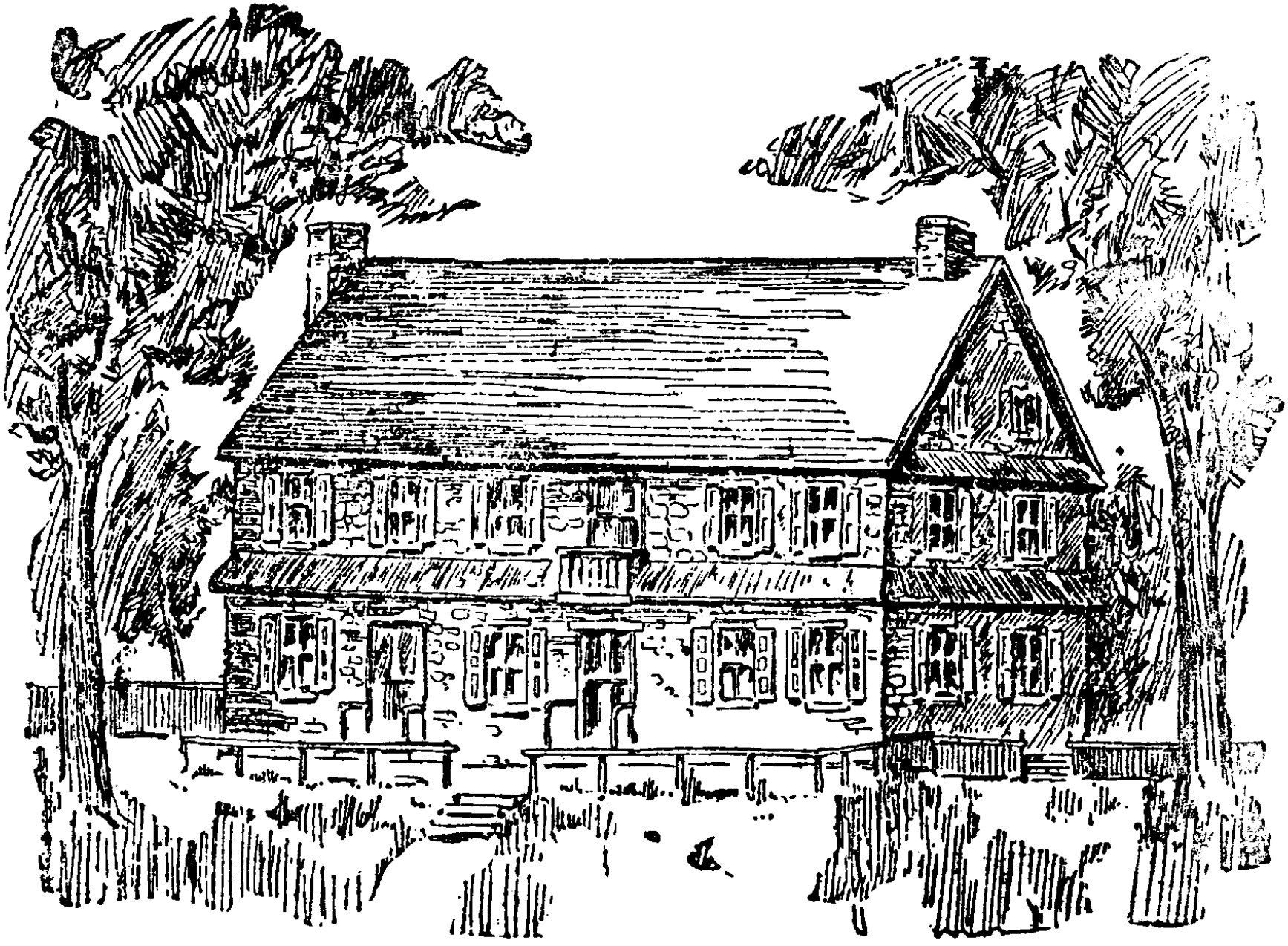
The book of Job and the nineteenth Psalm, which even the church admits to be more ancient than the chronological order in which they stand in the book called the Bible, are theological orations conformable to the original system of theology. The internal evidence of those orations proves to a demonstration that the study and contemplation of the works of creation, and of the power and wisdom of God, revealed and manifested in those works, made a great part of the religious devotion of the times in which they were written; and it was this devotional study and contemplation that led to the discovery of the principles upon which what are now called sciences are established; and it is to the discovery of these principles that almost all the arts that contribute to the convenience of human life owe their existence. Every principal art has some science for its parent, though the person who mechanically per-

forms the work does not always, and but very seldom, perceive the connection.

It is a fraud of the Christian system to call the sciences *human inventions;* it is only the application of them that is human. Every science has for its basis a system of principles as fixed and unalterable as those by which the universe is regulated and governed. Man cannot make principles; he can only discover them.

For example, every person who looks at an almanac sees an account when an eclipse will take place, and he sees also that it never fails to take place according to the account there given. This shows that man is acquainted with the laws by which the heavenly bodies move. But it would be something worse than ignorance were any church on earth to say that those laws are a human invention. It would also be ignorance, or something worse, to say that the scientific principles, by the aid of which man is enabled to calculate and foreknow when an eclipse will take place, are a human invention. Man cannot invent anything that is eternal and immutable, and the scientific principles he employs for this purpose must be, and are, of necessity, as eternal and immutable as the laws by which the heavenly bodies move, or they could not be used as they are to ascertain the time when, and the manner how, an eclipse will take place.

The scientific principles that man employs to obtain the foreknowledge of an eclipse, or of any thing else relating to the motion of the heavenly bodies, are contained chiefly in that part of science that is called trigonometry, or the property of a triangle, which, when applied to the study of the heavenly bodies, is called astronomy; when applied to direct the course of a ship on the ocean, it is called navigation; when applied to the construction of figures drawn by rule and compass, it is called geometry; when applied to the construction of plans of edifices, it is called architecture; when applied to the measurement of any portion of the surface of the earth, it is called land-surveying. In fine, it is the soul of science. It is an eternal truth;



PAINE'S LODGINGS AT YORK.

it contains the *mathematical demonstration* of which man speaks, and the extent of its uses is unknown.

It may be said that man can make or draw a triangle, and therefore a triangle is a human invention.

But the triangle, when drawn, is no other than the image of the principle; it is a delineation to the eye, and from thence to the mind, of a principle that would otherwise be imperceptible. The triangle does not make the principle, any more than a candle, taken into a room that was dark, makes the chairs and tables that before were invisible. All the properties of a triangle exist independently of the figure, and existed before any triangle was drawn or thought of by man. Man had no more to do in the formation of those properties, or principles, than he had to do in making the laws by which the heavenly bodies move; and therefore the one must have the same divine origin as the other.

In the same manner as it may be said that man can make a triangle, so also may it be said he can make the mechanical instrument called a lever; but the principle by which the lever acts is a thing distinct from the instrument, and would exist if the instrument did not; it attaches itself to the instrument after it is made; the instrument, therefore, can act no otherwise than it does act; neither can all the efforts of human invention make it act otherwise. That which, in all such cases, man calls the *effect*, is no other than the principle itself rendered perceptible to the senses.

Since, then, man cannot make principles, from whence did he gain a knowledge of them, so as to be able to apply them, not only to things on earth, but to ascertain the motion of bodies so immensely distant from him as all the heavenly bodies are? From whence, I ask, *could* he gain that knowledge but from the study of the true theology?

It is the structure of the universe that has taught this knowledge to man. That structure is an ever-existing exhibition of every principle upon which every part of mathematical science is founded. The offspring of this science is mechanics; for mechanics is no other

than the principles of science applied practically. The man who proportions the several parts of a mill uses the same scientific principles as if he had the power of constructing a universe; but as he cannot give to matter that invisible agency by which all the component parts of the immense machine of the universe have influence upon each other, and act in motional unison together, without any apparent contact, and to which man has given the name of attraction, gravitation, and repulsion, he supplies the place of that agency by the humble imitation of teeth and cogs. All the parts of man's microcosm must visibly touch; but could he gain a knowledge of that agency, so as to be able to apply it in practice, we might then say that another *canonical book* of the word of God had been discovered.

If man could alter the properties of the lever, so also could he alter the properties of the triangle; for a lever (taking that sort of lever which is called a steelyard, for the sake of explanation) forms, when in motion, a triangle. The line it descends from (one point of that line being in the fulcrum), the line it descends to, and the chord of the arc which the end of the lever describes in the air, are the three sides of a triangle. The other arm of the lever describes also a triangle; and the corresponding sides of those two triangles, calculated scientifically or measured geometrically; and also the sines, tangents, and secants generated from the angles and geometrically measured, have the same proportions to each other as the different weights have that will balance each other on the lever, leaving the weight of the lever out of the case.

It may also be said that man can make a wheel and axis; that he can put wheels of different magnitudes together, and produce a mill. Still the case comes back to the same point, which is that he did not make the principle that gives the wheels those powers. That principle is as unalterable as in the former cases, or rather it is the same principle under a different appearance to the eye.

The power that two wheels of different magnitudes

have upon each other is in the same proportion as if the semi-diameters of the two wheels were joined together and made into that kind of lever I have described, suspended at the part where the semi-diameters join; for the two wheels, scientifically considered, are no other than the two circles generated by the motion of the compound lever.

It is from the study of the true theology that all our knowledge of science is derived, and it is from that knowledge that all the arts have originated.

The Almighty lecturer, by displaying the principles of science in the structure of the universe, has invited man to study and to imitation. It is as if he had said to the inhabitants of this globe that we call ours: "I have made an earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, AND LEARN FROM MY MUNIFICENCE TO ALL TO BE KIND TO EACH OTHER."

Of what use is it, unless it be to teach man something, that his eye is endowed with the power of beholding to an incomprehensible distance an immensity of worlds revolving in the ocean of space? Or of what use is it that this immensity of worlds is visible to man? What has man to do with the Pleiades, with Orion, with Sirius, with the star he calls the North star, with the moving orbs he has named Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, if no uses are to follow from their being visible? A less power of vision would have been sufficient for man, if the immensity he now possesses were only given to waste itself, as it were, on an immense desert space glittering with shows.

It is only by contemplating what he calls the starry heavens as the book and school of science that he discovers any use in their being visible to him, or any advantage resulting from his immensity of vision. But when he contemplates the subject in this light, he sees an additional motive for saying that *nothing was made in vain;* for in vain would be this power of vision if it taught man nothing.

As the Christian system of faith has made a revolution in theology, so also has it made a revolution in the state of learning. That which is now called learning was not learning originally. Learning does not consist, as the schools now make it to consist, in the knowledge of languages, but in the knowledge of things to which language gives names.

The Greeks were a learned people; but learning with them did not consist in speaking Greek, any more than in a Roman's speaking Latin, or a Frenchman's speaking French, or an Englishman's speaking English. From what we know of the Greeks, it does not appear that they knew or studied any language but their own, and this was one cause of their becoming so learned; it afforded them more time to apply themselves to better studies. The schools of the Greeks were schools of science and philosophy, and not of languages; and it is in the knowledge of the things that science and philosophy teach, that learning consists.

Almost all the scientific learning that now exists came to us from the Greeks, or the people who spoke the Greek language. It therefore became necessary for the people of other nations, who spoke a different language, that some among them should learn the Greek language in order that the learning the Greeks had might be made known in those nations by translating the Greek books of science and philosophy into the mother tongue of each nation.

The study, therefore, of the Greek language (and in the same manner for the Latin) was no other than the drudgery business of a linguist; and the language thus obtained was no other than the means, or, as it were, the tools employed to obtain the learning the Greeks had. It made no part of the learning itself; and was so distinct from it as to make it exceedingly probable that the persons who had studied Greek sufficiently to translate those works—such, for instance, as Euclid's Elements—did not understand any of the learning the works contained.

As there is now nothing new to be learned from the

dead languages—all the useful books being already translated—the languages are become useless, and the time expended in teaching and in learning them is wasted. So far as the study of languages may contribute to the progress and communication of knowledge (for it has nothing to do with the *creation* of knowledge), it is only in the living languages that new knowledge is to be found; and certain it is that, in general, a youth will learn more of a living language in one year than of a dead language in seven; and it is but seldom that the teacher knows much of it himself. The difficulty of learning the dead languages does not arise from any superior abstruseness in the languages themselves, but in their *being dead*, and the pronunciation entirely lost. It would be the same thing with any other language when it becomes dead. The best Greek linguist that now exists does not understand Greek so well as a Grecian plowman did, or a Grecian milkmaid; and the same for the Latin compared with a plowman or a milkmaid of the Romans; and, with respect to pronunciation and idiom, not so well as the cows that she milked. It would therefore be advantageous to the state of learning to abolish the study of the dead languages, and to make learning consist, as it originally did, in scientific knowledge.

The apology that is sometimes made for continuing to teach the dead languages is that they are taught at a time when a child is not capable of exerting any other mental faculty than that of memory; but this is altogether erroneous. The human mind has a natural disposition to scientific knowledge, and to the things connected with it. The first and favorite amusement of a child, even before it begins to play, is that of imitating the works of man. It builds houses with cards or sticks; it navigates the little ocean of a bowl of water with a paper boat, or dams the stream of a gutter, and contrives something which it calls a mill; and it interests itself in the fate of its works with a care that resembles affection. It afterwards goes to school, where its genius is killed by the barren study of a

dead language, and the philosopher is lost in the linguist.

But the apology that is now made for continuing to teach the dead languages could not be the cause, at first, of cutting down learning to the narrow and humble sphere of linguistry; the cause, therefore, must be sought for elsewhere. In all researches of this kind the best evidence that can be produced is the internal evidence the thing carries with itself, and the evidence of circumstances that unites with it; both of which, in this case, are not difficult to be discovered.

Putting then aside, as matter of distinct consideration, the outrage offered to the moral justice of God, by supposing him to make the innocent suffer for the guilty, and also the loose morality and low contrivance of supposing him to change himself into the shape of a man, in order to make an excuse to himself for not executing his supposed sentence upon Adam; putting, I say, those things aside as matter of distinct consideration, it is certain that what is called the Christian system of faith, including in it the whimsical account of the creation; the strange story of Eve, the snake, and the apple; the amphibious idea of a man-god; the corporeal idea of the death of a god; the mythological idea of a family of gods, and the Christian system of arithmetic, that three are one and one is three, are all irreconcilable, not only to the divine gift of reason that God has given to man, but to the knowledge that man gains of the power and wisdom of God by the aid of the sciences, and by studying the structure of the universe that God has made.

The setters-up, therefore, and the advocates of the Christian system of faith could not but foresee that the continually progressive knowledge that man would gain, by the aid of science, of the power and wisdom of God, manifested in the structure of the universe, and in all the works of creation, would militate against, and call into question, the truth of their system of faith; and therefore it became necessary to their purpose to cut learning down to a size less dangerous to their project,

and this they effected by restricting the idea of learning to the dead study of dead languages.

They not only rejected the study of science out of the Christian schools, but they persecuted it; and it is only within about the last two centuries that the study has been revived. So late as 1610, Galileo, a Florentine, discovered and introduced the use of telescopes, and by applying them to observe the motions and appearances of the heavenly bodies, afforded additional means for ascertaining the true structure of the universe. Instead of being esteemed for these discoveries, he was sentenced to renounce them, or the opinions resulting from them, as a damnable heresy. And, prior to that time, Virgilius was condemned to be burned for asserting the antipodes, or in other words, that the earth was a globe and habitable in every part where there was land; yet the truth of this is now too well known even to be told.

If the belief of errors not morally bad did no mischief, it would make no part of the moral duty of man to oppose and remove them. There was no moral ill in believing the earth was flat like a trencher, any more than there was moral virtue in believing it was round like a globe; neither was there any moral ill in believing that the Creator made no other world than this, any more than there was moral virtue in believing that he made millions, and that the infinity of space is filled with worlds. But when a system of religion is made to grow out of a supposed system of creation that is not true, and to unite itself therewith in a manner almost inseparable therefrom, the case assumes an entirely different ground. It is then that errors, not morally bad, become fraught with the same mischiefs as if they were. It is then that the truth, though otherwise indifferent in itself, becomes an essential, by becoming the criterion that either confirms by corresponding evidence, or denies by contradictory evidence, the reality of the religion itself. In this view of the case it is the moral duty of man to obtain every possible evidence that the structure of the heavens or any other part of creation

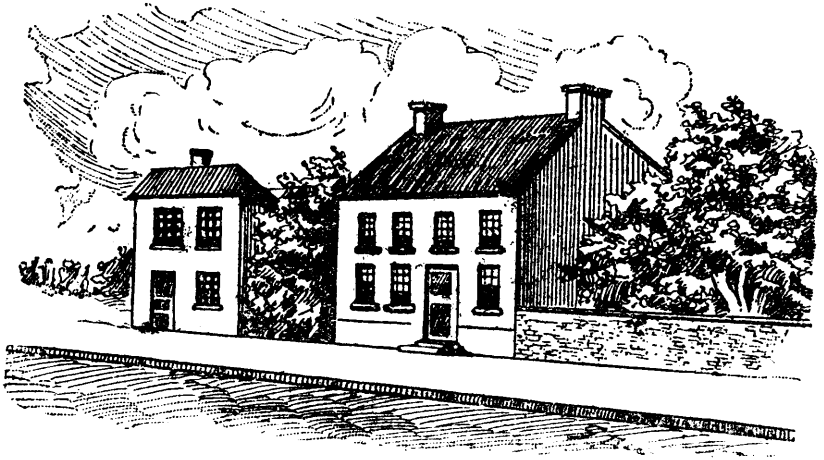
affords with respect to systems of religion. But this the supporters or partisans of the Christian system, as if dreading the result, incessantly opposed, and not only rejected the sciences, but persecuted the professors. Had Newton or Descartes lived three or four hundred years ago, and pursued their studies as they did, it is most probable they would not have lived to finish them; and had Franklin drawn lightning from the clouds at the same time, it would have been at the hazard of expiring for it in flames.

Latter times have laid all the blame upon the Goths and Vandals; but however unwilling the partisans of the Christian system may be to believe or to acknowledge it, it is nevertheless true that the age of ignorance commenced with the Christian system. There was more knowledge in the world before that period than for many centuries afterwards; and as to religious knowledge, the Christian system, as already said, was only another species of mythology; and the mythology to which it succeeded was a corruption of an ancient system of theism.*

It is owing to this long interregnum of science, *and to no other cause*, that we have now to look back through a vast chasm of many hundred years to the respectable characters we call the ancients. Had the progression of knowledge gone on proportionably with the stock that before existed, that chasm would have been filled up with characters rising superior in knowledge to each other; and those ancients we now so much admire

* It is impossible for us now to know at what time the heathen mythology began; but it is certain, from the internal evidence that it carries, that it did not begin in the same state or condition in which it ended. All the gods of that mythology, except Saturn, were of modern invention. The supposed reign of Saturn was prior to that which is called the heathen mythology, and was so far a species of theism that it admitted the belief of only one God. Saturn is supposed to have abdicated the government in favor of his three sons and one daughter—Jupiter, Pluto, Neptune, and Juno; after this, thousands of other gods and demi-gods were imaginarily created, and the calendar of gods increased as fast as the calendar of saints and the calendars of courts have increased since.

All the corruptions that have taken place in theology and in religion have been produced by admitting of what man calls



OFFICE OF THE COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, YORK, PA. (1777-8)

The smaller building to the left was used by the Board of War, and by the Committee of Foreign Affairs, of which Paine was Secretary. It is said that the Committee occupied the second story of the building. The first story was used as an office by James Smith, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, whose residence is also shown in the cut.

would have appeared respectably in the background of the scene. But the Christian system laid all waste; and if we take our stand about the beginning of the sixteenth century, we look back through that long chasm to the times of the ancients as over a vast sandy desert, in which not a shrub appears to intercept the vision to the fertile hills beyond.

It is an inconsistency scarcely possible to be credited, that anything should exist, under the name of religion, that held it to be *irreligious* to study and contemplate the structure of the universe that God had made. But the fact is too well established to be denied. The event that served more than any other to break the first link in this long chain of despotic ignorance is that known by the name of the Reformation by Luther. From that time, though it does not appear to have made any part of the intention of Luther, or of those who are called reformers, the Sciences began to revive; and Liberality, their natural associate, began to appear. This was the only public good the Reformation did; for, with respect to religious good, it might as well not have taken place. The mythology still continued the same; and a multiplicity of national popes grew out of the downfall of the pope of Christendom.

Having thus shown from the internal evidence of things the cause that produced a change in the state of learning, and the motive for substituting the study of the dead languages in the place of the Sciences, I proceed, in addition to the several observations already

---

revealed religion. The mythologists pretended to more revealed religion than the Christians do. They had their oracles and their priests, who were supposed to receive and deliver the word of God, verbally, on almost all occasions.

Since then all corruptions down from Moloch to modern predestinarianism, and the human sacrifices of the heathens to the Christian sacrifice of the Creator, have been produced by admitting of what is called *revealed religion;* the most effectual means to prevent all such evils and impositions is, not to admit of any other revelation than that which is manifested in the book of creation, and to contemplate the creation as the only true and real word of God that ever did or ever will exist; and everything else called the word of God is fable and imposition.

made in the former part of this work, to compare, or rather to confront, the evidence that the structure of the universe affords with the Christian system of religion; but, as I cannot begin this part better than by referring to the ideas that occurred to me at an early part of life, and which I doubt not have occurred in some degree to almost every other person at one time or other, I shall state what those ideas were, and add thereto such other matter as shall arise out of the subject, giving to the whole, by way of preface, a short introduction.

My father being of the Quaker profession, it was my good fortune to have an exceeding good moral education, and a tolerable stock of useful learning. Though I went to the grammar school, * I did not learn Latin, not only because I had no inclination to learn languages, but because of the objection the Quakers have against the books in which the language is taught. But this did not prevent me from being acquainted with the subjects of all the Latin books used in the school.

The natural bent of my mind was to science. I had some turn, and I believe some talent, for poetry; but this I rather repressed than encouraged, as leading too much into the field of imagination. As soon as I was able, I purchased a pair of globes, and attended the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson, and became afterwards acquainted with Dr. Bevis, of the society called the Royal Society, then living in the Temple, and an excellent astronomer.

I had no disposition for what was called politics. It presented to my mind no other idea than is contained in the word Jockeyship. When, therefore, I turned my thoughts towards matters of government, I had to form a system for myself that accorded with the moral and philosophic principles in which I had been educated. I saw, or at least I thought I saw, a vast scene opening itself to the world in the affairs of America; and it appeared to me that unless the Americans changed the

* The same school, Thetford in Norfolk, that the present Counsellor Mingay went to, and under the same master.

plan they were then pursuing with respect to the government of England and declared themselves independent, they would not only involve themselves in a multiplicity of new difficulties, but shut out the prospect that was then offering itself to mankind through their means. It was from these motives that I published the work known by the name of "Common Sense," which is the first work I ever did publish; and so far as I can judge of myself, I believe I should never have been known in the world as an author on any subject whatever, had it not been for the affairs of America. I wrote "Common Sense" the latter end of the year 1775, and published it the first of January, 1776. Independence was declared the fourth of July following.

Any person who has made observations on the state and progress of the human mind, by observing his own, cannot but have observed that there are two distinct classes of what are called Thoughts: those that we produce in ourselves by reflection and the act of thinking, and those that bolt into the mind of their own accord. I have always made it a rule to treat those voluntary visitors with civility, taking care to examine, as well I was able, if they were worth entertaining; and it is from them I have acquired almost all the knowledge that I have. As to the learning that any person gains from school education, it serves only, like a small capital, to put him in the way of beginning learning for himself afterwards. Every person of learning is finally his own teacher, the reason of which is that principles, being of a distinct quality to circumstances, cannot be impressed upon the memory; their place of residence is the understanding, and they are never so lasting as when they begin by conception. Thus much for the introductory part.

From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea, and acting upon it by reflection, I either doubted the truth of the Christian system, or thought it to be a strange affair; I scarcely know which it was; but I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age,

hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine, who was a great devotee of the church, upon the subject of what is called Redemption by the Death of the Son of God. After the sermon was ended I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man that killed his son when he could not revenge himself any other way; and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. This was not one of the kind of thoughts that had anything in it of childish levity; it was to me a serious reflection, arising from the idea I had that God was too good to do such an action, and also too almighty to be under any necessity of doing it. I believe in the same manner to this moment; and I moreover believe that any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system.

It seems as if parents of the Christian profession were ashamed to tell their children anything about the principles of their religion. They sometimes instruct them in morals, and talk to them of the goodness of what they call Providence; for the Christian mythology has five deities—there is God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, the God Providence, and the Goddess Nature. But the Christian story of God the Father putting his son to death, or employing people to do it (for that is the plain language of the story), cannot be told by a parent to a child; and to tell him that it was done to make mankind happier and better is making the story still worse; as if mankind could be improved by the example of murder; and to tell him that all this is a mystery is only making an excuse for the incredibility of it.

How different is this to the pure and simple profession of Deism! The true Deist has but one Deity; and his religion consists in contemplating the power, wisdom, and benignity of the Deity in his works, and

in endeavoring to imitate him in everything moral, scientifical, and mechanical.

The religion that approaches the nearest of all others to true Deism, in the moral and benign part thereof, is that professed by the Quakers; but they have contracted themselves too much by leaving the works of God out of their system. Though I reverence their philanthropy, I cannot help smiling at the conceit that if the taste of a Quaker could have been consulted at the creation, what a silent and drab-colored creation it would have been! Not a flower would have blossomed its gaieties, nor a bird been permitted to sing.

Quitting these reflections, I proceed to other matters. After I had made myself master of the use of the globes, and of the orrery,* and conceived an idea of the infinity of space, and of the eternal divisibility of matter, and obtained at least a general knowledge of what is called natural philosophy, I began to compare, or, as I have before said, to confront, the internal evidence those things afford with the Christian system of faith.

Though it is not a direct article of the Christian system that this world that we inhabit is the whole of the habitable creation, yet it is so worked up therewith, from what is called the Mosaic account of the Creation, the story of Eve and the apple, and the counterpart of that story—the death of the Son of God—that to believe otherwise, that is, to believe that God created a plurality of worlds, at least as numerous as what we call stars, renders the Christian system of faith at once little and ridiculous, and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air. The two beliefs cannot be held

* As this book may fall into the hands of persons who do not know what an orrery is, it is for their information I add this note, as the name gives no idea of the uses of the thing. The orrery has its name from the person who invented it. It is a machinery of clockwork representing the universe in miniature, and in which the revolution of the earth round itself and round the sun, the revolution of the moon round the earth, the revolution of the planets round the sun, their relative distances from the sun as the center of the whole system, their relative distances from each other, and their different magnitudes, are represented as they really exist in what we call the heavens.

together in the same mind; and he who thinks that he believes both has thought but little of either.

Though the belief of a plurality of worlds was familiar to the ancients, it is only within the last three centuries that the extent and dimensions of this globe that we inhabit have been ascertained. Several vessels, following the tract of the ocean, have sailed entirely round the world, as a man may march in a circle and come round by the contrary side of the circle to the spot he set out from. The circular dimensions of our world in the widest part, as a man would measure the widest round of an apple, or a ball, is only twenty-five thousand and twenty English miles, reckoning sixty-nine miles and a half to an equatorial degree, and may be sailed round in the space of about three years.*

A world of this extent may, at first thought, appear to us to be great; but if we compare it with the immensity of space in which it is suspended, like a bubble or balloon in the air, it is infinitely less in proportion than the smallest grain of sand is to the size of the world, or the finest particle of dew to the whole ocean, and is therefore but small; and, as will be hereafter shown, is only one of a system of worlds, of which the universal creation is composed.

It is not difficult to gain some idea of the immensity of space in which this and all other worlds are suspended if we follow a progression of ideas. When we think of the size or dimensions of a room, our ideas limit themselves to the walls, and there they stop; but when our eye, or our imagination, darts into space—that is, when it looks upwards into what we call the open air—we cannot conceive any walls or boundaries it can have; and if, for the sake of resting our ideas, we suppose a boundary, the question immediately renews itself, and asks, What is beyond that boundary? and in the same manner, What is beyond the next

*Allowing a ship to sail on an average three miles in an hour, she would sail entirely round the world in less than one year, if she could sail in a direct circle; but she is obliged to follow the course of the ocean.

boundary? and so on until the fatigued imagination returns and says, *there is no end.* Certainly, then, the Creator was not pent for room when he made this world no larger than it is; and we have to seek the reason in something else.

If we take a survey of our own world, or rather of this of which the Creator has given us the use, as our portion in the immense system of Creation, we find every part of it—the earth, the waters, and the air that surrounds it—filled and, as it were, crowded with life, down from the largest animals that we know of to the smallest insects the naked eye can behold, and from thence to others still smaller, and totally invisible without the assistance of a microscope. Every tree, every plant, every leaf, serves not only as a habitation, but as a whole world to some numerous race, till animal existence becomes so exceedingly refined that the effluvia of a blade of grass would be food for thousands.

Since, then, no part of our earth is left unoccupied, why is it to be supposed that the immensity of space is a naked void, lying in eternal waste? There is room for millions of worlds as large or larger than ours, and each of them millions of miles apart from each other.

Having now arrived at this point, if we carry our ideas only one thought further, we shall see, perhaps, the true reason—at least a very good reason for our happiness—why the Creator, instead of making one immense world, extended over an immense quantity of space, has preferred dividing that quantity of matter into several distinct and separate worlds, which we call planets, of which our earth is one. But before I explain my ideas upon this subject, it is necessary (not for the sake of those that already know, but for those who do not) to show what the system of the universe is.

That part of the universe that is called the solar system (meaning the system of worlds to which our earth belongs, and of which Sol, or in English language, the Sun, is the center) consists, besides the Sun, of six distinct orbs, or planets, or worlds, besides the secondary bodies, called satellites or moons, of which our earth

has one that attends her in her annual revolution round the Sun, in like manner as the other satellites, or moons, attend the planets, or worlds, to which they severally belong, as may be seen by the assistance of the telescope.

The Sun is the center round which those six worlds or planets revolve at different distances therefrom and in circles concentric to each other. Each world keeps constantly in nearly the same track round the Sun, and continues, at the same time, turning round itself in nearly an upright position, as a top turns round itself when it is spinning on the ground and leans a little sideways.

It is this leaning of the earth (23½ degrees) that occasions summer and winter and the different length of days and nights. If the earth turned round itself in a position perpendicular to the plane or level of the circle it moves in around the Sun, as a top turns round when it stands erect on the ground, the days and nights would be always of the same length, twelve hours day and twelve hours night, and the seasons would be uniformly the same throughout the year.

Every time that a planet (our earth, for example) turns round itself it makes what we call day and night; and every time it goes entirely round the Sun it makes what we call a year, consequently our world turns three hundred and sixty-five times round itself in going once round the Sun.*

The names that the ancients gave to those six worlds, and which are still called by the same names, are Mercury, Venus, this world that we call ours, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. They appear larger to the eye than the stars, being many million miles nearer to our earth than any of the stars are. The planet Venus is that which is called the evening star, and sometimes the morning star, as she happens to set after, or rise before,

* Those who supposed that the Sun went round the earth every twenty-four hours made the same mistake in idea that a cook would do in fact that should make the fire go round the meat, instead of the meat turning round itself towards the fire.

the Sun, which, in either case, is never more than three hours.

The Sun, as before said, being the center, the planet, or world, nearest the Sun, is Mercury; his distance from the Sun is thirty-four million miles, and he moves round in a circle always at that distance from the Sun, as a top may be supposed to spin round in the track in which a horse goes in a mill. The second world is Venus; she is fifty-seven million miles distant from the Sun, and consequently moves round in a circle much greater than that of Mercury. The third world is this that we inhabit, and which is eighty-eight million miles distant from the Sun, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Venus. The fourth world is Mars; he is distant from the Sun one hundred and thirty-four million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of our earth. The fifth is Jupiter; he is distant from the Sun five hundred and fifty-seven million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Mars. The sixth world is Saturn; he is distant from the Sun seven hundred and sixty-three million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle that surrounds the circles, or orbits, of all the other worlds or planets.

The spaces, therefore, in the air, or in the immensity of space, that our solar system takes up for the several worlds to perform their revolutions in round the Sun, is of the extent in a straight line of the whole diameter of the orbit or circle in which Saturn moves round the Sun, which, being double his distance from the Sun, is fifteen hundred and twenty-six million miles; and its circular extent is nearly five thousand million; and its globical content is almost three thousand five hundred million times three thousand five hundred million square miles.*

---

*If it should be asked, How can man know these things? I have one plain answer to give, which is, that man knows how to calculate an eclipse and also to calculate to a minute of time when the planet Venus, in making her revolutions round the Sun, will come in a straight line between our earth and the Sun, and will appear to us about the size of a large pea passing across the face of the Sun.

But this, immense as it is, is only one system of worlds. Beyond this, at a vast distance into space, far beyond all power of calculation, are the stars called the fixed stars. They are called fixed because they have no revolutionary motion, as the six worlds or planets have that I have been describing. Those fixed stars continue always at the same distance from each other, and always in the same place, as the Sun does in the center of our system. The probability, therefore, is that each of those fixed stars is also a Sun, round which another system of worlds or planets, though too remote for us to discover, performs its revolutions, as our system of worlds does round our central Sun.

By this easy progression of ideas, the immensity of space will appear to us to be filled with systems of worlds; and that no part of space lies at waste, any more than any part of our globe or earth and water is left unoccupied.

Having thus endeavored to convey, in a familiar and easy manner, some idea of the structure of the universe, I return to explain what I before alluded to—namely, the great benefits arising to man in consequence of the Creator having made a *plurality* of worlds, such as our system is, consisting of a central Sun and six worlds, besides satellites, in preference to that of creating one world only of a vast extent.

It is an idea I have never lost sight of, that all our knowledge of science is derived from the revolutions (exhibited to our eye and from thence to our understanding) which those several planets, or worlds, of

---

This happens but twice in about a hundred years, at the distance of about eight years from each other, and has happened twice in our time, both of which were foreknown by calculation. It can also be known when they will happen again for a thousand years to come, or to any portion of time. As, therefore, man could not be able to do those things if he did not understand the solar system, and the manner in which the revolutions of the several planets or worlds are performed, the fact of calculating an eclipse, or a transit of Venus, is a proof in point that the knowledge exists; and as to a few thousand, or even a few million miles, more or less, it makes scarcely any sensible difference in such immense distances.

which our system is composed, make in their circuit round the Sun.

Had then the quantity of matter which these six worlds contain been blended into one solitary globe, the consequence to us would have been that either no revolutionary motion would have existed, or not a sufficiency of it to give us the ideas and the knowledge of science we now have; and it is from the sciences that all the mechanical arts that contribute so much to our earthly felicity and comfort are derived.

As, therefore, the Creator made nothing in vain, so also must it be believed that he organized the structure of the universe in the most advantageous manner for the benefit of man; and as we see, and from experience feel, the benefits we derive from the structure of the universe, formed as it is, which benefits we should not have had the opportunity of enjoying if the structure, so far as relates to our system, had been a solitary globe, we can discover at least one reason why a *plurality* of worlds has been made, and that reason calls forth the devotional gratitude of man, as well as his admiration.

But it is not to us, the inhabitants of this globe, only that the benefits arising from a plurality of worlds are limited. The inhabitants of each of the worlds of which our system is composed enjoy the same opportunities of knowledge as we do. They behold the revolutionary motions of our earth, as we behold theirs. All the planets revolve in sight of each other; and, therefore, the same universal school of science presents itself to all.

Neither does the knowledge stop here. The system of worlds next to us exhibits, in its revolutions, the same principles and school of science to the inhabitants of their system as our system does to us, and in like manner throughout the immensity of space.

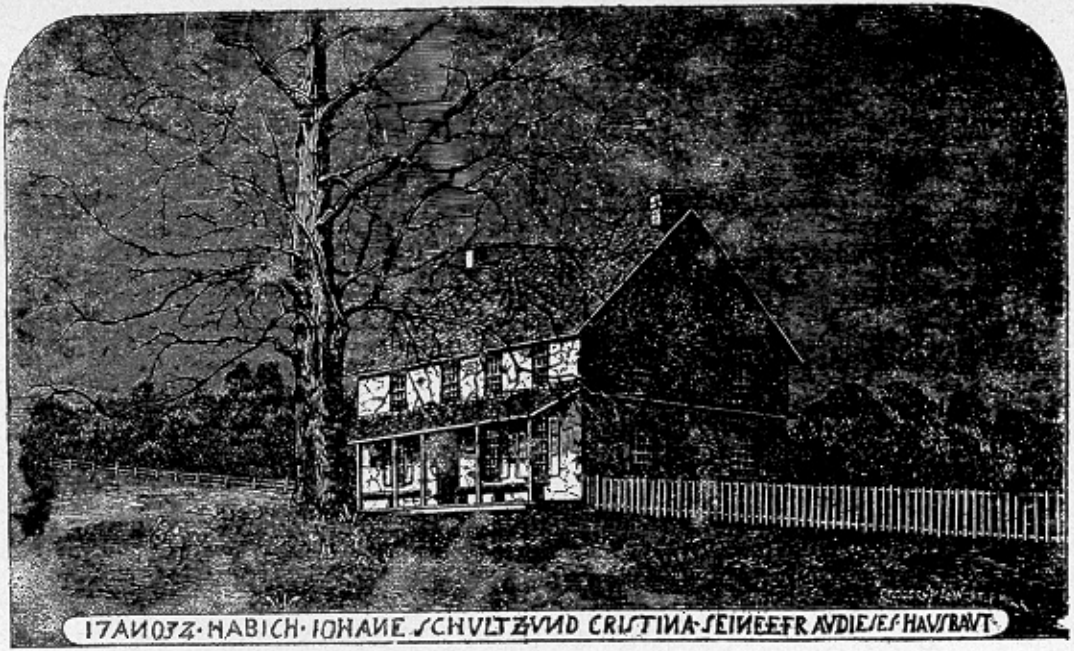
Our ideas, not only of the almightiness of the Creator, but of his wisdom and his beneficence, become enlarged in proportion as we contemplate the extent and the structure of the universe. The solitary idea of

a solitary world, rolling or at rest in the immense ocean of space, gives place to the cheerful idea of a society of worlds, so happily contrived as to administer, even by their motion, instruction to man. We see our own earth filled with abundance; but we forget to consider how much of that abundance is owing to the scientific knowledge the vast machinery of the universe has unfolded.

But, in the midst of those reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith that forms itself upon the idea of only one world, and that of no greater extent, as is before shown, than twenty-five thousand miles? An extent which a man, walking at the rate of three miles an hour, for twelve hours in the day, could he keep on in a circular direction, would walk entirely round in less than two years. Alas! what is this to the mighty ocean of space, and the almighty power of the Creator?

From whence, then, could arise the solitary and strange conceit that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equally dependent on his protection, should quit the care of all the rest and come to die in our world, because, they say, one man and one woman had eaten an apple! And, on the other hand, are we to suppose that every world in the boundless creation had an Eve, an apple, a serpent, and a redeemer? In this case, the person who is irreverently called the Son of God, and sometimes God himself, would have nothing else to do than to travel from world to world, in an endless succession of death, with scarcely a momentary interval of life.

It has been by rejecting the evidence that the word or works of God in the creation afford to our senses, and the action of our reason upon that evidence, that so many wild and whimsical systems of faith and of religion have been fabricated and set up. There may be many systems of religion that, so far from being morally bad, are in many respects morally good; but there can be but ONE that is true; and that one necessarily must, as it ever will, be in all things consistent



The old stone hotel (Dutch tavern) at which Paine and the patriots of the Revolution stopped on their journeyings to and from York. It was built in 1734 by John Schultz and wife. A stone tablet in the front wall bears the inscription in German found on the bottom of the cut. (17 ANO 34 HABICH, JOHANE SCHULTZ UND CRISTINA SEINE FRAU, DIESES HAUSBAUT—In the year 1734 John Schultz and his wife Christina built this house.)

with the ever existing word of God that we behold in his works. But such is the strange construction of the Christian system of faith, that every evidence the heavens afford to man either directly contradicts it or renders it absurd.

It is possible to believe, and I always feel pleasure in encouraging myself to believe it, that there have been men in the world who persuaded themselves that what is called a *pious fraud* might, at least under particular circumstances, be productive of some good. But the fraud, being once established, could not afterwards be explained; for it is with a pious fraud as with a bad action: it begets a calamitous necessity of going on.

The persons who first preached the Christian system of faith, and in some measure combined with it the morality preached by Jesus Christ, might persuade themselves that it was better than the heathen mythology that then prevailed. From the first preachers the fraud went on to the second, and to the third, till the idea of its being a pious fraud became lost in the belief of its being true; and that belief became again encouraged by the interests of those who made a livelihood by preaching it.

But though such a belief might, by such means, be rendered almost general among the laity, it is next to impossible to account for the continual persecution carried on by the church for several hundred years against the sciences, and against the professors of science, if the church had not some record or some tradition that it was originally no other than a pious fraud, or did not foresee that it could not be maintained against the evidence that the structure of the universe afforded.

Having thus shown the irreconcilable inconsistencies between the real word of God existing in the universe and that which is called *the word of God*, as shown to us in a printed book that any man might make, I proceed to speak of the three principal means that have been employed in all ages, and perhaps in all countries, to impose upon mankind.

Those three means are Mystery, Miracle, and Prophecy. The first two are incompatible with true religion, and the third ought always to be suspected.

With respect to mystery, everything we behold is, in one sense, a mystery to us. Our own existence is a mystery; the whole vegetable world is a mystery. We cannot account how it is that an acorn, when put into the ground, is made to develop itself, and become an oak. We know not how it is that the seed we sow unfolds and multiplies itself, and returns to us such an abundant interest for so small a capital.

The fact, however, as distinct from the operating cause, is not a mystery, because we see it; and we know also the means we are to use, which is no other than putting the seed in the ground. We know, therefore, as much as is necessary for us to know; and that part of the operation that we do not know, and which, if we did, we could not perform, the Creator takes upon himself and performs it for us. We are, therefore, better off than if we had been let into the secret, and left to do it for ourselves.

But though every created thing is, in this sense, a mystery, the word mystery cannot be applied to *moral truth*, any more than obscurity can be applied to light. The God in whom we believe is a God of moral truth, and not a God of mystery or obscurity. Mystery is the antagonist of truth. It is a fog of human invention that obscures truth and represents it in distortion. Truth never envelops *itself* in mystery; and the mystery in which it is enveloped is the work of its antagonist, and never of itself.

Religion, therefore, being the belief of a God, and the practice of moral truth, cannot have connection with mystery. The belief of a God, so far from having anything of a mystery in it, is of all beliefs the most easy, because it arises to us, as is before observed, out of necessity. And the practice of moral truth, or, in other words, a practical imitation of the moral goodness of God, is no other than our acting towards each other as he acts benignly towards all. We cannot *serve*

God in the manner we serve those who cannot do without such service; and, therefore, the only idea we can have of serving God is that of contributing to the happiness of the living creation that God has made. This cannot be done by retiring ourselves from the society of the world, and spending a recluse life in selfish devotion.

The very nature and design of religion, if I may so express it, prove even to demonstration that it must be free from everything of mystery, and unencumbered with everything that is mysterious. Religion, considered as a duty, is incumbent upon every living soul alike, and, therefore, must be on a level to the understanding and comprehension of all. Man does not learn religion as he learns the secrets and mysteries of a trade. He learns the theory of religion by reflection. It arises out of the action of his own mind upon the things which he sees, or upon what he may happen to hear or to read, and the practice joins itself thereto.

When men, whether from policy or pious fraud, set up systems of religion incompatible with the word or works of God in the creation, and not only above but repugnant to human comprehension, they were under the necessity of inventing or adopting a word that should serve as a bar to all questions, inquiries, and speculations. The word *mystery* answered this purpose; and thus it has happened that religion, which is in itself without mystery, has been corrupted into a fog of mysteries.

As *mystery* answered all general purposes, *miracle* followed as an occasional auxiliary. The former served to bewilder the mind; the latter, to puzzle the senses. The one was the lingo, the other the legerdemain.

But before going further into this subject, it will be proper to inquire what is to be understood by a miracle.

In the same sense that everything may be said to be a mystery, so also may it be said that everything is a miracle, and that no one thing is a greater miracle than another. The elephant, though larger, is not a greater miracle than a mite; nor a mountain a greater miracle

than an atom. To an almighty power it is no more difficult to make the one than the other; and no more difficult to make a million of worlds than to make one. Everything, therefore, is a miracle, in one sense, whilst, in the other sense, there is no such thing as a miracle. It is a miracle when compared to our power and to our comprehension; it is not a miracle compared to the power that performs it; but as nothing in this description conveys the idea that is affixed to the word miracle, it is necessary to carry the inquiry further.

Mankind have conceived to themselves certain laws, by which what they call nature is supposed to act; and that a miracle is something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws; but unless we know the whole extent of those laws, and of what are commonly called the powers of nature, we are not able to judge whether anything that may appear to us wonderful, or miraculous, be within, or be beyond, or be contrary to her natural power of acting.

The ascension of a man several miles high into the air would have everything in it that constitutes the idea of a miracle, if it were not known that a species of air can be generated several times lighter than the common atmospheric air, and yet possess elasticity enough to prevent the balloon, in which that light air is inclosed, from being compressed into as many times less bulk by the common air that surrounds it. In like manner, extracting flashes or sparks from the human body, as visible as from a steel struck with a flint, and causing iron or steel to move without any visible agent, would also give the idea of a miracle, if we were not acquainted with electricity and magnetism; so also would many other experiments in natural philosophy, to those who are not acquainted with the subject. The restoring persons to life, who are to appearance dead, as is practiced upon drowned persons, would also be a miracle, if it were not known that animation is capable of being suspended without being extinct.

Besides these, there are performances by sleight of hand, and by persons acting in concert, that have a

miraculous appearance, which, when known, are thought nothing of. And, besides these, there are mechanical and optical deceptions. There is now an exhibition in Paris of ghosts and spectres, which, though it is not imposed upon the spectators as a fact, has an astonishing appearance. As, therefore, we know not the extent to which either nature or art can go, there is no positive criterion to determine what a miracle is; and mankind, in giving credit to appearances, under the idea of their being miracles, are subject to be continually imposed upon.

Since, then, appearances are so capable of deceiving, and things not real have a strong resemblance to things that are, nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose that the Almighty would make use of means, such as are called miracles, that would subject the person who performed them to the suspicion of being an impostor, and the persons who related them to be suspected of lying, and the doctrine intended to be supported thereby to be suspected as a fabulous invention.

Of all the modes of evidence that ever were intended to obtain belief to any system or opinion to which the name of religion has been given, that of *miracle*, however successful the imposition may have been, is the most inconsistent. For, in the first place, whenever recourse is had to show, for the purpose of procuring that belief (for a miracle, under any idea of the word, is a show), it implies a lameness or weakness in the doctrine that is preached. And, in the second place, it is degrading the Almighty into the character of a showman, playing tricks to amuse and make the people stare and wonder. It is also the most equivocal sort of evidence that can be set up; for the belief is not to depend upon the thing called a miracle, but upon the credit of the reporter who says that he saw it; and, therefore, the thing, were it true, would have no better chance of being believed than if it were a lie.

Suppose I were to say that when I sat down to write this book, a hand presented itself in the air, took up the pen, and wrote every word that is herein written;

would anybody believe me? Certainly they would not. Would they believe me a whit more if the thing had been a fact? Certainly they would not. Since, then, a real miracle, were it to happen, would be subject to the same fate as the falsehood, the inconsistency becomes the greater of supposing the Almighty would make use of means that would not answer the purpose for which they were intended, even if they were real.

If we are to suppose a miracle to be something so entirely out of the course of what is called nature, that she must go out of that course to accomplish it; and we see an account given of such a miracle by the person who said he saw it, it raises a question in the mind very easily decided, which is, Is it more probable that nature should go out of her course or that a man should tell a lie? We have never seen, in our time, nature go out of her course; but we have good reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time; it is, therefore, at least millions to one that the reporter of a miracle tells a lie.

The story of the whale swallowing Jonah, though a whale is large enough to do it, borders greatly on the marvelous; but it would have approached nearer to the idea of miracle if Jonah had swallowed the whale. In this, which may serve for all cases of miracles, the matter would decide itself as before stated—namely, Is it more probable that a man should have swallowed a whale or told a lie?

But suppose that Jonah had really swallowed the whale, and gone with it in his belly to Nineveh, and to convince the people that it was true, have cast it up in their sight, of the full length and size of a whale, would they not have believed him to have been the devil instead of a prophet? Or, if the whale had carried Jonah to Nineveh and cast him up in the same public manner, would they not have believed the whale to have been the devil, and Jonah one of his imps?

The most extraordinary of all the things called miracles, related in the New Testament, is that of the devil flying away with Jesus Christ, and carrying him to the

top of a high mountain; and to the top of the highest pinnacle of the temple, and showing him and promising to him *all the kingdoms of the world.* How happened it that he did not discover America; or is it only with *kingdoms* that his sooty highness has any interest?

I have too much respect for the moral character of Christ to believe that he told this whale of a miracle himself; neither is it easy to account for what purpose it could have been fabricated, unless it were to impose upon the connoisseurs of miracles, as is sometimes practiced upon the connoisseurs of Queen Anne's farthings and collectors of relics and antiquities; or to render the belief of miracles ridiculous by outdoing miracle, as Don Quixote outdid chivalry; or to embarrass the belief of miracles by making it doubtful by what power, whether of God or of the devil, anything called a miracle was performed. It requires, however, a great deal of faith in the devil to believe this miracle.

In every point of view in which those things called miracles can be placed and considered, the reality of them is improbable, and their existence unnecessary. They would not, as before observed, answer any useful purpose, even if they were true; for it is more difficult to obtain belief to a miracle than to a principle evidently moral without any miracle. Moral principle speaks universally for itself. Miracle could be but a thing of the moment and seen but by a few; after this it requires a transfer of faith from God to man to believe a miracle upon man's report. Instead, therefore, of admitting the recitals of miracles as evidence of any system of religion being true, they ought to be considered as symptoms of its being fabulous. It is necessary to the full and upright character of truth that it rejects the crutch; and it is consistent with the character of fable to seek the aid that truth rejects. Thus much for mystery and miracle.

As mystery and miracle took charge of the past and the present, prophecy took charge of the future, and rounded the tenses of faith. It was not sufficient to know what had been done, but what would be done.

The supposed prophet was the supposed historian of times to come; and if he happened, in shooting with a long bow of a thousand years, to strike within a thousand miles of a mark, the ingenuity of posterity could make it point-blank; and if he happened to be directly wrong, it was only to suppose, as in the case of Jonah and Nineveh, that God had repented himself and changed his mind. What a fool do fabulous systems of religion make of man!

It has been shown, in a former part of this work, that the original meaning of the words *prophet* and *prophesying* has been changed, and that a prophet, in the sense the word is now used, is a creature of modern invention; and it is owing to this change in the meaning of the words that the flights and metaphors of the Jewish poets, and phrases and expressions now rendered obscure by our not being acquainted with the local circumstances to which they applied at the time they were used, have been erected into prophecies and made to bend to explanations at the will and whimsical conceits of sectaries, expounders, and commentators. Everything unintelligible was prophetical, and everything insignificant was typical. A blunder would have served for a prophecy; and a dish-clout for a type.

If by a prophet we are to suppose a man to whom the Almighty communicated some event that would take place in future, either there were such men or there were not. If there were, it is consistent to believe that the event so communicated would be told in terms that could be understood, and not related in such a loose and obscure manner as to be out of the comprehension of those that heard it, and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen afterwards. It is conceiving very irreverently of the Almighty to suppose he would deal in this jesting manner with mankind; yet all the things called prophecies in the book called the Bible come under this description.

But it is with prophecy as it is with miracle. It could not answer the purpose even if it were real. Those to whom a prophecy should be told could not

House Where Paine Lived in New Rochelle,
on Farm Presented to Him by the State of New York.

tell whether the man prophesied or lied, or whether it had been revealed to him, or whether he conceited it; and if the thing that he prophesied, or pretended to prophesy, should happen, or something like it, among the multitude of things that are daily happening, nobody could again know whether he foreknew it, or guessed at it, or whether it was accidental. A prophet, therefore, is a character useless and unnecessary; and the safe side of the case is to guard against being imposed upon by not giving credit to such relations.

Upon the whole, mystery, miracle, and prophecy are appendages that belong to fabulous and not to true religion. They are the means by which so many *Lo heres!* and *Lo theres!* have been spread about the world, and religion been made into a trade. The success of one impostor gave encouragement to another, and the quieting salvo of doing *some good* by keeping up a *pious fraud* protected them from remorse.

Having now extended the subject to a greater length than I first intended, I shall bring it to a close by abstracting a summary from the whole.

First—That the idea or belief of a word of God existing in print, or in writing, or in speech, is inconsistent in itself for the reasons already assigned. These reasons, among many others, are the want of a universal language; the mutability of language; the errors to which translations are subject; the possibility of totally suppressing such a word; the probability of altering it, or of fabricating the whole, and imposing it upon the world.

Secondly—That the Creation we behold is the real and ever-existing word of God, in which we cannot be deceived. It proclaimeth his power; it demonstrates his wisdom; it manifests his goodness and beneficence.

Thirdly—That the moral duty of man consists in imitating the moral goodness and beneficence of God manifested in the creation towards all his creatures. That seeing as we daily do the goodness of God to all men, it is an example calling upon all men to practice the same towards each other; and, consequently, that

everything of persecution and revenge between man and man, and everything of cruelty to animals, is a violation of moral duty.

I trouble not myself about the manner of future existence. I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the power that gave me existence is able to continue it, in any form and manner he pleases, either with or without this body; and it appears more probable to me that I shall continue to exist hereafter than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began.

It is certain that in one point all nations of the earth and all religions agree. All nations believe in a God. The things in which they disagree are the redundancies annexed to that belief; and, therefore, if ever a universal religion should prevail, it will not be believing anything new, but in getting rid of redundancies and believing as man believed at first. Adam, if ever there was such a man, was created a Deist; but in the meantime, let every man follow, as he has a right to do, the religion and the worship he prefers.

Thus far I had written on the 28th of December, 1793. In the evening I went to the Hotel Philadelphia (formerly White's Hotel), Passage des Petits Peres, where I lodged when I came to Paris, in consequence of being elected a member of the Convention, but had left the lodging about nine months, and taken lodgings in the Rue Fauxbourg St. Denis, for the sake of being more retired than I could be in the middle of the town.

Meeting with a company of Americans at the Hotel Philadelphia, I agreed to spend the evening with them; and, as my lodging was distant about a mile and a half, I bespoke a bed at the hotel. The company broke up about twelve o'clock, and I went directly to bed. About four in the morning I was awakened by a rapping at my chamber door; when I opened it, I saw a guard, and the master of the hotel with them. The guard told

me they came to put me under arrestation, and to demand the key of my papers. I desired them to walk in, and I would dress myself and go with them immediately.

It happened that Achilles Audibert, of Calais, was then in the hotel; and I desired to be conducted into his room. When we came there, I told the guard that I had only lodged at the hotel for that night; that I was printing a work, and that part of that work was at the Maison Bretagne, Rue Jacob; and desired they would take me there first, which they did.

The printing-office at which the work was printing was near to the Maison Bretagne, where Colonel Blackden and Joel Barlow, of the United States of America, lodged; and I had desired Joel Barlow to compare the proof-sheets with the copy as they came from the press. The remainder of the manuscript, from page 32 to 76, was at my lodging. But besides the necessity of my collecting all the parts of the work together that the publication might not be interrupted by my imprisonment, or by any event that might happen to me, it was highly proper that I should have a fellow-citizen of America with me during the examination of my papers, as I had letters of correspondence in my possession of the President of Congress General Washington; the Minister of Foreign Affairs to Congress Mr. Jefferson; and the late Benjamin Franklin; and it might be necessary for me to make a proces-verbal to send to Congress.

It happened that Joel Barlow had received only one proof-sheet of the work, which he had compared with the copy and sent it back to the printing-office.

We then went, in company with Joel Barlow, to my lodging; and the guard, or commissaires, took with them the interpreter to the Committee of Surety-General. It was satisfactory to me, that they went through the examination of my papers with the strictness they did; and it is but justice that I say; they did it not only with civility, but with tokens of respect to my character.

I showed them the remainder of the manuscript of

the foregoing work. The interpreter examined it and returned it to me, saying, "*It is an interesting work; it will do much good.*" I also showed him another manuscript, which I had intended for the Committee of Public Safety. It is entitled, "Observations on the Commerce between the United States of America and France."

After the examination of my papers was finished, the guard conducted me to the prison of the Luxembourg, where they left me as they would a man whose undeserved fate they regretted. I offered to write under the proces-verbal they had made that they had executed their orders with civility, but they declined it.

THOMAS PAINE.

The Paine Monument. (1898.)

In the original book this is a

BLANK PAGE

and this page is included

to keep page numbering consistent.

==========

The Bank of Wisdom reproduces the best of scholarly, Philosophical, Scientific, Religious and Freethought books produced by the great thinkers and doers throughout human history. It is our duty and our pleasure to do this necessary work.

The Bank of wisdom is always looking for lost, suppressed, and unusual old books, sets, pamphlets, magazines, manuscripts and other information that needs to be preserved and reproduced for future generations. If you have such old works please contact the Bank of Wisdom, we would be interested in obtaining this information either by buying or borrowing the book(s), or in obtaining a good clear copy of all pages.

Help us help your children find a better tomorrow.

Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom

Bank of Wisdom
P.O. Box 926
Louisville, KY 40201
U.S.A.

THE AGE OF REASON.
PART II.

In the original book this is a

BLANK PAGE

and this page is included
to keep page numbering consistent.

==========

The Bank of Wisdom publishes all works of human interest, we scorn no ideas of serious thought. Ideas and beliefs some may think “dangerous” and would hide, we seek to reproduce and distribute for the consideration and intellectual development of every human mind. When peace and understanding is established throughout the world it might be said that humanity has achieved an acceptable degree of civilization, but until that longed for time we must never cease to search for greater truth and a higher morality for humanity.

The wealth of thought hidden in obscure books of bygone ages makes fascinating reading, and as much of this great original thought was suppressed by the sheer power of the established systems of the time, these ideas may well be the ones needed to bring peace and human progress to our world. One thing is certain, the belief systems we have are not the ones we need.

Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom

Bank of wisdom
P.O. Box 926
Louisville, KY 40201
U.S.A.

PREFACE TO PART II.

I HAVE mentioned in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON that it had long been my intention to publish my thoughts upon Religion, but that I had originally reserved it to a later period in life, intending it to be the last work I should undertake. The circumstances, however, which existed in France in the latter end of the year 1793 determined me to delay it no longer. The just and humane principles of the Revolution, which philosophy had first diffused, had been departed from. The idea, always dangerous to society, as it is derogatory to the Almighty, that priests could forgive sins, though it seemed to exist no longer, had blunted the feelings of humanity, and callously prepared men for the commission of all manner of crimes. The intolerant spirit of church persecution had transferred itself into politics; the tribunals, styled Revolutionary, supplied the place of an Inquisition; and the guillotine of the stake. I saw many of my most intimate friends destroyed; others daily carried to prison; and I had reason to believe, and had also intimations given me, that the same danger was approaching myself.

Under these disadvantages, I began the former part of THE AGE OF REASON; I had, besides, neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both; nor could I procure any; notwithstanding which I have produced a work that no Bible believer, though writing at his ease, and with a library of church books about him, can refute. Towards the latter end of December of that year a motion was made and carried to exclude foreigners from the Convention. There

were but two in it, Anacharsis Cloots and myself; and I saw I was particularly pointed at by Bourdon de l'Oise, in his speech on that motion.

Conceiving, after this, that I had but a few days of liberty, I sat down and brought the work to a close as speedily as possible; and I had not finished it more than six hours, in the state it has since appeared, before a guard came there about three in the morning, with an order signed by the two Committees of Public Safety and Surety-General for putting me in arrestation as a foreigner, and conveyed me to the prison of the Luxembourg. I contrived, in my way there, to call on Joel Barlow, and I put the manuscript of the work into his hands, as more safe than in my possession in prison; and not knowing what might be the fate in France either of the writer or the work, I addressed it to the protection of the citizens of the United States.

It is with justice that I say that the guard who executed this order, and the interpreter to the Committee of General Surety, who accompanied them to examine my papers, treated me not only with civility, but with respect. The keeper of the Luxembourg, Benoit, a man of good heart, showed to me every friendship in his power, as did also all his family, while he continued in that station. He was removed from it, put into arrestation, and carried before the tribunal upon a malignant accusation, but acquitted.

After I had been in the Luxembourg about three weeks, the Americans then in Paris went in a body to the Convention to reclaim me as their countryman and friend; but were answered by the President, Vadier, who was also President of the Committee of Surety-General, and had signed the order for my arrestation, that I was born in England. I heard no more, after this, from any person out of the walls of the prison till the fall of Robespierre, on the 9th of Thermidor—July 27, 1794.

About two months before this event I was seized with a fever that in its progress had every symptom of becoming mortal, and from the effects of which I am

not recovered. It was then I remembered with renewed satisfaction, and congratulated myself most sincerely on having written the former part of THE AGE OF REASON. I had then but little expectation of surviving, and those about me had less. I know, therefore, by experience, the conscientious trial of my own principles.

I was then with three chamber comrades—Joseph Vanheule of Bruges, Charles Bastini and Michael Robyns of Louvain. The unceasing and anxious attention of these three friends to me, by night and by day, I remember with gratitude and mention with pleasure. It happened that a physician (Dr. Graham) and a surgeon (Mr. Bond), part of the suite of General O'Hara, were then in the Luxembourg. I ask not myself whether it be convenient to them, as men under the English government, that I express to them my thanks; but I should reproach myself if I did not; and also to the physician of the Luxembourg, Dr. Markoski.

I have some reason to believe, because I cannot discover any other cause, that this illness preserved me in existence. Among the papers of Robespierre that were examined and reported upon to the Convention by a Committee of Deputies, is a note in the handwriting of Robespierre, in the following words:

Demander que Thomas Paine soit decrete d'accusation, pour l'interet de l'Amerique autant que de la France.	Demand that Thomas Paine be decreed of accusation for the interest of America, as well as of France.

From what cause it was that the intention was not put in execution I know not, and cannot inform myself; and therefore I ascribe it to impossibility, on account of that illness.

The Convention, to repair as much as lay in their power the injustice I had sustained, invited me publicly and unanimously to return into the Convention, and which I accepted, to show I could bear an injury without permitting it to injure my principles or my disposition. It is not because right principles have been violated that they are to be abandoned.

I have seen, since I have been at liberty, several publications written—some in America and some in England—as answers to the former part of THE AGE OF REASON. If the authors of these can amuse themselves by so doing, I shall not interrupt them. They may write against the work and against me as much as they please; they do me more service than they intend, and I can have no objection that they write on. They will find, however, by this second part, without its being written as an answer to them, that they must return to their work and spin their cobweb over again. The first is brushed away by accident.

They will now find that I have furnished myself with a Bible and Testament; and I can say also that I have found them to be much worse books than I had conceived. If I have erred in anything in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON, it has been by speaking better of some parts of those books than they deserved.

I observe that all my opponents resort more or less to what they call Scripture evidence and Bible authority to help them out. They are so little masters of the subject as to confound a dispute about authenticity with a dispute about doctrines; I will, however, put them right, that if they should be disposed to write any more, they may know how to begin.

THOMAS PAINE.

October, 1795.

THE AGE OF REASON.

PART THE SECOND.

IT HAS often been said that anything may be proved from the Bible, but before anything can be admitted as proved by the Bible, the Bible itself must be proved to be true; for if the Bible be not true, or the truth of it be doubtful, it ceases to have authority, and cannot be admitted as proof of anything.

It has been the practice of all Christian commentators on the Bible, and of all Christian priests and preachers, to impose the Bible on the world as a mass of truth and as the word of God; they have disputed and wrangled, and have anathematized each other about the supposable meaning of particular parts and passages therein; one has said and insisted that such a passage meant such a thing; another that it meant directly the contrary; and a third, that it meant neither one nor the other, but something different from both; and this they have called *understanding* the Bible.

It has happened that all the answers that I have seen to the former part of THE AGE OF REASON have been written by priests; and these pious men, like their predecessors, contend and wrangle and pretend to *understand* the Bible; each understands it differently, but each understands it best; and they have agreed in nothing but in telling their readers that Thomas Paine understands it not.

Now, instead of wasting their time and heating themselves in fractious disputations about doctrinal points

drawn from the Bible, these men ought to know, and, if they do not, it is civility to inform them, that the first thing to be understood is whether there is sufficient authority for believing the Bible to be the word of God, or whether there is not?

There are matters in that book, said to be done by the *express command* of God, that are as shocking to humanity, and to every idea we have of moral justice, as anything done by Robespierre, by Carrier, by Joseph le Bon, in France, by the English government in the East Indies, or by any other assassin in modern times. When we read in the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, etc., that they (the Israelites) came by stealth upon whole nations of people, who, as the history itself shows, had given them no offense; *that they put all those nations to the sword; that they spared neither age nor infancy; that they utterly destroyed men, women, and children; that they left not a soul to breathe;* expressions that are repeated over and over again in those books, and that too with exulting ferocity; are we sure these things are facts? Are we sure that the Creator of man commissioned those things to be done; are we sure that the books that tell us so were written by his authority?

It is not the antiquity of a tale that is any evidence of its truth; on the contrary, it is a symptom of its being fabulous; for the more ancient any history pretends to be, the more it has the resemblance of a fable. The origin of every nation is buried in fabulous tradition, and that of the Jews is as much to be suspected as any other. To charge the commission of acts upon the Almighty, which in their own nature, and by every rule of moral justice, are crimes, as all assassination is, and more especially the assassination of infants, is matter of serious concern. The Bible tells us that those assassinations were done by the *express command of God.* To believe, therefore, the Bible to be true, we must *unbelieve* all our belief in the moral justice of God; for wherein could crying or smiling infants offend? And to read the Bible without horror, we must undo every-

thing that is tender, sympathizing, and benevolent in the heart of man. Speaking for myself, if I had no other evidence that the Bible was fabulous than the sacrifice I must make to believe it to be true, that alone would be sufficient to determine my choice.

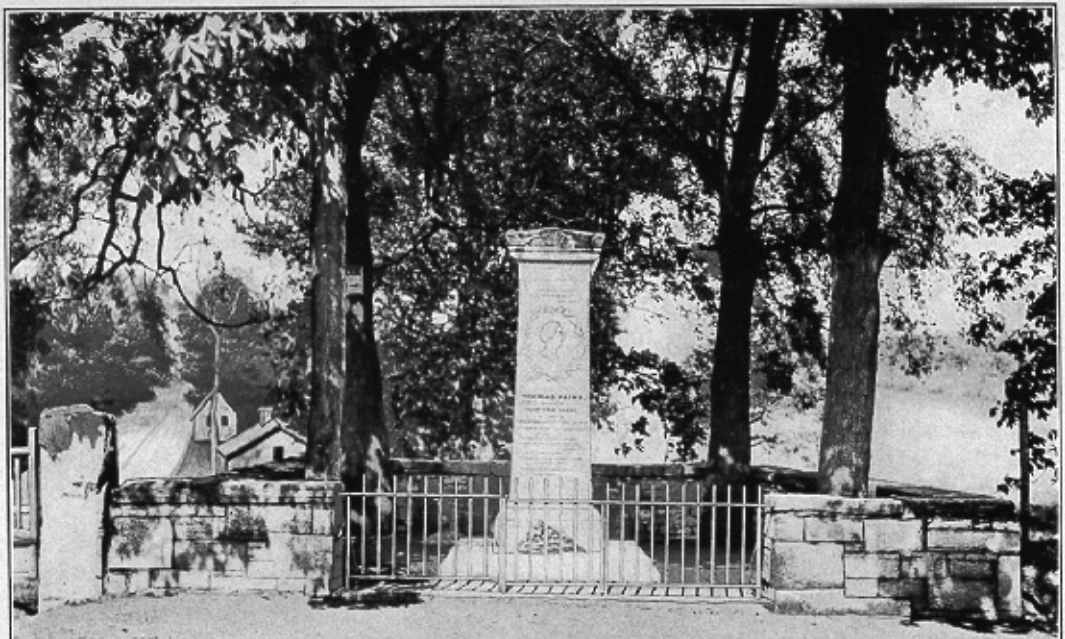
But in addition to all the moral evidence against the Bible, I will in the progress of this work produce such other evidence as even a priest cannot deny; and show, from that evidence, that the Bible is not entitled to credit as being the word of God.

But before I proceed to this examination I will show wherein the Bible differs from all other ancient writings with respect to the nature of the evidence necessary to establish its authenticity; and this is the more proper to be done because the advocates of the Bible, in their answers to the former part of THE AGE OF REASON, undertake to say—and they put some stress thereon—that the authenticity of the Bible is as well established as that of any other ancient book; as if our belief of the one could become any rule for our belief of the other.

I know, however, but of one ancient book that authoritatively challenges universal consent and belief, and that is "Euclid's Elements of Geometry";* and the reason is, because it is a book of self-evident demonstration, entirely independent of its author and of everything relating to time, place, and circumstance. The matters contained in that book would have the same authority they now have had they been written by any other person, or had the work been anonymous, or had the author never been known; for the identical certainty of who was the author makes no part of our belief of the matters contained in the book. But it is quite otherwise with respect to the books ascribed to Moses, to Joshua, to Samuel, etc.; those are books of *testimony*, and they testify of things naturally incredible; and, therefore, the whole of our belief as to the

* Euclid, according to chronological history, lived three hundred years before Christ, and about one hundred years before Archimedes; he was of the city of Alexandria, in Egypt.

authenticity of those books rests, in the first place, upon the *certainty* that they were written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel; secondly, upon the credit we give to their testimony. We may believe the first—that is, may believe the certainty of the authorship, and yet not the testimony—in the same manner that we may believe that a certain person gave evidence upon a case, and yet not believe the evidence that he gave. But if it should be found that the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, and Samuel were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, every part of the authority and authenticity of those books is gone at once; for there can be no such thing as forged or invented testimony; neither can there be anonymous testimony, more especially as to things naturally incredible; such as that of talking with God face to face, or that of the sun and moon standing still at the command of a man. The greatest part of the other ancient books are works of genius; of which kind are those ascribed to Homer, to Plato, to Aristotle, to Demosthenes, to Cicero, etc. Here again the author is not an essential in the credit we give to any of those works; for, as works of genius, they would have the same merit they have now were they anonymous. Nobody believes the Trojan story, as related by Homer, to be true; for it is the poet only that is admired; and the merit of the poet will remain, though the story be fabulous. But if we disbelieve the matters related by the Bible authors (Moses, for instance) as we disbelieve the things related by Homer, there remains nothing of Moses, in our estimation, but an impostor. As to the ancient historians, from Herodotus to Tacitus, we credit them as far as they relate things probable and credible, and no further; for if we do, we must believe the two miracles which Tacitus relates were performed by Vespasian, that of curing a lame man and a blind man, in just the same manner as the same things are told of Jesus Christ by his historians. We must also believe the miracles cited by Josephus, that of the sea of Pamphilia opening to let Alexander and his army pass, as is related of the Red



Paine Monument and Surroundings.

Sea in Exodus. These miracles are quite as well authenticated as the Bible miracles, and yet we do not believe them; consequently the degree of evidence necessary to establish our belief of things naturally incredible, whether in the Bible or elsewhere, is far greater than that which obtains our belief to natural and probable things; and, therefore, the advocates for the Bible have no claim to our belief of the Bible because that we believe things stated in other ancient writings; since that we believe the things stated in these writings no further than they are probable and credible, or because they are self-evident, like Euclid; or admire them because they are elegant, like Homer; or approve them because they are sedate, like Plato, or judicious, like Aristotle.

Having premised these things, I proceed to examine the authenticity of the Bible, and I begin with what are called the five books of Moses—*Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. My intention is to show that those books are spurious, and that Moses is not the author of them; and, still further, that they were not written in the time of Moses, nor till several hundred years afterwards; that they are no other than an attempted history of the life of Moses, and of the times in which he is said to have lived, and also of the times prior thereto, written by some very ignorant and stupid pretenders to authorship, several hundred years after the death of Moses, as men now write histories of things that happened, or are supposed to have happened, several hundred or several thousand years ago.

The evidence that I shall produce in this case is from the books themselves; and I will confine myself to this evidence only. Were I to refer for proofs to any of the ancient authors whom the advocates of the Bible call profane authors, they would controvert that authority, as I controvert theirs; I will therefore meet them on their own ground, and oppose them with their own weapon—the Bible.

In the first place, there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of those books; and that he

is the author is altogether an unfounded opinion, got abroad nobody knows how. The style and manner in which those books are written give no room to believe, or even to suppose, they were written by Moses; for it is altogether the style and manner of another person speaking of Moses. In Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers (for everything in Genesis is prior to the times of Moses and not the least allusion is made to him therein)—the whole, I say, of these books is in the third person; it is always, *the Lord said unto Moses*, or *Moses said unto the Lord:* or *Moses said unto the people*, or *the people said unto Moses;* and this is the style and manner that historians use in speaking of the persons whose lives and actions they are writing. It may be said that a man may speak of himself in the third person; and, therefore, it may be supposed that Moses did; but supposition proves nothing; and if the advocates for the belief that Moses wrote those books himself have nothing better to advance than supposition, they may as well be silent.

But granting the grammatical right, that Moses might speak of himself in the third person because any man might speak of himself in that manner, it cannot be admitted as a fact in those books, that it is Moses who speaks, without rendering Moses truly ridiculous and absurd; for example, Numbers xii, 3: "*Now the man Moses was very* MEEK, *above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.*" If Moses said this of himself, instead of being the meekest of men, he was one of the most vain and arrogant coxcombs; and the advocates for those books may now take which side they please, for both sides are against them; if Moses was not the author, the books are without authority; and if he was the author, the author is without credit, because to boast of *meekness* is the reverse of meekness and is *a lie in sentiment.*

In Deuteronomy, the style and manner of writing marks more evidently than in the former books that Moses is not the writer. The manner here used is dramatical; the writer opens the subject by a short

introductory discourse, and then introduces Moses as in the act of speaking; and when he has made Moses finish his harangue, he (the writer) resumes his own part, and speaks till he brings Moses forward again, and at last closes the scene with an account of the death, funeral, and character of Moses.

This interchange of speakers occurs four times in this book: from the first verse of the first chapter to the end of the fifth verse, it is the writer who speaks; he then introduces Moses as in the act of making his harangue, and this continues to the end of iv, 40; here the writer drops Moses, and speaks historically of what was done in consequence of what Moses, when living, is supposed to have said, and which the writer has dramatically rehearsed.

The writer opens the subject again in the first verse of the fifth chapter, though it is only by saying that Moses called the people of Israel together; he then introduces Moses as before, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the twenty-sixth chapter. He does the same thing at the beginning of the twenty-seventh chapter; and continues Moses, as in the speaking, to the end of the twenty-eighth chapter. At chapter xxix the writer speaks again through the whole of the first verse, and the first line of the second verse, where he introduces Moses for the last time, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the thirty-third chapter.

The writer having now finished the rehearsal on the part of Moses, comes forward, and speaks through the whole of the last chapter; he begins by telling the reader that Moses went up to the top of Pisgah; that he saw from thence the land which (the writer says) had been promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that he (Moses) died there, in the land of Moab, that he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, but that no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day—that is, unto the time in which the writer lived who wrote the book of Deuteronomy. The writer then tells us that Moses was one hundred and ten years old when he

died; that his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated; and he concludes by saying that there arose not a prophet *since* in Israel like unto Moses, whom, says this anonymous writer, the Lord knew face to face.

Having thus shown, as far as grammatical evidence implies, that Moses was not the writer of those books, I will, after making a few observations on the inconsistencies of the writer of the book of Deuteronomy, proceed to show, from the historical and chronological evidence contained in those books, that Moses *was not*, because *he could not be*, the writer of them; and, consequently, that there is no authority for believing that the inhuman and horrid butcheries of men, women, and children, told in those books, were done, as those books say they were, at the command of God. It is a duty incumbent on every true Deist, that he vindicate the moral justice of God against the calumnies of the Bible.

The writer of the book of Deuteronomy, whoever he was (for it is an anonymous work), is obscure, and also contradictory with himself, in the account he has given of Moses.

After telling that Moses went to the top of Pisgah (and it does not appear from any account that he ever came down again), he tells us that Moses died *there* in the land of Moab, and that *he* buried him in a valley in the land of Moab; but as there is no antecedent to the pronoun *he*, there is no knowing who *he* was that did bury him. If the writer meant that *he* (God) buried him, how should *he* (the writer) know it? or why should we (the readers) believe him, since we know not who the writer was that tells us so, for certainly Moses could not himself tell where he was buried.

The writer also tells us that no man knoweth where the sepulchre of Moses is *unto this day*, meaning the time in which this writer lived; how then should he know that Moses was buried in a valley in the land of Moab? For, as the writer lived long after the time of Moses, as is evident from his using the expression *unto this day*, meaning a great length of time after the death

of Moses, he certainly was not at his funeral; and, on the other hand, it is impossible that Moses himself could say that *no man knoweth where the sepulchre is unto this day.* To make Moses the speaker would be an improvement on the play of a child that hides himself and cries "Nobody can find me." Nobody can find Moses.

This writer has nowhere told us how he came by the speeches which he has put into the mouth of Moses to speak, and, therefore, we have a right to conclude that he either composed them himself or wrote them from oral tradition. One or other of these is the more probable, since he has given, in the fifth chapter, a table of commandments in which that called the fourth commandment is different from the fourth commandment in Exodus xx. In that of Exodus, the reason given for keeping the seventh day is, "because [says the commandment] God made the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested on the seventh;" but in that of Deuteronomy the reason given is that it was the day on which the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and *therefore,* says this commandment, *the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath-day. This* makes no mention of the creation, nor *that* of the coming out of Egypt. There are also many things given as laws of Moses in this book that are not to be found in any of the other books; among which is that inhuman and brutal law (xxi, 18–21) which authorizes parents, the father and the mother, to bring their own children to have them stoned to death for what it pleased them to call stubbornness. But priests have always been fond of preaching up Deuteronomy, for Deuteronomy preaches up tithes; and it is from this book (xxv, 4) they have taken the phrase and applied it to tithing, that "thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn;" and that this might not escape observation, they have noted it in the table of contents at the head of the chapter, though it is only a single verse of less than two lines. O priests, priests! ye are willing to be compared to an ox, for the sake of tithes. Though

it is impossible for us to know *identically* who the writer of Deuteronomy was, it is not difficult to discover him *professionally*, that he was some Jewish priest who lived, as I shall show in the course of this work, at least three hundred and fifty years after the time of Moses.

I come now to speak of the historical and chronological evidence. The chronology that I shall use is the Bible chronology; for I mean not to go out of the Bible for evidence of anything, but to make the Bible itself prove historically and chronologically that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him. It is therefore proper that I inform the reader (such a one at least as may not have the opportunity of knowing it) that in the larger Bibles, and also in some smaller ones, there is a series of chronology printed in the margin of every page for the purpose of showing how long the historical matters stated in each page happened, or are supposed to have happened, before Christ, and, consequently, the distance of time between one historical circumstance and another.

I begin with the book of Genesis. In Genesis xiv the writer gives an account of Lot being taken prisoner in a battle between the four kings against five, and carried off; and that when the account of Lot being taken came to Abraham, he armed all his household and marched to rescue Lot from the captors; and that he pursued them unto Dan (verse 14).

To show in what manner this expression of *pursuing them unto Dan* applies to the case in question, I will refer to two circumstances, the one in America, the other in France. The city now called New York, in America, was originally New Amsterdam; and the town in France, lately called Havre Marat, was before called Havre-de-Grace. New Amsterdam was changed to New York in the year 1664; Havre-de-Grace to Havre Marat in the year 1793. Should, therefore, any writing be found, though without date, in which the name of New York should be mentioned, it would be certain evidence that such a writing could not have been written before,

and must have been written after, New Amsterdam was changed to New York, and consequently not till after the year 1664, or at least during the course of that year. And, in like manner, any dateless writing with the name of Havre Marat, would be certain evidence that such a writing must have been written after Havre-de-Grace became Havre Marat, and consequently not till after the year 1793, or at least during the course of that year.

I now come to the application of those cases, and to show that there was no such place as *Dan* till many years after the death of Moses; and consequently, that Moses could not be the writer of the book of Genesis, where this account of pursuing them unto *Dan* is given.

The place that is called Dan in the Bible was originally a town of the Gentiles, called Laish; and when the tribe of Dan seized upon this town they changed its name to Dan, in commemoration of Dan, who was the father of that tribe and the great-grandson of Abraham.

To establish this in proof it is necessary to refer from Genesis to chapter xviii of the book called the Book of Judges. It is there said (verse 27) *that they* (the Danites) *came unto Laish to a people that were quiet and secure, and they smote them with the edge of the sword* (the Bible is filled with murder) *and burned the city with fire; and they built a city* (verse 28), and dwelt therein, *and* (verse 29) *they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan, their father, howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.*

This account of the Danites taking possession of Laish and changing it to Dan is placed in the book of Judges immediately after the death of Samson. The death of Samson is said to have happened 1120 years before Christ, and that of Moses 1451 before Christ, and therefore, according to the historical arrangement, the place was not called Dan till 331 years after the death of Moses.

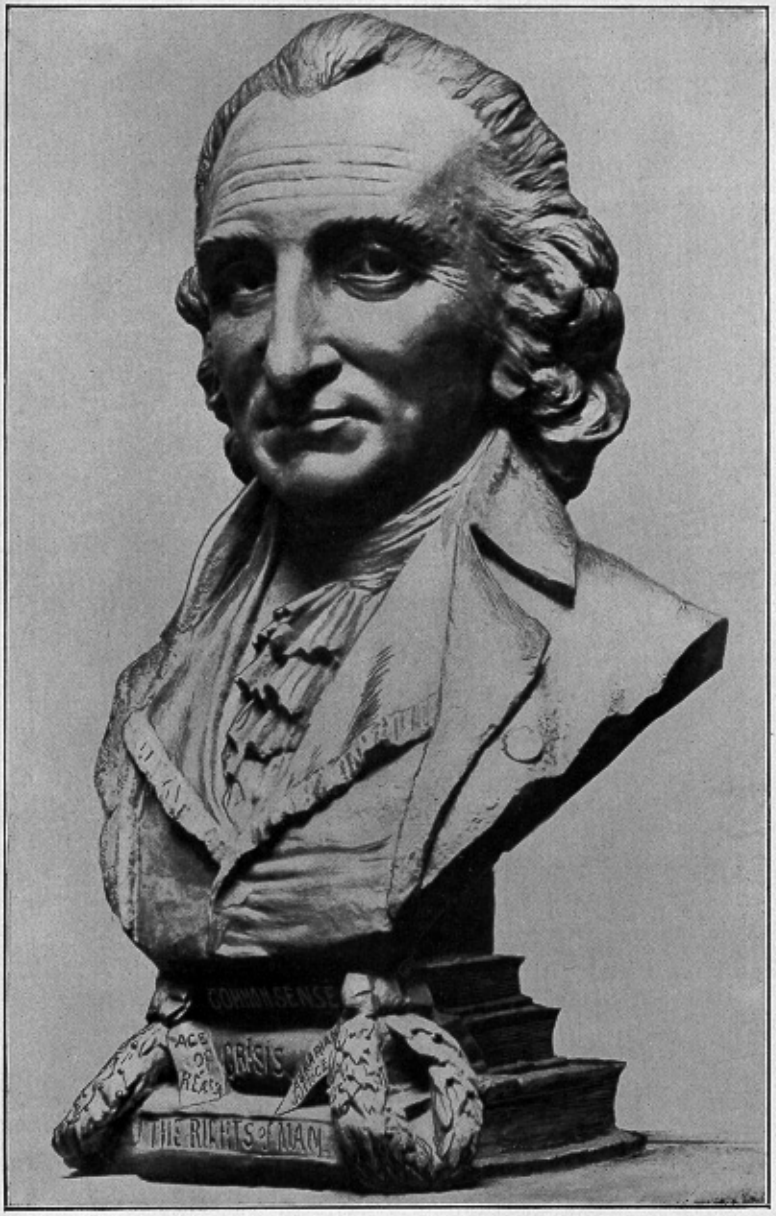
There is a striking confusion between the historical and the chronological arrangement in the book of

Judges. The last five chapters as they stand in the book—xvii, xviii, xix, xx, xxi—are put chronologically before all the preceding chapters; they are made to be 286 years before xvi, 266 before xv, 245 before xiii, 195 before ix, 90 before iv, and 15 years before the first chapter. This shows the uncertain and fabulous state of the Bible. According to the chronological arrangement, the taking of Laish and giving it the name of Dan is made to be twenty years after the death of Joshua, who was the successor of Moses; and by the historical order as it stands in the book, it is made to be 306 years after the death of Joshua, and 331 after that of Moses; but they both exclude Moses from being the writer of Genesis, because, according to either of the statements, no such place as Dan existed in the time of Moses; and therefore the writer of Genesis must have been some person who lived after the town of Laish had the name of Dan; and who that person was, nobody knows; and consequently the book of Genesis is anonymous and without authority.

I come now to state another point of historical and chronological evidence, and to show therefrom, as in the preceding case, that Moses is not the author of the book of Genesis.

In the thirty-sixth chapter of Genesis there is given a genealogy of the sons and descendants of Esau, who are called Edomites, and also a list, by name, of the kings of Edom; in the enumerating of which, it is said (verse 31): "*And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.*"

Now, were any dateless writing to be found in which, speaking of any past events, the writer should say, "These things happened before there was any Congress in America, or before there was any Convention in France," it would be evidence that such writing could not have been written before, and could only be written after, there was a Congress in America or a Convention in France, as the case might be; and, consequently, that it could not be written by any person who died



COLOSSAL BRONZE BUST OF PAINE.

Now surmounting the New Rochelle monument Wilson Macdonald, sculptor. Dedicated May 30, 1899.

before there was a Congress in the one country or a Convention in the other.

Nothing is more frequent, as well in history as in conversation, than to refer to a fact in the room of a date. It is most natural so to do, first, because a fact fixes itself in the memory better than a date; secondly, because the fact includes the date and serves to excite two ideas at once; and this manner of speaking by circumstances implies as positively that the fact alluded to is *past* as if it was so expressed. When a person, in speaking upon any matter, says, "It was before I was married," or "Before my son was born," or "Before I went to America," or "Before I went to France," it is absolutely understood, and intended to be understood, that he has been married, that he has had a son, that he has been in America, or been in France. Language does not admit of using this mode of expression in any other sense; and whenever such an expression is found anywhere, it can only be understood in the sense in which only it could have been used.

The passage, therefore, that I have quoted—"And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before there reigned *any* king over the children of Israel"—could only have been written after the first king began to reign over them; and, consequently, that the book of Genesis so far from having been written by Moses, could not have been written till the time of Saul at least. This is the positive sense of the passage; but the expression, *any* king, implies more kings than one; at least it implies two, and this will carry it to the time of David; and, if taken in a general sense, it carries itself through all times of the Jewish monarchy.

Had we met with this verse in any part of the Bible that *professed* to have been written after kings began to reign in Israel, it would have been impossible not to have seen the application of it. It happens then that this is the case; the two books of Chronicles, which give a history of all the kings of Israel, are *professedly*, as well as in fact, written after the Jewish monarchy began; and this verse that I have quoted, and all the

remaining verses of Genesis xxxvi, are, word for word, in the first chapter of Chronicles, beginning at the forty-third verse.

It was with consistency that the writer of Chronicles could say, as he has said (1 Chron. i, 43): "*Now these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the children of Israel,*" because he was going to give, and has given, a list of the kings that had reigned in Israel; but as it is impossible that the same expression could have been used before that period, it is as certain as anything can be proved from historical language that this part of Genesis is taken from Chronicles, and that Genesis is not so old as Chronicles, and probably not so old as the book of Homer, or as Æsop's Fables, admitting Homer to have been, as the tables of chronology state, contemporary with David or Solomon, and Æsop to have lived about the end of the Jewish monarchy.

Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange belief that it is the word of God has stood, and there remains nothing of Genesis but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities, or of downright lies. The story of Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his ark, drops to a level with the Arabian Tales, without the merit of being entertaining; and the account of men living to eight and nine hundred years becomes as fabulous as the immortality of the giants of the mythology.

Besides, the character of Moses, as stated in the Bible, is the most horrid that can be imagined. If those accounts be true, he was the wretch that first began and carried on wars on the score, or on the pretense, of religion; and under that mask, or that infatuation, committed the most unexampled atrocities that are to be found in the history of any nation, of which I will state only one instance.

When the Jewish army returned from one of their murdering and plundering excursions, the account goes on as follows (Numbers xxxi, 13):

"And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp; and Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle; and Moses said unto them, *Have ye saved all the women alive?* behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore, *kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.*"

Among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man it is impossible to find a greater than Moses if this account be true. Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers, and debauch the daughters.

Let any mother put herself in the situation of those mothers; one child murdered, another destined to violation, and herself in the hands of an executioner; let any daughter put herself in the situation of those daughters, destined as a prey to the murderers of a mother and a brother, and what will be their feelings? It is in vain that we attempt to impose upon nature, for nature will have her course, and the religion that tortures all her social ties is a false religion.

After this detestable order follows an account of the plunder taken and the manner of dividing it; and here it is that the profaneness of priestly hypocrisy increases the catalogue of crimes. Verse 37: "*And the Lord's tribute* of the sheep was six hundred and threescore and fifteen; and the beeves were thirty and six thousand, of which the *Lord's tribute* was threescore and twelve; and the asses were thirty thousand and five hundred, of which the Lord's tribute was threescore and one; and the persons were sixteen thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was thirty and two." In short, the matters contained in this chapter, as well as

in many other parts of the Bible, are too horrid for humanity to read, or for decency to hear; for it appears, from the thirty-fifth verse of this chapter, that the number of women-children consigned to debauchery by the order of Moses was thirty-two thousand.

People in general know not what wickedness there is in this pretended word of God. Brought up in habits of superstition, they take it for granted that the Bible is true, and that it is good; they permit themselves not to doubt of it, and they carry the ideas they form of the benevolence of the Almighty to the book which they have been taught to believe was written by his authority. Good heavens! it is quite another thing; it is a book of lies, wickedness, and blasphemy; for what can be greater blasphemy, than to ascribe the wickedness of man to the orders of the Almighty?

But to return to my subject, that of showing that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him, and that the Bible is spurious. The two instances I have already given would be sufficient, without any additional evidence, to invalidate the authenticity of any book that pretended to be four or five hundred years more ancient than the matters it speaks of, or refers to, as facts; for in the case of *pursuing them unto Dan*, and of *the kings that reigned over the children of Israel*, not even the flimsy pretense of prophecy can be pleaded. The expressions are in the preter tense, and it would be downright idiotism to say that a man could prophesy in the preter tense.

But there are many other passages scattered throughout those books that unite in the same point of evidence. It is said in Exodus (another of the books ascribed to Moses) xvi, 35: "And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years *until they came to a land inhabited;* they did eat manna, *until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.*"

Whether the children of Israel ate manna or not, or what manna was, or whether it was anything more than a kind of fungus or small mushroom, or other vegetable substance common to that part of the country, makes

nothing to my argument; all that I mean to show is, that it is not Moses that could write this account, because the account extends itself beyond the life-time of Moses. Moses, according to the Bible (but it is such a book of lies and contradictions there is no knowing which part to believe, or whether any), died in the wilderness, and never came upon the borders of the land of Canaan; and, consequently, it could not be he that said what the children of Israel did, or what they ate when they came there. This account of eating manna, which they tell us was written by Moses, extends itself to the time of Joshua, the successor of Moses, as appears by the account given in the book of Joshua, after the children of Israel had passed the river Jordan, and came into the borders of the land of Canaan. Joshua (v, 12): "*And the manna ceased on the morn after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*"

But a more remarkable instance than this occurs in Deuteronomy, which, while it shows that Moses could not be the writer of that book, shows also the fabulous notions that prevailed at that time about giants. In the third chapter of Deuteronomy, among the conquests said to be made by Moses, is an account of the taking of Og, king of Bashan (verse 11): "For only Og king of Bashan remained of the race of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man." A cubit is 1 foot 9 888-1000 inches; the length, therefore, of the bed was 16 feet 4 inches, and the breadth 7 feet 4 inches. Thus much for this giant's bed. Now for the historical part, which, though the evidence is not so direct and positive as in the former cases, is nevertheless very presumable and corroborating evidence, and is better than the *best* evidence on the contrary side.

The writer, by way of proving the existence of this

giant, refers to his bed as an *ancient relic*, and says, "Is it not in Rabbath [or Rabbah] of the children of Ammon?" meaning that it is; for such is frequently the Bible method of affirming a thing. But it could not be Moses that said this, because Moses could know nothing about Rabbah, nor of what was in it. Rabbah was not a city belonging to this giant king, nor was it one of the cities that Moses took. The knowledge, therefore, that this bed was at Rabbah, and of the particulars of its dimensions, must be referred to the time when Rabbah was taken, and this was not till four hundred years after the death of Moses; for which see 2 Sam. xii, 26: "And Joab [David's general] fought against *Rabbah of the children of Ammon*, and took the royal city."

As I am not undertaking to point out all the contradictions in time, place, and circumstance that abound in the books ascribed to Moses, and which prove to a demonstration that those books could not be written by Moses, nor in the time of Moses, I proceed to the book of Joshua, and to show that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous and without authority. The evidence I shall produce is contained in the book itself. I will not go out of the Bible for proof against the supposed authenticity of the Bible. False testimony is always good against itself.

Joshua, according to the first chapter of Joshua, was the immediate successor of Moses; he was, moreover, a military man, which Moses was not, and he continued as chief of the people of Israel twenty-five years; that is, from the time that Moses died, which, acccording to the Bible chronology, was 1451 years before Christ, until 1426 years before Christ, when, according to the same chronology, Joshua died. If, therefore, we find in this book, said to have been written by Joshua, references to *facts done* after the death of Joshua, it is evidence that Joshua could not have been the author; and also that the book could not have been written till after the time of the latest fact which it records. As to the character of the book, it is horrid; it is a mili-

tary history of rapine and murder, as savage and brutal as those recorded of his predecessor in villainy and hypocrisy, Moses; and the blasphemy consists, as in the former books, in ascribing those deeds to the orders of the Almighty.

In the first place, the book of Joshua, as is the case in the preceding books, is written in the third person; it is the historian of Joshua that speaks, for it would have been absurd and vainglorious that Joshua should say of himself, as is said of him in the last verse of the sixth chapter, that "*his fame was noised throughout all the country.*" I now come more immediately to the proof.

In xxiv, 31, it is said that "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and *all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua.*" Now, in the name of common sense, can it be Joshua that relates what people had done after he was dead? This account must not only have been written by some historian that lived after Joshua, but that lived also after the elders that outlived Joshua.

There are several passages of a general meaning with respect to time scattered throughout the book of Joshua that carry the time in which the book was written to a distance from the time of Joshua, but without marking by exclusion any particular time, as in the passage above quoted. In that passage, the time that intervened between the death of Joshua and the death of the elders is excluded descriptively and absosolutely, and the evidence substantiates that the book could not have been written till after the death of the last.

But though the passages to which I allude, and which I am going to quote, do not designate any particular time by exclusion, they imply a time far more distant from the days of Joshua than is contained between the death of Joshua and the death of the elders. Such is the passage, x, 14, where, after giving an account that the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, at the command of Joshua

(a tale only fit to amuse children *), the passage says, "And there was no day like that, before it, nor after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man."

The time implied by the expression *after* it—that is, after that day—being put in comparison with all the time that passed *before* it, must, in order to give any expressive signification to the passage, mean a *great length of time;* for example, it would have been ridiculous to have said so the next day, or the next week, or the next month, or the next year; to give, therefore, meaning to the passage, comparative with the wonder it relates, and the prior time it alludes to, it must mean centuries of years; less, however, than one would be trifling, and less than two would be barely admissible.

A distant but general time is also expressed in the eighth chapter, where, after giving an account of the taking of the city of Ai, it is said, verse 28th: "And Joshua burned Ai, and made it an heap for ever, even a desolation *unto this day;*" and again (verse 29), where, speaking of the king of Ai, whom Joshua had hanged, and buried at the entering of the gate, it is

---

* This tale of the sun standing still upon Mount Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, is one of those fables that detects itself. Such a circumstance could not have happened without being known all over the world. One half would have wondered why the sun did not rise, and the other why it did not set; and the tradition of it would be universal; whereas, there is not a nation in the world that knows anything about it. But why must the moon stand still? What occasion should there be for moonlight in the daytime, and that too whilst the sun shined? As a poetical figure, the whole is well enough; it is akin to that in the song of Deborah and Barak, *The stars in their courses fought against Sisera;* but it is inferior to the figurative declaration of Mahomet to the persons who came to expostulate with him on his goings-on. "Wert thou," said he, "to come to me with the sun in thy right hand and the moon in thy left, it should not alter my career." For Joshua to have exceeded Mahomet, he should have put the sun and moon one in each pocket, and carried them as Guy Faux carried his dark lantern, and taken them out to shine as he might happen to want them. The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again; the account, however, abstracted from the poetical fancy, shows the ignorance of Joshua, for he should have commanded the earth to stand still.

said, "And he raised thereon a great heap of stones, which remaineth unto this day"—that is, unto the day or time in which the writer of the book of Joshua lived. And again, in the tenth chapter (verse 27), where, after speaking of the five kings whom Joshua had hanged on five trees, and then thrown in a cave, it is said, "And he laid great stones on the cave's mouth, which remain unto this very day."

In enumerating the several exploits of Joshua, and of the tribes, and of the places which they conquered or attempted, it is said (xv, 63), "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah *at Jerusalem unto this day.*" The question upon this passage is, At what time did the Jebusites and the children of Judah dwell together at Jerusalem? As this matter occurs again in the first chapter of Judges, I shall reserve my observations till I come to that part.

Having thus shown from the book of Joshua itself, without any auxiliary evidence whatever, that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous, and consequently without authority, I proceed, as before-mentioned, to the book of Judges.

The book of Judges is anonymous on the face of it; and therefore even the pretense is wanting to call it the word of God; it has not so much as a nominal voucher; it is altogether fatherless.

This book begins with the same expression as the book of Joshua. That of Joshua begins (i, 1), "Now after the death of Moses," etc., and this of Judges begins, "Now after the death of Joshua," etc. This, and the similarity of style between the two books, indicate that they are the work of the same author, but who he was is altogether unknown; the only point that the book proves is that the author lived long after the time of Joshua;* for though it begins as

* Here is afforded one of the many striking instances where the conclusions of Paine, based upon evidence furnished by the book he

if it followed immediately after his death, the second chapter is an epitome or abstract of the whole book, which, according to the Bible chronology, extends

---

is considering, are verified by the latest findings of modern critical research. While the present edition of THE AGE OF REASON is in hand a new English translation of the book of Judges, by the Rev. G. F. Moore, D.D., professor in Andover Theological Seminary, Andover, Mass., is issued as a part of the Polychrome Bible under the editorship of Prof. Paul Haupt of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Md., which goes even farther than did Paine in reducing the antiquity of the composition. Paine finds "good reason to believe that it [Judges] was not written till the time of David at least," which, according to Bible (or Ussher) chronology, is "about" 1050 B.C. Professor Moore does not venture to place any part of the work earlier than the ninth century, B.C., and assigns portions of it to the sixth. Paine was therefore conservative in his estimate of the late origin of Judges His ascription of Judges and Joshua to the same author, on account of the introductory words, "Now after the death," etc., is not without warrant, and speaks as highly for his discernment as though one man had actually composed them both. We learn from Professor Moore that the words quoted are the formula of the final editor of the historical books of the Old Testament, so that the hand which Paine traced in the two books was really there. Without that formula Judges would begin abruptly, "The children of Israel asked the Lord"—the question When? being left to the reader's imagination. What preceded those words in the original history is unknown. Professor Moore says the matter is "lost." As Paine recognized the similarity of style between the two books, Joshua and Judges, indicates that they are the work of the same author; this similarity is of course due to the work of the "final editor," who did not hesitate to add whole sentences and paragraphs. But the books are contradictory; their accounts of the conquest of Canaan are irreconcilably at variance. In Joshua, Israel invades Palestine in one great army under Joshua's command, and in two campaigns, with two decisive battles, achieves the conquest of the whole country, ruthlessly extirpating the entire population. The land was then, according to that history, allotted to the several Israelitish tribes, who had nothing to do but to take possession of the subjugated territories. To the contrary, in the first chapter of Judges, which would almost seem to have been written to contradict the story told in Joshua, whole districts and many towns are asserted to have remained in the possession of the enemy.

The book of Judges is divided by Professor Moore into three parts, the first part—from i, 1, to ii, 5, inclusive—forming a comparatively late addition. The second part, comprising the body of the book, includes ii, 6–xvi, 31, "to which alone," it is remarked, "the title in strict propriety belongs" Part third is entitled "Additional Stories of the Times of the Judges." Here the final editor has interpolated with the greatest freedom. Evidently he had before him two or more sources of the same narrative, which he dovetailed together, producing confusion and contradiction. Instead of one author, the books of Joshua and Judges had many contributors and editors.

its history through a space of 306 years; that is, from the death of Joshua, 1426 years before Christ, to the death of Samson, 1120 years before Christ, and only 25 years before Saul went *to seek his father's asses, and was made king.* But there is good reason to believe that it was not written till the time of David at least, and that the book of Joshua was not written before the same time.

In the first chapter of Judges, the writer, after announcing the death of Joshua, proceeds to tell what happened between the children of Judah and the native inhabitants of the land of Canaan. In this statement, the writer, having abruptly mentioned Jerusalem in the seventh verse, says immediately after, in the eighth verse, by way of explanation, "Now the children of Judah *had* fought against Jerusalem, and *taken* it;" consequently this book could not have been written before Jerusalem had been taken. The reader will recollect the quotation I have just before made from Joshua xv, 63, where it said that "the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day;" meaning the time when the book of Joshua was written.

The evidence I have already produced to prove that the books I have hitherto treated of were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed, nor till many years after their death, if such persons ever lived, is already so abundant that I can afford to admit this passage with less weight than I am entitled to draw from it. For the case is that, so far as the Bible can be credited as a history, the city of Jerusalem was not taken till the time of David; and, consequently, that the books of Joshua and of Judges were not written till after the commencement of the reign of David, which was 370 years after the death of Joshua.

The name of the city that was afterwards called Jerusalem was originally Jebus, or Jebusi, and was the capital of the Jebusites. The account of David's taking this city is given in 2 Samuel v, 4, etc.; also in 1 Chronicles xiv, 4, etc. There is no mention in any part of the Bible that it was ever taken before, nor any

account that favors such an opinion. It is not said, either in Samuel or in Chronicles, that "they utterly destroyed men, women, and children;" that "they left not a soul to breathe," as is said of their other conquests; and the silence here observed implies that it was taken by capitulation, and that the Jebusites, the native inhabitants, continued to live in the place after it was taken. The account, therefore, given in Joshua, that *the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at* Jerusalem at this day, corresponds to no other time than after the taking of the city by David.

Having now shown that every book in the Bible, from Genesis to Judges, is without authenticity, I come to the book of Ruth, an idle, bungling story, foolishly told, nobody knows by whom, about a strolling country girl creeping slyly to bed to her cousin Boaz. Pretty stuff indeed to be called the word of God! It is, however, one of the best books in the Bible, for it is free from murder and rapine.

I come next to the two books of Samuel, and to show that those books were not written by Samuel, nor till a great length of time after the death of Samuel, and that they are, like all the former books, anonymous and without authority.

To be convinced that these books have been written much later than the time of Samuel, and, consequently, not by him, it is only necessary to read the account which the writer gives of Saul going to seek his father's asses, and of his interview with Samuel, of whom Saul went to inquire about those lost asses, as foolish people nowadays go to a conjurer to inquire after lost things.

The writer in relating this story of Saul, Samuel, and the asses, does not tell it as a thing that had just then happened, but as *an ancient story in the time this writer lived;* for he tells it in the language or terms used at the time that *Samuel* lived, which obliges the writer to explain the story in the terms or language used in the time the *writer* lived.

Samuel, in the account given of him in the first of those books (ix), is called *the seer;* and it is by this

term that Saul inquires after him (verse 11), "And as they [Saul and his servant] went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water; and they said unto them, *Is the seer here?*" Saul then went according to the direction of those maidens, and met Samuel without knowing him, and said to him (verse 18), "Tell me, I pray thee, where the *seer's house is?* and Samuel answered Saul, and said, *I am the seer.*"

As the writer of the book of Samuel relates these questions and answers in the language or manner of speaking used in the time they are said to have been spoken, and as that manner of speaking was out of use when this author wrote, he found it necessary, in order to make the story understood, to explain the terms in which these questions and answers are spoken; and he does this in the ninth verse, where he says, "*Before-time,* in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet, was *before-time* called a seer." This proves, as I have before said, that this story of Saul, Samuel, and the asses was an ancient story at the time the book of Samuel was written, and consequently that Samuel did not write it, and that the book is without authenticity.

But if we go further into those books the evidence is still more positive that Samuel is not the writer of them; for they relate things that did not happen till several years after the death of Samuel. Samuel died before Saul; for 1 Samuel xxviii, tells that Saul and the witch of Endor conjured Samuel up after he was dead; yet the history of the matters contained in those books is extended through the remaining part of Saul's life, and to the latter end of the life of David, who succeeded Saul. The account of the death and burial of Samuel (a thing which he could not write himself) is related in chapter xxv of the first book of Samuel; and the chronology affixed to this chapter makes this to be 1060 years before Christ; yet the history of this *first* book is brought down to 1056 years before Christ;

that is, to the death of Saul, which was not till four years after the death of Samuel.

The second book of Samuel begins with an account of things that did not happen until four years after Samuel was dead; for it begins with the reign of David, who succeeded Saul, and it goes on to the end of David's reign, which was forty-three years after the death of Samuel; and, therefore, the books are in themselves positive evidence that they were not written by Samuel.

I have now gone through all the books in the first part of the Bible, to which the names of persons are affixed as being the authors of those books, and which the church styling itself the Christian church has imposed upon the world as the writings of Moses, Joshua, and Samuel; and I have detected and proved the falsehood of this imposition. And now, ye priests of every description, who have preached and written against the former part of THE AGE OF REASON, what have ye to say? Will ye, with all this mass of evidence against you, and staring you in the face, still have the assurance to march into your pulpits, and continue to impose these books on your congregations as the works of *inspired penmen* and the word of God, when it is as evident as demonstration can make truth appear that the persons who, ye say, are the authors, are *not* the authors, and that ye know not who the authors are? What shadow of pretense have ye now to produce for continuing the blasphemous fraud? What have ye still to offer against the pure and moral religion of Deism, in support of your system of falsehood, idolatry, and pretended revelation? Had the cruel and murdering orders with which the Bible is filled, and the numberless torturing executions of men, women, and children, in consequence of those orders, been ascribed to some friend whose memory you revered, you would have glowed with satisfaction at detecting the falsehood of the charge, and gloried in defending his injured fame. It is because ye are sunk in the cruelty of superstition, or feel no interest in the honor of your Creator, that ye listen to the horrid tales of the Bible, or hear them

with callous indifference. The evidence I have produced, and shall still produce in the course of this work, to prove that the Bible is without authority will, whilst it wounds the stubbornness of a priest, relieve and tranquilize the minds of millions; it will free them from all those hard thoughts of the Almighty which priestcraft and the Bible had infused into their minds, and which stood in everlasting opposition to all their ideas of his moral justice and benevolence.

I come now to the two books of Kings and the two books of Chronicles. Those books are altogether historical, and are chiefly confined to the lives and actions of the Jewish kings, who in general were a parcel of rascals; but these are matters with which we have no more concern than we have with the Roman emperors or Homer's account of the Trojan war. Besides which, as those books are anonymous, and as we know nothing of the writer, or of his character, it is impossible for us to know what degree of credit to give to the matters related therein. Like all other ancient histories, they appear to be a jumble of fable and of fact, and of probable and of improbable things, but which distance of time and place, and change of circumstances in the world, have rendered obsolete and uninteresting.

The chief use I shall make of those books will be that of comparing them with each other, and with other parts of the Bible, to show the confusion, contradiction, and cruelty in this pretended word of God.

The first book of Kings begins with the reign of Solomon, which, according to the Bible chronology, was 1015 years before Christ; and the second book ends 588 years before Christ, being a little after the reign of Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, after taking Jerusalem and conquering the Jews, carried captive to Babylon. The two books include a space of 427 years.

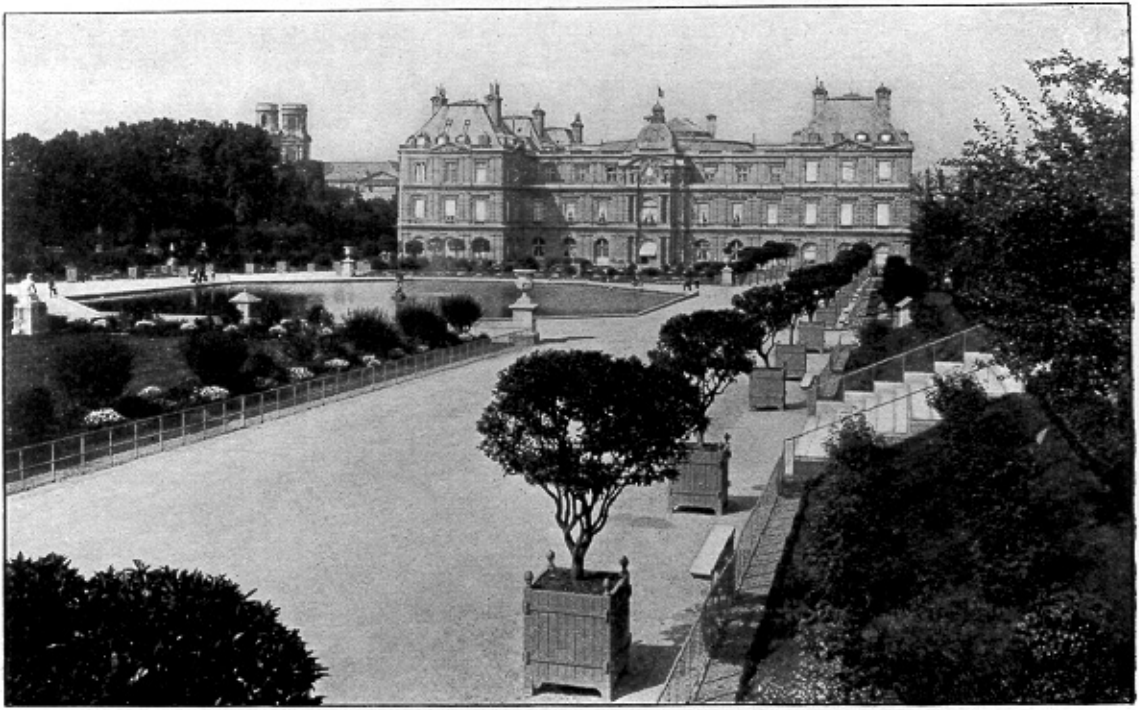
The two books of Chronicles are a history of the same times, and in general of the same persons, by another author; for it would be absurd to suppose that the same author wrote the history twice over. The first book of Chronicles (after giving the genealogy from

Adam to Saul, which takes up the first nine chapters) begins with the reign of David; and the last book ends, as in the last book of Kings, soon after the reign of Zedekiah, about 588 years before Christ. The last two verses of the last chapter bring the history 52 years more forward—that is, to 536. But these verses do not belong to the book, as I shall show when I come to speak of the book of Ezra.

The two books of Kings, besides the history of Saul, David, and Solomon, who reigned over *all* Israel, contain an abstract of the lives of seventeen kings and one queen who are styled kings of Judah, and of nineteen who are styled kings of Israel; for the Jewish nation, immediately on the death of Solomon, split into two parties, who chose separate kings, and who carried on most rancorous wars against each other.

Those two books are little more than a history of assassinations, treachery, and wars. The cruelties that the Jews had accustomed themselves to practice on the Canaanites, whose country they had savagely invaded under a pretended gift from God, they afterwards practiced as furiously on each other. Scarcely half their kings died a natural death, and, in some instances, whole families were destroyed to secure possession to the successor, who, after a few years, and sometimes only a few months, or less, shared the same fate. In the tenth chapter of the second book of Kings, an account is given of two baskets full of children's heads, seventy in number, being exposed at the entrance of the city; they were the children of Ahab, and were murdered by the orders of Jehu, whom Elisha, the pretended man of God, had anointed to be king over Israel on purpose to commit this bloody deed and assassinate his predecessor. And in the account of the reign of Menahem, one of the kings of Israel, who had murdered Shallum, who had reigned but one month, it is said (2 Kings xv. 16), that Menahem smote the city of Tiphsah, because they opened not the city to him, *and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up.*

Could we permit ourselves to suppose that the



THE LUXEMBOURG PRISON,

Paine was confined here from Dec. 29, 1793, to Nov. 6, 1794.

Almighty would distinguish any nation of people by the name of *his chosen people*, we must suppose that people to have been an example to all the rest of the world of the purest piety and humanity, and not such a nation of ruffians and cutthroats as the ancient Jews were—a people who, corrupted by and copying after such monsters and impostors as Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, and David, had distinguished themselves above all others on the face of the known earth for barbarity and wickedness. If we will not stubbornly shut our eyes and steel our hearts, it is impossible not to see, in spite of all that long-established superstition imposes upon the mind, that the flattering appellation of *his chosen people* is no other than a *lie* which the priests and leaders of the Jews had invented to cover the baseness of their own characters, and which Christian priests, sometimes as corrupt, and often as cruel, have professed to believe.

The two books of Chronicles are a repetition of the same crimes; but the history is broken in several places by the author leaving out the reign of some of their kings; and in this as well as in that of Kings, there is such a frequent transition from kings of Judah to kings of Israel, and from kings of Israel to kings of Judah, that the narrative is obscure in the reading. In the same book the history sometimes contradicts itself; for example, in 2 Kings i, 17, we are told, but in rather ambiguous terms, that after the death of Ahaziah, king of Israel, Jehoram, or Joram (who was of the house of Ahab), reigned in his stead in the *second year of* Jehoram, or Joram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; and in viii, 16, of the same book, it is said, "And in the *fifth year* of Joram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, began to reign;" that is, one chapter says Joram of Judah began to reign in the *second year* of Joram of Israel; and the other chapter says, that Joram of Israel began to reign in the *fifth year* of Joram of Judah.

Several of the most extraordinary matters related in

one history as having happened during the reign of such or such of their kings are not to be found in the other, in relating the reign of the same king; for example, the first two rival kings, after the death of Solomon, were Rehoboam and Jeroboam; and in 1 Kings xii and xiii, an account is given of Jeroboam making an offering of burnt incense; and that a man who is there called a man of God cried out against the altar (xiii, 2): "O altar, altar! thus saith the Lord: Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." Verse 4: "And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying: Lay hold on him; and his hand which he put out against him dried up, so that he could not pull it again to him."

One would think that such an extraordinary case as this (which is spoken of as a judgment), happening to the chief of one of the parties, and that at the first moment of the separation of the Israelites into two nations, would, if it had been true, have been recorded in both histories. But though men, in latter times, have believed *all that the prophets have said unto them*, it does not appear that these prophets or historians believed each other; they knew each other too well.

A long account also is given in Kings about Elijah. It runs through several chapters and concludes with telling (2 Kings ii, 11): "And it came to pass, as they [Elijah and Elisha] still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared *a chariot of fire and horses of fire*, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah *went up by a whirlwind into heaven*." Hum! this the author of Chronicles, miraculous as the story is, makes no mention of, though he mentions Elijah by name; neither does he say anything of the story related in the second chapter of the same book of Kings, of a parcel of children calling Elisha *bald head, bald head;* and that this

man of God (verse 24) "turned back, and looked upon them, *and cursed them in the name of the Lord;* and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." He also passes over in silence the story told (2 Kings xiii) that when they were burying a man in the sepulchre where Elisha had been buried, it happened that the dead man, as they were letting him down (verse 21) "touched the bones of Elisha, and he [the dead man] *revived, and stood upon his feet.*" The story does not tell us whether they buried the man notwithstanding he revived and stood upon his feet, or drew him up again. Upon all these stories the writer of Chronicles is as silent as any writer of the present day who did not choose to be accused of *lying,* or at least of romancing, would be about stories of the same kind.

But, however these two historians may differ from each other with respect to the tales related by either, they are silent alike with respect to those men styled prophets whose writings fill up the latter part of the Bible. Isaiah, who lived in the time of Hezekiah, is mentioned in Kings, and again in Chronicles, when these histories are speaking of that reign; but except in one or two instances at most, and those very slightly, none of the rest are so much as spoken of, or even their existence hinted at; though, according to the Bible chronology, they lived within the time those histories were written; and some of them long before. If those prophets, as they are called, were of such importance in their day as the compilers of the Bible and priests and commentators have since represented them to be, how can it be accounted for that not one of those histories should say anything about them?

The history in the books of Kings and of Chronicles is brought forward, as I have already said, to the year 588 before Christ; it will therefore be proper to examine which of these prophets lived before that period.

Here follows a table of all the prophets, with the times in which they lived before Christ, according to the chronology affixed to the first chapter of each of

the books of the prophets; and also of the number of years they lived before the books of Kings and Chronicles were written:

Table of the Prophets, with the time in which they lived before Christ, and also before the books of Kings and Chronicles were written:

Names	Years before Christ	Years before Kings and Chronicles.	Observations.
Isaiah	760	172	mentioned.
Jeremiah	629	41	mentioned only in the last [2] chap. of Chron.
Ezekiel	595	7	not mentioned.
Daniel	607	19	not mentioned.
Hosea	785	97	not mentioned.
Joel	800	212	not mentioned.
Amos	787	199	not mentioned.
Jonah	862	274	see the note.*
Micah	750	162	not mentioned.
Nahum	713	125	not mentioned.
Habakkuk	626	38	not mentioned.
Zephaniah	630	42	not mentioned.
Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Obadiah	after the year 588		

This table is either not very honorable for the Bible historians or not very honorable for the Bible prophets, and I leave to priests and commentators, who are very learned in little things, to settle the point of *etiquette* between the two, and to assign a reason why the authors of Kings and Chronicles have treated those prophets, whom in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON I have considered as poets, with as much degrading silence as

* In 2 Kings xiv, 25, the name of Jonah is mentioned on account of the restoration of a tract of land by Jeroboam; but nothing further is said of him, nor is any allusion made to the book of Jonah, nor to his expedition to Nineveh, nor to his encounter with the whale.

any historian of the present day would treat Peter Pindar.

I have one observation more to make on the book of Chronicles, after which I shall pass on to review the remaining books of the Bible.

In my observations on the book of Genesis I have quoted a passage from xxxvi, 31, which evidently refers to a time *after* that kings began to reign over the children of Israel; and I have shown that as this verse is verbatim the same as in 1 Chronicles i, 43, where it stands consistently with the order of history, which in Genesis it does not, the verse in Genesis and a great part of the thirty-sixth chapter have been taken from Chronicles; and that the book of Genesis, though it is placed first in the Bible, and ascribed to Moses, has been manufactured by some unknown person after the book of Chronicles was written, which was not until at least eight hundred and sixty years after the time of Moses.

The evidence I proceed by to substantiate this is regular and has in it but two stages. First, as I have already stated, that the passage in Genesis refers itself for *time* to Chronicles; secondly, that the book of Chronicles, to which this passage refers itself, was not *begun* to be written until at least eight hundred and sixty years after the time of Moses. To prove this, we have only to look into 1 Chronicles iii, 13, where the writer, in giving the genealogy of the descendants of David, mentions Zedekiah; and it was in the time of Zedekiah that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, 588 years before Christ, and consequently more than 860 years after Moses. Those who have superstitiously boasted of the antiquity of the Bible, and particularly of the books ascribed to Moses, have done it without examination, and without any other authority than that of one credulous man telling it to another; for, so far as historical and chronological evidence applies, the very first book in the Bible is not so ancient as the book of Homer by more than three hundred years, and is about the same age with Æsop's Fables.

I am not contending for the morality of Homer; on the contrary, I think it a book of false glory, tending to inspire immoral and mischievous notions of honor; and with respect to Æsop, though the moral is in general just, the fable is often cruel; and the cruelty of the fable does more injury to the heart, especially in a child, than the moral does good to the judgment.

Having now dismissed Kings and Chronicles, I come to the next in course—the book of Ezra.

As one proof, among others I shall produce to show the disorder in which this pretended word of God, the Bible, has been put together, and the uncertainty of who the authors were, we have only to look at the first three verses in Ezra, and the last two in 2 Chronicles; for by what kind of cutting and shuffling has it been that the first three verses in Ezra should be the last two verses in Chronicles, or that the last two in Chronicles should be the first three in Ezra? Either the authors did not know their own works, or the compilers did not know the authors.

Last Two Verses of 2 Chronicles.

22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem,

First Three Verses of Ezra.

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.

3 Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up *to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.*

—The last verse in Chronicles is broken abruptly, and ends in the middle of the phrase with the word *up*, without signifying to what place. This abrupt break, and the appearance of the same verses in different books, show, as I have already said, the disorder and ignorance in which the Bible has been put together, and that the compilers of it had no authority for what they were doing, nor we any authority for believing what they have done.*

The only thing that has any appearance of certainty in the book of Ezra is the time in which it was written, which was immediately after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, about 536 years before Christ. Ezra (who, according to the Jewish commen-

*I observed, as I passed along, several broken and senseless passages in the Bible, without thinking them of consequence enough to be introduced in the body of the work; such as that, 1 Samuel xiii, 1, where it is said, "Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men," etc. The first part of the verse, that Saul reigned one year, has no sense, since it does not tell us what Saul did, nor say anything of what happened at the end of that one year; and it is, besides, mere absurdity to say he reigned one year, when the very next phrase says he had reigned two; for if he had reigned two, it was impossible not to have reigned one.

Another instance occurs in Joshua v, where the writer tells us a story of an angel (for such the table of contents at the head of the chapter calls him) appearing unto Joshua; and the story ends abruptly and without any conclusion. The story is as follows (Verse 13): "And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Verse 14: "And he said, Nay; but as captain of the hosts of the

tators, is the same person as is called Esdras in the Apocrypha) was one of the persons who returned, and who, it is probable, wrote the account of that affair. Nehemiah, whose book follows next to Ezra, was another of the returned persons, and who, it is also probable, wrote the account of the same affair in the book that bears his name. But those accounts are nothing to us, nor to any other persons, unless it be to the Jews, as a part of the history of their nation; and there is just as much of the word of God in those books as there is in any of the histories of France, or Rapin's history of England, or the history of any other country.

But even in matters of historical record, neither of those writers is to be depended upon. In the second chapter of Ezra, the writer gives a list of the tribes and families, and of the precise number of souls of each that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem; and this enrollment of the persons so returned appears to have been one of the principal objects for writing the book; but in this there is an error that destroys the intention of the undertaking.

The writer begins his enrollment in the following manner (ii, 3): "The children of Parosh, two thousand

---

Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?" Verse 15: "And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." And what then? Nothing; for here the story ends, and the chapter too.

Either this story is broken off in the middle, or it is a story told by some Jewish humorist, in ridicule of Joshua's pretended mission from God, and the compilers of the Bible, not perceiving the design of the story, have told it as a serious matter. As a story of humor and ridicule, it has a great deal of point, for it pompously introduces an angel in the figure of a man, with a drawn sword in his hand, before whom Joshua falls on his face to the earth and worships (which is contrary to their second commandment); and then this most important embassy from heaven ends in telling Joshua to take off his shoe. It might as well have told him to pull up his breeches.

It is certain, however, that the Jews did not credit everything their leaders told them, as appears from the cavalier manner in which they speak of Moses when he was gone into the mount. "As for this Moses," say they, "we wot not what is become of him." Ex. xxxii, 1.

one hundred seventy and two." Verse 4: "The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two." And in this manner he proceeds through all the families; and in the sixty-fourth verse he makes a total, and says the whole congregation together was *forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore.*

But whoever will take the trouble of casting up the several particulars will find that the total is but 29,818; so that the error is 12,542.* What certainty then can there be in the Bible for anything?

Nehemiah, in like manner, gives a list of the returned families, and of the number of each family. He begins as in Ezra, by saying (vii, 8): "The children of Parosh, two thousand three hundred and seventy-two;" and so on through all the families. The list differs in several of the particulars from that of Ezra. In the sixty-sixth verse Nehemiah makes a total, and says, as Ezra had said, "The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore." But the particulars of this list make a total but of 31,089, so that the error here is 11,271. These writers may do well enough for Bible-makers, but not for anything where truth and exactness are necessary. The next book in course is the book of Esther. If Madam Esther thought it any honor to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus, or as a rival to Queen Vashti,

**Particulars of the families from the Second Chapter of Ezra.*

Chap. ii.		Bro't forw.	11577	Bro't forw.	15783	Bro't forw.	19444
Verse 3	2172	Verse 13	666	Verse 23	128	Verse 33	725
4	372	14	2056	24	42	34	345
5	775	15	454	25	743	35	3630
6	2812	16	98	26	621	36	973
7	1254	17	323	27	122	37	1052
8	945	18	112	28	223	38	1247
9	760	19	223	29	52	39	1017
10	642	20	95	30	156	40	74
11	623	21	123	31	1254	41	128
12	1222	22	56	32	320	42	139
						58	392
						60	652
	11,577		15,783		19,444	Total.....	29,818

who had refused to come to a drunken king, in the midst of a drunken company, to be made a show of (for the account says they had been drinking seven days, and were merry), let Esther and Mordecai look to that, it is no business of ours; at least, it is none of mine; besides which, the story has a great deal the appearance of being fabulous, and is also anonymous. I pass on to the book of Job.

The book of Job differs in character from all the books we have hitherto passed over. Treachery and murder make no part of this book; it is the meditations of a mind strongly impressed with the vicissitudes of human life, and by turns sinking under and struggling against the pressure. It is a highly wrought composition, between willing submission and involuntary discontent; and shows man, as he sometimes is, more disposed to be resigned than he is capable of being. Patience has but a small share in the character of the person of whom the book treats; on the contrary, his grief is often impetuous; but he still endeavors to keep a guard upon it, and seems determined, in the midst of accumulating ills, to impose upon himself the hard duty of contentment.

I have spoken in a respectful manner of the book of Job in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON, but without knowing at that time what I have learned since; which is, that from all the evidence that can be collected, the book of Job does not belong to the Bible.

I have seen the opinion of two Hebrew commentators, Abenezra and Spinoza, upon this subject; they both say that the book of Job carries no internal evidence of being a Hebrew book; that the genius of the composition, and the drama of the piece, are not Hebrew; that it has been translated from another language into Hebrew, and that the author of the book was a Gentile; that the character represented under the name of Satan (which is the first and only time this name is mentioned in the Bible) does not correspond to any Hebrew idea; and that the two convocations which the Deity is supposed to have made of those whom the poem calls sons

of God, and the familiarity which this supposed Satan is stated to have with the Deity, are in the same case.

It may also be observed that the book shows itself to be the production of a mind cultivated in science, which the Jews, so far from being famous for, were very ignorant of. The allusions to objects of natural philosophy are frequent and strong, and are of a different cast to anything in the books known to be Hebrew. The astronomical names, Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, are Greek and not Hebrew names, and it does not appear from anything that is to be found in the Bible that the Jews knew anything of astronomy, or that they studied it; they had no translation of those names into their own language, but adopted the names as they found them in the poem.

That the Jews did translate the literary productions of the Gentile nations into the Hebrew language, and mix them with their own, is not a matter of doubt; Proverbs xxxi, 1, is an evidence of this; it is there said, "The word of King Lemuel, the prophecy which his mother taught him." This verse stands as a preface to the proverbs that follow, and which are not the proverbs of Solomon, but of Lemuel; and this Lemuel was not one of the kings of Israel, nor of Judah, but of some other country, and consequently a Gentile. The Jews, however, have adopted his proverbs, and as they cannot give any account who the author of the book of Job was, nor how they came by the book; and as it differs in character from the Hebrew writings, and stands totally unconnected with every other book and chapter in the Bible, before it and after it, it has all the circumstantial evidence of being originally a book of the Gentiles.*

*The prayer known by the name of *Agur's Prayer*, in Proverbs xxx, immediately preceding the proverbs of Lemuel, and which is the only sensible, well-conceived, and well-expressed prayer in the Bible, has much the appearance of being a prayer taken from the Gentiles. The name of Agur occurs on no other occasion than this; and he is introduced, together with the prayer ascribed to him, in the same manner, and nearly in the same words, that Lemuel and his proverbs are introduced in the chapter that follows. The first verse

The Bible-makers, and those regulators of time, the Bible chronologists, appear to have been at a loss where to place and how to dispose of the book of Job; for it contains no one historical circumstance, nor allusion to any, that might serve to determine its place in the Bible. But it would not have answered the purpose of these men to have informed the world of their ignorance; and therefore they have affixed it to the era of 1520 years before Christ, which is during the time the Israelites were in Egypt, and for which they have just as much authority and no more than I should have for saying it was a thousand years before that period. The probability, however, is that it is older than any book in the Bible; and it is the only one that can be read without indignation or disgust.

We know nothing of what the ancient Gentile world (as it is called) was before the time of the Jews, whose practice has been to calumniate and blacken the character of all other nations; and it is from the Jewish accounts that we have learned to call them heathens. But, as far as we know to the contrary, they were a just and moral people, and not addicted, like the Jews, to cruelty and revenge, but of whose profession of faith we are unacquainted. It appears to have been their custom to personify both virtue and vice by statues and images, as is done nowadays both by statuary and by painting; but it does not follow from this that they worshiped them any more than we do. I pass on to the book of

Psalms, of which it is not necessary to make much observation. Some of them are moral, and others are

---

of the thirtieth chapter says, "The words of Agur, son of Jakeh, even the prophecy;" here the word prophecy is used with the same application it has in the following chapter of Lemuel, unconnected with anything of prediction. The prayer of Agur is in the eighth and ninth verses, "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither riches nor poverty, but feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." This has not any of the marks of being a Jewish prayer, for the Jews never prayed but when they were in trouble, and never for anything but victory, vengeance, or riches.

LUXEMBOURG GARDEN.

Small interior garden behind the Luxembourg. It was here that Paine used to walk with General O'Hara.

very revengeful; and the greater part relates to certain local circumstances of the Jewish nation at the time they were written, with which we have nothing to do. It is, however, an error or an imposition to call them the Psalms of David; they are a collection, as song-books are nowadays, from different song-writers, who lived at different times. The 137th Psalm could not have been written till more than 400 years after the time of David, because it is written in commemoration of an event, the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, which did not happen till that distance of time. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof; for there they that carried us away captive, required of us a song, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." As a man would say to an American, or to a Frenchman, or to an Englishman, sing us one of your American songs, or of your French songs, or of your English songs. This remark with respect to the time this Psalm was written, is of no other use than to show (among others already mentioned) the general imposition the world has been under with respect to the authors of the Bible. No regard has been paid to time, place, and circumstance; and the names of persons have been affixed to the several books which it was as impossible they should write as that a man should walk in procession at his own funeral.

The Book of Proverbs. These, like the Psalms, are a collection, and that from authors belonging to other nations than those of Jewish nation, as I have shown in the observations upon the book of Job; besides which, some of the proverbs ascribed to Solomon did not appear till two hundred and fifty years after the death of Solomon; for it is said in xxv, 1, "*These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.*" It was two hundred and fifty years from the time of Solomon to the time of Hezekiah. When a man is famous and his name is abroad, he is made the putative father of things he

never said or did; and this, most probably, has been the case with Solomon. It appears to have been the fashion of that day to make proverbs, as it is now to make jest-books, and father them upon those who never saw them.

The book of *Ecclesiastes*, or the *Preacher*, is also ascribed to Solomon, and that with much reason, if not with truth. It is written as the solitary reflections of a worn-out debauchee, such as Solomon was, who, looking back on scenes he can no longer enjoy, cries out, "All is vanity!" A great deal of the metaphor and of the sentiment is obscure, most probably by translation; but enough is left to show they were strongly pointed in the original.* From what is transmitted to us of the character of Solomon, he was witty, ostentatious, dissolute, and at last melancholy. He lived fast, and died, tired of the world, at the age of fifty-eight years.

Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines are worse than none; and, however it may carry with it the appearance of heightened enjoyment, it defeats all the felicity of affection by leaving it no point to fix upon; divided love is never happy. This was the case with Solomon; and if he could not, with all his pretensions to wisdom, discover it beforehand, he merited, unpitied, the mortification he afterwards endured. In this point of view, his preaching is unnecessary, because, to know the consequences, it is only necessary to know the cause. Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines would have stood in place of the whole book. It was needless after this to say that all was vanity and vexation of spirit; for it is impossible to derive happiness from the company of those whom we deprive of happiness.

To be happy in old age it is necessary that we accustom ourselves to objects that can accompany the mind all the way through life, and that we take the rest as good in their day. The mere man of pleasure is miser-

* "Those that look out of the window shall be darkened," is an obscure figure in translation for loss of sight.

able in old age; and the mere drudge in business is but little better; whereas, natural philosophy, mathematical and mechanical science, are a continual source of tranquil pleasure; and in spite of the gloomy dogmas of priests, and of superstition, the study of those things is the study of the true theology; it teaches man to know and to admire the Creator, for the principles of science are in the creation, and are unchangeable and of divine origin.

Those who knew Benjamin Franklin will recollect that his mind was ever young; his temper ever serene; science, that never grows gray, was always his mistress. He was never without an object; for when we cease to have an object, we become like an invalid in a hospital waiting for death.

Solomon's Song, amorous and foolish enough, but which wrinkled fanaticism has called divine. The compilers of the Bible have placed these songs after the book of Ecclesiastes; and the chronologists have affixed to them the era of 1014 years before Christ, at which time Solomon, according to the same chronology, was nineteen years of age, and was then forming his seraglio of wives and concubines. The Bible-makers and the chronologists should have managed this matter a little better, and either have said nothing about the time, or chosen a time less inconsistent with the supposed divinity of those songs; for Solomon was then in the honeymoon of one thousand debaucheries.

It should also have occurred to them that, as he wrote, if he did write, the book of Ecclesiastes long after these songs, and in which he exclaims that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, he included those songs in that description. This is more probable, because he says, or somebody for him (Ecclesiastes ii, 8, 11), "*I gat me men singers, and women singers* [most probably to sing those songs], *and musical instruments of all sorts;* and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit." The compilers, however, have done their work but by halves; for as they have given us the songs, they should have given us the tunes, that we might sing them.

The books called the books of the Prophets fill up all the remaining part of the Bible; they are sixteen in number, beginning with Isaiah and ending with Malachi, of which I have given a list in the observations on Chronicles. Of these sixteen prophets—all of whom, except the last four, lived within the time the books of Kings and Chronicles were written—two only, Isaiah and Jeremiah, are mentioned in the history of those books. I shall begin with those two, reserving what I have to say on the general character of the men called prophets to another part of the work.

Whoever will take the trouble of reading the book ascribed to Isaiah will find it one of the most wild and disorderly compositions ever put together; it has neither beginning, middle, nor end; and, except a short historical part, and a few sketches of history in two or three of the first chapters, is one continued incoherent, bombastical rant, full of extravagant metaphor without application, and destitute of meaning; a schoolboy would scarcely have been excusable for writing such stuff; it is (at least in translation) that kind of composition and false taste that is properly called prose run mad.

The historical part begins at chapter xxxvi, and is continued to the end of chapter xxxix. It relates some matters that are said to have passed during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah, at which time Isaiah lived. This fragment of history begins and ends abruptly; it has not the least connection with the chapter that precedes it, nor with that which follows it, nor with any other in the book. It is probable that Isaiah wrote this fragment himself, because he was an actor in the circumstances it treats of; but, except this part, there are scarcely two chapters that have any connection with each other; one is entitled, at the beginning of the first verse, the burden of Babylon; another, the burden of Moab; another, the burden of Damascus; another, the burden of Egypt; another, the burden of the Desert of the Sea; another, the burden of the Valley of Vision; as you would say, the story of the Knight of the Burn-

ing Mountain, the story of Cinderella or the Glassen Slippers, the story of the Sleeping Beauty in the Wood, etc., etc.

I have already shown, in the instance of the last two verses of 2 Chronicles, and the first three in Ezra, that the compilers of the Bible mixed and confounded the writings of different authors with each other, which alone, were there no other cause, is sufficient to destroy the authenticity of any compilation, because it is more than presumptive evidence that the compilers are ignorant who the authors were. A very glaring instance of this occurs in the book ascribed to Isaiah: the latter part of chapter xliv and the beginning of chapter xlv, so far from having been written by Isaiah, could only have been written by some person who lived at least a hundred and fifty years after Isaiah was dead.

These chapters are a compliment to *Cyrus*, who permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, as is stated in Ezra. The last of Isaiah xliv, and the beginning of xlv are in the following words: "That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid; thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee," etc.

What audacity of church and priestly ignorance it is to impose this book upon the world as the writing of Isaiah, when Isaiah, according to their own chronology, died soon after the death of Hezekiah, which was 698 years before Christ; and the decree of Cyrus in favor of the Jews returning to Jerusalem was, according to the same chronology, 536 years before Christ; which is a distance of time between the two of 162 years. I do not suppose that the compilers of the Bible made these books, but rather that they picked up some loose, anonymous essays, and put them together under the names of

such authors as best suited their purpose. They have encouraged the imposition, which is next to inventing it; for it was impossible but they must have observed it.

When we see the studied craft of the scripture-makers in making every part of this romantic book of schoolboy's eloquence bend to the monstrous idea of a son of God, begotten by a ghost on the body of a virgin, there is no imposition we are not justified in suspecting them of. Every phrase and circumstance are marked with the barbarous hand of superstitious torture, and forced into meanings it was impossible they could have. The head of every chapter, and the top of every page, are blazoned with the names of Christ and the Church, that the unwary reader might suck in the error before he began to read.

"*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son*" (Isaiah vii, 14), has been interpreted to mean the person called Jesus Christ and his mother, Mary, and has been echoed through Christendom for more than a thousand years; and such has been the rage of this opinion that scarcely a spot in it but has been stained with blood and marked with desolation in consequence of it. Though it is not my intention to enter into controversy on subjects of this kind, but to confine myself to show that the Bible is spurious, and thus, by taking away the foundation, to overthrow at once the whole structure of superstition raised thereon, I will, however, stop a moment to expose the fallacious application of this passage.

Whether Isaiah was playing a trick with Ahaz, king of Judah, to whom this passage is spoken, is no business of mine; I mean only to show the misapplication of the passage, and that it has no more reference to Christ and his mother than it has to me and my mother. The story is simply this:

The king of Syria and the king of Israel (I have already mentioned that the Jews were split into two nations, one of which was called Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem, and the other Israel) made war jointly against Ahaz, king of Judah, and marched their

armies towards Jerusalem. Ahaz and his people became alarmed, and the account says (Isa. vii, 2), "His heart was moved, and the hearts of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind."

In this situation of things, Isaiah addresses himself to Ahaz, and assures him in the *name of the Lord* (the cant phrase of all the prophets) that these two kings should not succeed against him; and, to satisfy Ahaz that this should be the case, tells him to ask a sign. This, the account says, Ahaz declined doing; giving as a reason that he would not tempt the Lord; upon which Isaiah, who is the speaker, says (verse 14), "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son;*" and the sixteenth verse says, "*And before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good,* the land which thou abhorrest [or dreadest, meaning Syria and the kingdom of Israel] shall be forsaken of both her kings." Here then was the sign, and the time limited for the completion of the assurance or promise; namely, before this child should know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Isaiah having committed himself thus far, it became necessary to him, in order to avoid the imputation of being a false prophet, and the consequence thereof, to take measures to make this sign appear. It certainly was not a difficult thing, in any time of the world, to find a girl with child, or to make her so; and perhaps Isaiah knew of one beforehand; for I do not suppose that the prophets of that day were any more to be trusted than the priests of this; be that, however, as it may, he says in the next chapter (verse 2), "And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zachariah the son of Jeberechiah, and *I went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son.*"

Here then is the whole story, foolish as it is, of this child and this virgin; and it is upon the barefaced perversion of this story that the book of Matthew, and the impudence and sordid interests of priests in later times, have founded a theory which they call the gospel,

and have applied this story to signify the person they call Jesus Christ; begotten, they say, by a ghost, whom they call holy, on the body of a woman, engaged in marriage, and afterwards married, whom they call a virgin, seven hundred years after this foolish story was told; a theory which, speaking for myself, I hesitate not to believe and to say, is as fabulous and as false as God is true.*

But to show the imposition and falsehood of Isaiah we have only to attend to the sequel of this story, which, though it is passed over in silence in the book of Isaiah, is related in 2 Chronicles xxviii, and which is that instead of these two kings failing in their attempt against Ahaz, king of Judah, as Isaiah had pretended to foretell in the name of the Lord, they succeeded; Ahaz was defeated and destroyed; a hundred and twenty thousand of his people were slaughtered; Jerusalem was plundered, and two hundred thousand women and sons and daughters carried into captivity. Thus much for this lying prophet and impostor, Isaiah, and the book of falsehoods that bears his name. I pass on to the book of

Jeremiah. This prophet, as he is called, lived in the time that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, in the reign of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah; and the suspicion was strong against him that he was a traitor in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar. Everything relating to Jeremiah shows him to have been a man of an equivocal character; in his metaphor of the potter and the clay (chapter xviii) he guards his prognostications in such a crafty manner as always to leave himself a door to escape by in case the event should be contrary to what he had predicted.

In the seventh and eighth verses of that chapter, he makes the Almighty to say, "At what instant I shall

---

* In Isaiah vii, 14, it is said that the child should be called Immanuel; but this name was not given to either of the children, otherwise than as a character which the word signifies. That of the prophetess was called Maher-shalal-hash-baz, and that of Mary was called Jesus.

speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them." Here is a proviso against one side of the case; now for the other side.

Verses 9 and 10, "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice: then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them." Here is a proviso against the other side; and, according to this plan of prophesying, a prophet could never be wrong, however mistaken the Almighty might be. This sort of absurd subterfuge, and this manner of speaking of the Almighty, as one would speak of a man, is consistent with nothing but the stupidity of the Bible.

As to the authenticity of the book, it is only necessary to read it in order to decide positively that, though some passages recorded therein may have been spoken by Jeremiah, he is not the author of the book. The historical parts, if they can be called by that name, are in the most confused condition; the same events are several times repeated, and that in a manner different, and sometimes in contradiction to each other; and this disorder runs even to the last chapter, where the history, upon which the greater part of the book has been employed, begins anew, and ends abruptly. The book has all the appearance of being a medley of unconnected anecdotes, respecting persons and things of that time, collected together in the same rude manner as if the various and contradictory accounts that are to be found in a bundle of newspapers respecting persons and things of the present day, were put together without date, order, or explanation. I will give two or three examples of this kind.

It appears from the account of chapter xxxvii, that the army of Nebuchadnezzar, which is called the army of the Chaldeans, had besieged Jerusalem some time; and on their hearing that the army of Pharaoh of Egypt

was marching against them they raised the siege, and retreated for a time. It may here be proper to mention, in order to understand this confused history, that Nebuchadnezzar had besieged and taken Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoiakim, the predecessor of Zedekiah; and that it was Nebuchadnezzar who had made Zedekiah king, or rather viceroy; and that this second siege, of which the book of Jeremiah treats, was in consequence of the revolt of Zedekiah against Nebuchadnezzar. This will in some measure account for the suspicion that affixes itself to Jeremiah of being a traitor, and in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar, whom Jeremiah calls (xliii, 10) the servant of God.

Chapter xxxvii (11–13) says, "And it came to pass, that, when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem, for fear of Pharaoh's army, then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem, to go [as this account states] into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people; and when he was in the gate of Benjamin a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans; then said Jeremiah, It is false, I fall not away to the Chaldeans." Jeremiah, being thus stopped and accused, was, after being examined, committed to prison on suspicion of being a traitor, where he remained, as is stated in the last verse of this chapter.

But the next chapter gives an account of the imprisonment of Jeremiah, which has no connection with this account, but ascribes his imprisonment to another circumstance, and for which we must go back to the twenty-first chapter. It is there stated (verse 1) that Zedekiah sent Pashur, the son of Malchiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah the priest, to Jeremiah to inquire of him concerning Nebuchadnezzar, whose army was then before Jerusalem; and Jeremiah said to them (verse 8), "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death; he that abideth in the city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth out

and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey."

This interview and conference breaks off abruptly at the end of chapter xxi, 10; and such is the disorder of this book that we have to pass over sixteen chapters, upon various subjects, in order to come at the continuation and event of this conference; and this brings us to the first verse of chapter xxxviii, as I have just mentioned.

Chapter xxxviii opens with saying, "Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malachiah [here are more persons mentioned than in chapter xxi], heard the words that Jeremiah spoke unto the people, saying, *Thus saith the Lord, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live* [which are the words of the conference]; therefore [say they to Zedekiah] we beseech thee, let this man be put to death, *for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them; for this man seeketh not the welfare of the people, but the hurt:*" and at the sixth verse it is said, "Then they took Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah."

These two accounts are different and contradictory. The one ascribes his imprisonment to his attempt to escape out of the city; the other to his preaching and prophesying in the city; the one to his being seized by the guard at the gate; the other to his being accused before Zedekiah by the conferees.*

---

* I observe two chapters (xvi and xvii) in the first book of Samuel that contradict each other with respect to David and the manner he became acquainted with Saul; as chapters xxxvii and xxxviii of the book of Jeremiah contradict each other with respect to the cause of Jeremiah's imprisonment.

In 1 Samuel xvi it is said that an evil spirit of God troubled Saul, and that his servants advised him (as a remedy) "to seek out a man who was a cunning player upon the harp." And Saul said (verse 17),

In the next chapter (xxxix) we have another instance of the disordered state of this book: for notwithstanding the siege of the city by Nebuchadnezzar has been the subject of several of the preceding chapters, particularly xxxvii and xxxviii, chapter xxxix begins as if not a word had been said upon the subject, and as if the reader was still to be informed of every particular respecting it; for it begins with saying, "*In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and all his army, against Jerusalem, and besieged it,*" etc., etc.

But the instance in the last chapter (lii) is still more glaring; for though the story has been told over and over again, this chapter still supposes the reader not to know anything of it, for it begins by saying (1–4), "*Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And it came to pass in the ninth year*

"Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me." Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him. Whereupon Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son. And [verse 21] David came to Saul, and stood before him, and he loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer; and . . . when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul [verse 23] David took his harp, and played with his hand, so Saul was refreshed, and was well."

But the next chapter (xvii) gives an account, all different to this, of the manner that Saul and David became acquainted. Here it is ascribed to David's encounter with Goliah, when David was sent by his father to carry provision to his brethren in the camp. In the fifty-fifth verse of this chapter it is said, "And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine [Goliah] he said to Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said, Inquire thou whose son the stripling is And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand; and Saul said unto him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." These two accounts belie each other, because each of them supposes Saul and David not to have known each other before. This book, the Bible, is too ridiculous for criticism.

PRINTERY OF BARROIS, SENIOR.

The house (formerly Barrois') in which the "Age of Reason" was first printed in English. Formerly 19 Quai des Augustins, now 5 Quai Voltaire. (This picture was taken in 1899. The figure in the foreground is Dr. Moncure D. Conway, the biographer of Paine.)

of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it," etc.

It is not possible that any one man, and more particulary Jeremiah, could have been the writer of this book. The errors are such as could not have been committed by any person sitting down to compose a work. Were I, or any other man, to write in such a disordered manner, nobody would read what was written; and everybody would suppose that the writer was in a state of insanity. The only way, therefore, to account for the disorder is that the book is a medley of detached unauthenticated anecdotes, put together by some stupid book-maker under the name of Jeremiah, because many of them refer to him and to the circumstances of the times he lived in.

Of the duplicity and of the false predictions of Jeremiah, I shall mention two instances, and then proceed to review the remainder of the Bible.

It appears from chapter xxxviii that when Jeremiah was in prison, Zedekiah sent for him, and at this interview, which was private, Jeremiah pressed it strongly on Zedekiah to surrender himself to the enemy. "*If,*" says he (verse 17), "*thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live,*" etc. Zedekiah was apprehensive that what passed at this conference should be known; and he said to Jeremiah (verse 25), "If the princes [meaning those of Judah] hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king; hide it not from us and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee; then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king; that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him, and *he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded.*" Thus this man of God, as he is called, could tell a lie, or very strongly prevaricate,

when he supposed it would answer his purpose; for certainly he did not go to Zedekiah to make his supplication, neither did he make it; he went because he was sent for, and he employed that opportunity to advise Zedekiah to surrender himself to Nebuchadnezzar.

In chapter xxxiv, 2–5, is a prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah, in these words: "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak to thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. *Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah: Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not die by the sword; but thou shalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odors for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah Lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord.*"

Now, instead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the king of Babylon, and speaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, with the burning of odors, as at the funeral of his fathers (as Jeremiah had declared the Lord himself had pronounced), the reverse, according to chapter lii, was the case; it is there said (verse 10), "And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death." What then can we say of these prophets but that they are impostors and liars?

As for Jeremiah, he experienced none of those evils. He was taken into favor by Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him in charge to the captain of the guard (xxxix, 12). "Take him [said he] and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." Jeremiah joined himself afterwards to Nebuchadnezzar, and went about prophesying for him against the Egyptians, who had marched to the relief of Jerusalem

while it was besieged. Thus much for another of the lying prophets, and the book that bears his name.

I have been the more particular in treating of the books ascribed to Isaiah and Jeremiah, because those two are spoken of in the books of Kings and Chronicles, whilst the others are not. The remainder of the books called prophets I shall not trouble myself much about, but take them collectively into the observations I shall offer on the character of the men styled prophets.

In the former part of THE AGE OF REASON I have said that the word prophet was the Bible word for poet, and that the flights and metaphors of the Jewish poets have been foolishly erected into what are now called prophecies. I am sufficiently justified in this opinion, not only because the books called the prophecies are written in poetical language, but because there is no word in the Bible, except it be the word prophet, that describes what we mean by a poet. I have also said that the word signifies a performer upon musical instruments, of which I have given some instances; such as that of a company of prophets prophesying with psalteries, with tabarets, with pipes, with harps, etc., and that Saul prophesied with them (1 Samuel x, 5). It appears from this passage, and from other parts in the book of Samuel, that the word prophet was confined to signify poetry and music; for the person who was supposed to have a visionary insight into concealed things, was not a prophet, but a *seer* * (1 Samuel ix, 9); and it was not till after the word *seer* went out of use (which most probably was when Saul banished those he called wizards) that the profession of the seer, or the art of seeing, became incorporated into the word prophet.

According to the *modern* meaning of the word prophet and prophesying, it signifies foretelling events to a great distance of time; and it became necessary to the inventors of the gospel to give it this latitude of mean-

* I know not what is the Hebrew word that corresponds to the word seer in English; but I observe it is translated into French by Le Voyant, from the verb *voir*, to *see*, and which means the person who *sees*, or the seer.

ing, in order to apply or to stretch what they call the prophecies of the Old Testament to the times of the New; but according to the Old Testament, the prophesying of the seer, and afterwards of the prophets, so far as the meaning of the word seer was incorporated into that of prophet, had reference only to things of the time then passing, or very closely connected with it; such as the event of a battle they were going to engage in, or of a journey, or of any enterprise they were going to undertake, or of any circumstance then pending, or of any difficulty they were then in; all of which had immediate reference to themselves (as in the case already mentioned of Ahaz and Isaiah with respect to the expression, *Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son*), and not to any distant future time. It was that kind of prophesying that corresponds to what we call fortune-telling; such as casting nativities, predicting riches, fortunate or unfortunate marriages, conjuring for lost goods, etc.; and it is the fraud of the Christian church, not that of the Jews; and the ignorance and the superstition of modern, not that of ancient times, that elevated those poetical, musical, conjuring, dreaming, strolling gentry into the rank they have since had.

But, besides this general character of all the prophets, they had also a particular character. They were in parties, and they prophesied for or against, according to the party they were with; as the poetical and political writers of the present day write in defense of the party they associate with against the other.

After the Jews were divided into two nations, that of Judah and that of Israel, each party had its prophets, who abused and accused each other of being false prophets, lying prophets, impostors, etc.

The prophets of the party of Judah prophesied against the prophets of the party of Israel, and those of the party of Israel against those of Judah. This party prophesying showed itself immediately on the separation under the first two rival kings, Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The prophet that cursed or prophesied against the altar that Jeroboam had built in Bethel was

of the party of Judah, where Rehoboam was king; and he was waylaid, on his return home, by a prophet of the party of Israel, who said unto him (1 Kings xiii, 14), "Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? and he said, I am." Then the prophet of the party of Israel said unto him (verse 18), "I am a prophet also, as thou art [signifying of Judah]; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee unto thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. *But he lied unto him.*" The event, however, according to the story, is that the prophet of Judah never got back to Judah, for he was found dead on the road, by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel, who, no doubt, was called a true prophet by his own party, and the prophet of Judah a lying prophet.

In 2 Kings iii, a story is related of prophesying, or conjuring, that shows, in several particulars, the character of a prophet. Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and Joram king of Israel, had for a while ceased their party animosity, and entered into an alliance; and these two, together with the king of Edom, engaged in a war against the king of Moab. After uniting and marching their armies, the story says, they were in great distress for water, upon which Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may enquire of the Lord by him? and one of the servants of the king of Israel said, Here is Elisha." (Elisha was of the party of Judah.) "And Jehoshaphat [the king of Judah] said, The word of the Lord is with him." The story then says that these three kings went down to Elisha; and when Elisha (who, as I have said, was a Judahmite prophet) saw the king of Israel, he said unto him, "*What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father and to the prophets of thy mother.* And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay, for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab" (meaning because of the distress they were in for water); upon which Elisha said, "As the Lord of hosts liveth before whom I stand, surely were it not that I regard the presence of Jehosha-

phat king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." Here is all the venom and vulgarity of a party prophet. We have now to see the performance, or manner, of prophesying.

Verse 15: "Bring me," said Elisha, "a minstrel; and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him." Here is the farce of the conjuror. Now for the prophecy: "And Elisha said [singing most probably to the tune he was playing], Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches;" which was just telling them what every countryman could have told them without either fiddle or farce, that the way to get water was to dig for it.

But as every conjuror is not famous alike for the same thing, so neither were those prophets; for though all of them, at least those I have spoken of, were famous for lying, some of them excelled in cursing. Elisha, whom I have just mentioned, was a chief in this branch of prophesying; it was he that cursed the forty-two children, in the name of the Lord, whom the two she-bears came and devoured. We are to suppose that those children were of the party of Israel; but as those who will curse will lie, there is just as much credit to be given to this story of Elisha's two she-bears as there is to that of the Dragon of Wantley, of whom it is said:

> Poor children three devoured he,
> That could not with him grapple;
> And at one sup he ate them up,
> As a man would eat an apple.

There was another description of men called prophets, that amused themselves with dreams and visions; but whether by night or by day, we know not. These, if they were not quite harmless, were but little mischievous. Of this class are:

Ezekiel and Daniel; and the first question upon those books, as upon all the others, is, Are they genuine? That is, were they written by Ezekiel and Daniel?

Of this there is no proof; but so far as my own opinion goes, I am more inclined to believe they were than

that they were not. My reasons for this opinion are as follows:

First, because those books do not contain internal evidence to prove they were not written by Ezekiel and Daniel, as the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, etc., etc., prove that they were not written by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, etc.

Secondly, because they were not written till after the Babylonish captivity began; and there is good reason to believe that not any book in the Bible was written before that period; at least it is proveable from the books themselves, as I have already shown, that they were not written till after the commencement of the Jewish monarchy.

Thirdly, because the manner in which the books ascribed to Ezekiel and Daniel are written agrees with the condition these men were in at the time of writing them.

Had the numerous commentators and priests who have foolishly employed or wasted their time in pretending to expound and unriddle those books been carried into captivity, as Ezekiel and Daniel were, it would greatly have improved their intellects in comprehending the reason for this mode of writing, and have saved them the trouble of racking their invention, as they have done, to no purpose; for they would have found that themselves would be obliged to write whatever they had to write, respecting their own affairs, or those of their friends, or of their country, in a concealed manner, as those men have done.

These two books differ from all the rest; for it is only these that are filled with accounts of dreams and visions; and this difference arose from the situation the writers were in as prisoners of war, or prisoners of state, in a foreign country, which obliged them to convey even the most trifling information to each other, and all their political projects or opinions, in obscure and metaphorical terms. They pretend to have dreamed dreams, and seen visions, because it was unsafe for them to speak facts or plain language. We ought,

however, to suppose that the persons to whom they wrote understood what they meant, and that it was not intended anybody else should. But these busy commentators and priests have been puzzling their wits to find out what it was not intended they should know, and with which they have nothing to do.

Ezekiel and Daniel were carried prisoners to Babylon, under the first captivity, in the time of Jehoiakim, nine years before the second captivity, in the time of Zedekiah. The Jews were then still numerous, and had considerable force at Jerusalem; and as it is natural to suppose that men in the situation of Ezekiel and Daniel would be meditating the recovery of their country and their own deliverance, it is reasonable to suppose that the accounts of dreams and visions with which these books are filled are no other than a disguised mode of correspondence to facilitate those objects; it served them as a cipher or secret alphabet. If they are not this, they are tales, reveries, and nonsense; or, at least, a fanciful way of wearing off the wearisomeness of captivity; but the presumption is, they are the former.

Ezekiel begins his book by speaking of a vision of cherubims and of a wheel within a wheel, which he says he saw by the river Chebar in the land of his captivity. Is it not reasonable to suppose that by the cherubims he meant the temple at Jerusulem, where they had figures of cherubims? and by a wheel within a wheel (which, as a figure, has always been understood to signify political contrivance) the project or means of recovering Jerusalem? In the latter part of this book he supposes himself transported to Jerusalem, and into the temple; and he refers back to the vision on the river Chebar, and says (xliii, 3) that this last vision was like the vision on the river Chebar, which indicates that those pretended dreams and visions had for their object the recovery of Jerusalem, and nothing further.

As to the romantic interpretations and applications, wild as the dreams and visions they undertake to explain, which commentators and priests have made of those books, that of converting them into things which

they call prophecies, and making them bend to times and circumstances as far remote even as the present day, it shows the fraud or the extreme folly to which credulity or priestcraft can go.

Scarcely anything can be more absurd than to suppose that men situated as Ezekiel and Daniel were, whose country was overrun and in the possession of the enemy, all their friends and relations in captivity abroad, or in slavery at home, or massacred, or in continual danger of it; scarcely anything, I say, can be more absurd than to suppose that such men should find nothing to do but that of employing their time and their thoughts about what was to happen to other nations a thousand or two thousand years after they were dead; at the same time, nothing is more natural than that they should meditate the recovery of Jerusalem and their own deliverance; and that this was the sole object of all the obscure and apparently frantic writings contained in those books.

In this sense, the mode of writing used in those two books being forced by necessity, and not adopted by choice, is not irrational; but, if we are to view the books as prophecies, they are false. In Ezekiel xxix, 11, speaking of Egypt, it is said, "No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it; neither shall it be inhabited forty years." This is what never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are. I here close this part of the subject.

In the former part of THE AGE OF REASON I have spoken of Jonah, and of the story of him and the whale —a fit story for ridicule if it was written to be believed; or for laughter if it was intended to try what credulity could swallow; for, if it could swallow Jonah and the whale, it could swallow anything.

But as is already shown in the observations on the book of Job and of Proverbs, it is not always certain which of the books in the Bible are originally Hebrew, or only translations from books of the Gentiles into Hebrew; and as the book of Jonah, so far from treating

of the affairs of the Jews, says nothing upon that subject, but treats altogether of the Gentiles, it is more probable that it is a book of the Gentiles than of the Jews; and that it has been written as a fable, to expose the nonsense and satirize the vicious and malignant character of a Bible prophet or a predicting priest.

Jonah is represented, first, as a disobedient prophet, running away from his mission, and taking shelter aboard a vessel of the Gentiles, bound from Joppa to Tarshish; as if he ignorantly supposed, by such a paltry contrivance, he could hide himself where God could not find him. The vessel is overtaken by a storm at sea; and the mariners, all of whom are Gentiles, believing it to be a judgment on account of some one on board who had committed a crime, agreed to cast lots to discover the offender; and the lot fell upon Jonah. But, before this, they had cast all their wares and merchandise overboard to lighten the vessel, while Jonah, like a stupid fellow, was fast asleep in the hold.

After the lot had designated Jonah to be the offender, they questioned him to know who and what he was, and he told them *he was a Hebrew;* and the story implies that he confessed himself to be guilty. But these Gentiles, instead of sacrificing him at once, without pity or mercy, as a company of Bible prophets or priests would have done by a Gentile in the same case, and as it is related Samuel had done by Agag, and Moses by the women and children, they endeavored to save him, though at the risk of their own lives; for the account says: "Nevertheless [that is, though Jonah was a Jew and a foreigner, and the cause of all their misfortunes, and the loss of their cargo] the men rowed hard to bring it [the boat] to land, but they could not, for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them." Still, however, they were unwilling to put the fate of the lot into execution; and they cried (says the account) unto the Lord, saying: "We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee." Meaning thereby that they did

not presume to judge Jonah guilty, since he might be innocent; but that they considered the lot that had fallen upon him as a decree of God, or as it *pleased God*. The address of this prayer shows that the Gentiles worshiped one *Supreme Being*, and that they were not idolaters, as the Jews represented them to be. But the storm still continuing, and the danger increasing, they put the fate of the lot into execution, and cast Jonah into the sea, where, according to the story, a great fish swallowed him up whole and alive.

We have now to consider Jonah securely housed from the storm in the fish's belly. Here we are told that he prayed; but the prayer is a made-up prayer, taken from various parts of the Psalms, without connection or consistency, and adapted to the distress, but not at all to the condition, that Jonah was in. It is such a prayer as a Gentile, who might know something of the Psalms, could copy out for him. This circumstance alone, were there no other, is sufficient to indicate that the whole is a made-up story. The prayer, however, is supposed to have answered the purpose, and the story goes on (taking off at the same time the cant language of a Bible prophet), saying: "*The Lord spake unto the fish*, and it vomited out Jonah on dry land."

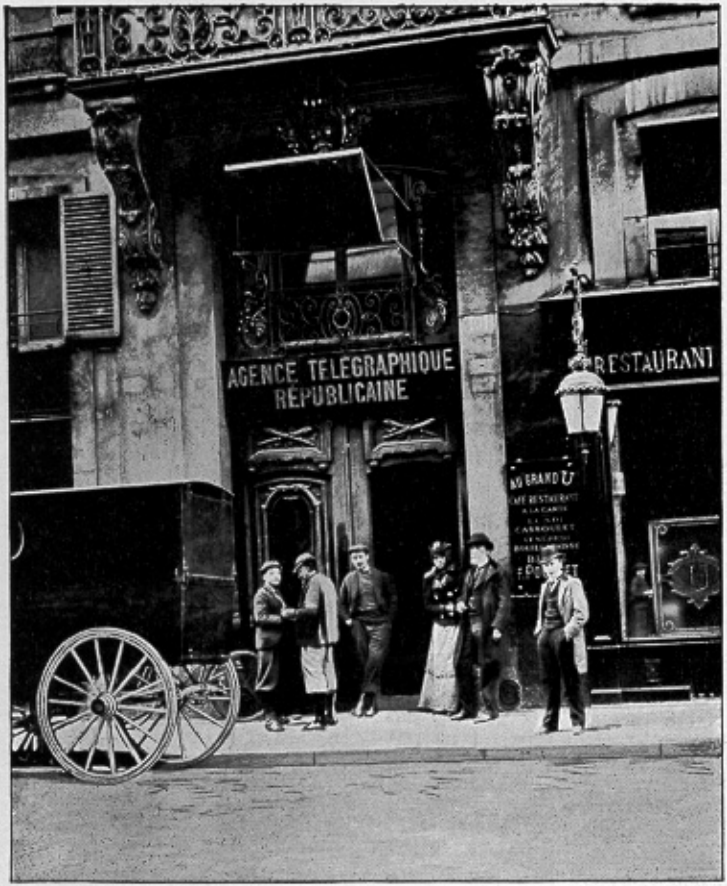
Jonah then received a second mission to Nineveh, with which he sets out; and we have now to consider him as a preacher. The distress he is represented to have suffered, the remembrance of his own disobedience as the cause of it, and the miraculous escape he is supposed to have had, were sufficient, one would conceive, to have impressed him with sympathy and benevolence in the execution of his mission; but, instead of this, he enters the city with denunciation and malediction in his mouth, crying: "*Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.*"

We have now to consider this supposed missionary in the last act of his mission; and here it is that the malevolent spirit of a Bible-prophet, or of a predicting priest, appears in all that blackness of character that men ascribe to the being they call the devil.

Having published his predictions, he withdrew, says the story, to the east side of the city. But for what? Not to contemplate, in retirement, the mercy of his creator to himself or to others, but to wait, with malignant impatience, the destruction of Nineveh. It came to pass, however, as the story relates, that the Ninevites reformed, and that God, according to the Bible phrase, repented him of the evil he had said he would do unto them, and did it not. This, saith the first verse of the last chapter, *displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.* His obdurate heart would rather that all Nineveh should be destroyed, and every soul, young and old perish in its ruins than that his prediction should not be fulfilled. To express the character of a prophet still more, a gourd is made to grow up in the night, that promises him an agreeable shelter from the heat of the sun, in the place to which he is retired; and the next morning it dies.

Here the rage of the prophet becomes excessive, and he is ready to destroy himself. "It is better [said he] for me to die than to live." This brings on a supposed expostulation between the Almighty and the prophet, in which the former says, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And Jonah said, I do well to be angry even unto death. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it to grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?"

Here is both the winding up of the satire, and the moral of the fable. As a satire, it strikes against the character of all the Bible prophets, and against all the indiscriminate judgments upon men, women, and children with which this lying book, the Bible, is crowded; such as Noah's flood, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the extirpation of the Canaanites, even to suckling infants and women with child, because the same reflection, that there "are more than sixscore



JAMES MONROE'S RESIDENCE.

No. 101 Rue de Richelieu. Printing office of Le Temps, and publishing office of the "Gironde," Republican Telegraphic Agency. In 1794 this was the "Maison des Etrangers," in which the United States minister, James Monroe, resided. To this house, Nov. 6, 1794, he brought Paine (from prison). Here (1795) Paine wrote his "Dissertations on First Principles of Government," his address to the Convention on the "Constitution of 1795," and his famous letter to Washington. Here also he wrote Part II. of the "Age of Reason."

thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand," meaning young children, applies to all their cases. It satirizes also the supposed partiality of the creator for one nation more than for another.

As a moral, it preaches against the malevolent spirit of prediction; for as certainly as a man predicts ill, he becomes inclined to wish it. The pride of having his judgment right hardens his heart, till at last he beholds with satisfaction, or sees with disappointment, the accomplishment or the failure of his predictions. This book ends with the same kind of strong and well-directed point against prophets, prophecies, and indiscriminate judgments, as the chapter that Benjamin Franklin made for the Bible, about Abraham and the stranger, ends against the intolerant spirit of religious persecutions. Thus much for the book of Jonah.

Of the poetical parts of the Bible, that are called prophecies, I have spoken in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON, and already in this, where I have said that the word *prophet* is the Bible word for *poet*, and that the flights and metaphors of those poets, many of which have become obscure by the lapse of time and the change of circumstances, have been ridiculously erected into things called prophecies, and applied to purposes the writers never thought of. When a priest quotes any of those passages, he unriddles it agreeably to his own views, and imposes that explanation upon his congregation as the meaning of the writer. The "whore of Babylon" has been the common whore of all the priests, and each has accused the other of keeping the strumpet; so well do they agree in their explanations.

There now remain only a few books, which they call books of the lesser prophets; and as I have already shown that the greater are impostors, it would be cowardice to disturb the repose of the little ones. Let them sleep, then, in the arms of their nurses, the priests, and both be forgotten together.

I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would

go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees. Here they lie; and the priests, if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow. I pass on to the books of the New Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE New Testament, they tell us, is founded upon the prophecies of the Old; if so, it must follow the fate of its foundation.

As it is nothing extraordinary that a woman should be with child before she is married, and that the son she might bring forth should be executed, even unjustly, I see no reason for not believing that such a woman as Mary, and such a man as Joseph, and Jesus, existed; their mere existence is a matter of indifference about which there is no ground either to believe or to disbelieve, and which comes under the common head of, *It may be so; and what then?* The probability, however, is, that there were such persons, or at least such as resembled them in part of the circumstances, because almost all romantic stories have been suggested by some actual circumstance; as the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, not a word of which is true, were suggested by the case of Alexander Selkirk.

It is not, then, the existence or non-existence of the persons that I trouble myself about; it is the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon, against which I contend. The story, taking it as it is told, is blasphemously obscene. It gives an account of a young woman engaged to be married, and while under this engagement, she is, to speak plain language, debauched by a ghost, under the impious pretense (Luke i, 35) that "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." Notwithstanding which, Joseph afterwards marries her, cohabits

with her as his wife, and in his turn rivals the ghost. This is putting the story into intelligible language, and, when told in this manner, there is not a priest but must be ashamed to own it.*

Obscenity in matters of faith, however wrapped up, is always a token of fable and imposture; for it is necessary to our serious belief in God that we do not connect it with stories that run, as this does, into ludicrous interpretations. This story is, upon the face of it, the same kind of story as that of Jupiter and Leda, or Jupiter and Europa, or any of the amorous adventures of Jupiter; and shows, as is already stated in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON, that the Christian faith is built upon the heathen mythology.

As the historical parts of the New Testament, so far as concerns Jesus Christ, are confined to a very short space of time—less than two years—and all within the same country, and nearly the same spot, the discordance of time, place, and circumstance, which detects the fallacy of the books of the Old Testament, and proves them to be impositions, cannot be expected to be found here in the same abundance. The New Testament, compared with the Old, is like a farce of one act, in which there is not room for very numerous violations of the unities. There are, however, some glaring contradictions, which, exclusive of the fallacy of the pretended prophecies, are sufficient to show the story of Jesus Christ to be false.

I lay it down as a position which cannot be controverted, first, that the *agreement* of all the parts of a story does not prove that story to be true, because the parts may agree, and the whole may be false; secondly, that the *disagreement* of the parts of a story proves *the whole cannot be true.* The agreement does not prove truth, but the disagreement proves falsehood positively.

The history of Jesus Christ is contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

---

*Mary, the supposed virgin mother of Jesus, had several other children, sons and daughters. See Matthew xiii, 55, 56.

The first chapter of Matthew begins with giving a genealogy of Jesus Christ; and in the third chapter of Luke there is also given a genealogy of Jesus Christ. Did these two agree, it would not prove the genealogy to be true, because it might, nevertheless, be a fabrication; but as they contradict each other in every particular, it proves falsehood absolutely. If Matthew speaks truth, Luke speaks falsehood; and if Luke speaks truth, Matthew speaks falsehood; and as there is no authority for believing one more than the other, there is no authority for believing either; and if they cannot be believed even in the first thing they say, and set out to prove, they are not entitled to be believed in anything they say afterwards. Truth is a uniform thing; and as to inspiration and revelation, were we to admit it, it is impossible to suppose it can be contradictory. Either then the men called apostles were impostors, or the books ascribed to them have been written by other persons, and fathered upon them, as is the case with the Old Testament.

The book of Matthew gives (i, 6) a genealogy by name from David, up through Joseph, the husband of Mary, to Christ; and makes there to be *twenty-eight* generations. The book of Luke gives also a genealogy by name from Christ, through Joseph, the husband of Mary, down to David, and makes there to be *forty-three* generations; besides which there are only the two names of David and Joseph that are alike in the two lists. I here insert both genealogical lists, and for the sake of perspicuity and comparison, have placed them both in the same direction—that is, from Joseph down to David.

Genealogy, according to Matthew.	*Genealogy, according to Luke.*
Christ	Christ
2 Joseph	2 Joseph
3 Jacob	3 Heli
4 Matthan	4 Matthat
5 Eleazar	5 Levi
6 Eliud	6 Melchi

Genealogy, according to Matthew.	*Genealogy, according to Luke.*
7 Achim	7 Janna
8 Sadoc	8 Joseph
9 Azor	9 Mattathias
10 Eliakim	10 Amos
11 Abiud	11 Naum
12 Zorobabel	12 Esli
13 Salathiel	13 Nagge
14 Jechonias	14 Maath
15 Josias	15 Mattathias
16 Amon	16 Semei
17 Manasses	17 Joseph
18 Ezekias	18 Juda
19 Achaz	19 Joanna
20 Joatham	20 Rhesa
21 Ozias	21 Zorobabel
22 Joram	22 Salathiel
23 Josaphat	23 Neri
24 Asa	24 Melchi
25 Abia	25 Addi
26 Roboam	26 Cosam
27 Solomon	27 Elmodam
28 David *	28 Er
	29 Jose
	30 Eliezer
	31 Jorim
	32 Matthat
	33 Levi
	34 Simeon
	35 Juda
	36 Joseph
	37 Jonan
	38 Eliakim
	39 Melea
	40 Menan
	41 Mattatha
	42 Nathan
	43 David

* From the birth of David to the birth of Christ is upwards of 1080 years, and as the lifetime of Christ is not included, there are but 27

Now if these men, Matthew and Luke, set out with a falsehood between them (as these two accounts show they do) in the very commencement of their history of Jesus Christ, and of who, and of what he was, what authority (as I have before asked) is there left for believing the strange things they tell us afterwards? If they cannot be believed in their account of his natural genealogy, how are we to believe them when they tell us he was the son of God, begotten by a ghost, and that an angel announced this in secret to his mother? If they lied in one genealogy, why are we to believe them in the other? If his natural genealogy be manufactured, which it certainly is, why are we not to suppose that his celestial genealogy is manufactured also, and that the whole is fabulous? Can any man of serious reflection hazard his future happiness upon the belief of a story naturally impossible, repugnant to every idea of decency, and related by persons already detected of falsehood? Is it not more safe that we stop ourselves at the plain, pure, and unmixed belief of one God, which is deism, than that we commit ourselves on an ocean of improbable, irrational, indecent, and contradictory tales?

The first question, however, upon the books of the New Testament, as upon those of the Old, is, Are they genuine? Were they written by the persons to whom they are ascribed? for it is upon this ground only that the strange things related therein have been credited. Upon this point there is no *direct proof for or against;* and all that this state of a case proves is *doubtfulness;* and doubtfulness is the opposite of belief. The state,

---

full generations. To find, therefore, the average age of each person mentioned in the first list, at the time his first son was born, it is only necessary to divide 1080 by 27, which gives 40 years for each person. As the lifetime of man was then but of the same extent it is now, it is an absurdity to suppose that 27 following generations should all be old bachelors before they married; and the more so, when we are told that Solomon, the next in succession to David, had a house full of wives and mistresses before he was twenty-one years of age. So far from this genealogy being a solemn truth, it is not even a reasonable lie. The list of Luke gives about twenty-six years for the average age, and this is too much.

therefore, that the books are in, proves against themselves, as far as this kind of proof can go.

But exclusive of this the presumption is that the books called the Evangelists, and ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and that they are impositions. The disordered state of the history in these four books, the silence of one book upon matters related in the others, and the disagreement that is to be found among them, implies that they are the production of some unconnected individuals, many years after the things they pretend to relate, each of whom made his own legend; and not the writings of men living intimately together, as the men called apostles are supposed to have done; in fine, that they have been manufactured, as the books of the Old Testament have been, by other persons than those whose names they bear.

The story of the angel announcing what the church calls the *immaculate conception* is not so much as mentioned in the books ascribed to Mark and John; and is differently related in Matthew and Luke. The former says the angel appeared to Joseph; the latter says it was to Mary; but either Joseph or Mary was the worst evidence that could have been thought of; for it was others that should have testified *for them*, and not they for themselves. Were any girl that is now with child to say, and even to swear it, that she was gotten with child by a ghost, and that an angel told her so, would she be believed? Certainly she would not. Why then are we to believe the same thing of another girl whom we never saw, told by nobody knows who, nor when, nor where? How strange and inconsistent is it that the same circumstance that would weaken the belief even of a probable story, should be given as a motive for believing this one, that has upon the face of it every token of absolute impossibility and imposture.

The story of Herod destroying all the children under two years old belongs altogether to the book of Matthew; not one of the rest mentions anything about it. Had such a circumstance been true, the universality of

it must have made it known to all the writers; and the thing would have been too striking to have been omitted by any. This writer tells us that Jesus escaped this slaughter because Joseph and Mary were warned by an angel to flee with him into Egypt; but he forgot to make provision for John, who was then under two years of age. John, however, who stayed behind, fared as well as Jesus, who fled; and, therefore, the story circumstantially belies itself.

Not any two of these writers agree in reciting, *exactly in the same words*, the written inscription, short as it is, which they tell us was put over Christ when he was crucified; and besides this, Mark says he was crucified at the third hour (nine in the morning); and John says it was the sixth hour (twelve, at noon).*

The inscription is thus stated in those books:

Matthew—This is Jesus the king of the Jews.

Mark—The king of the Jews.

Luke—This is the king of the Jews.

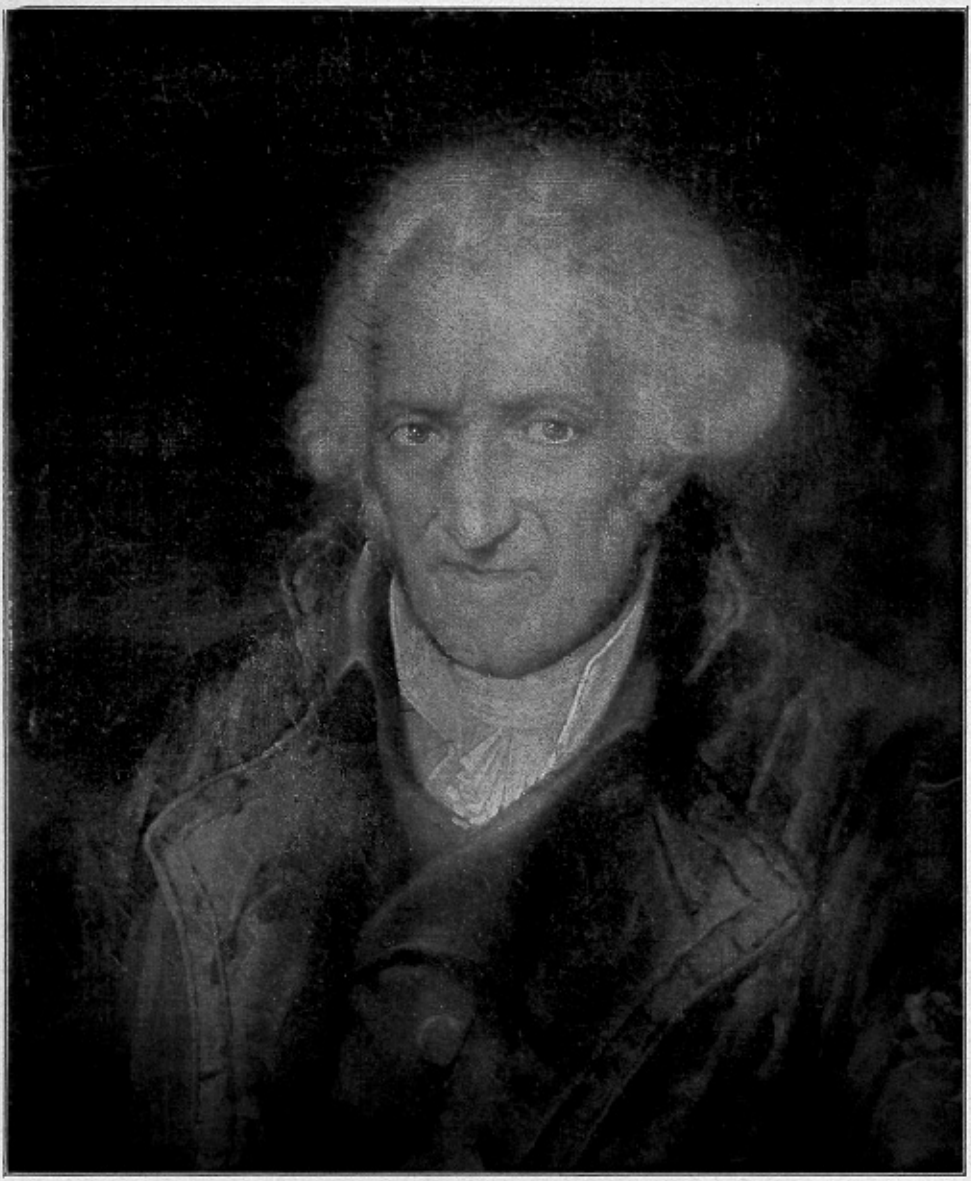
John—Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews.

We may infer from these circumstances, trivial as they are, that those writers, whoever they were, and in whatever time they lived, were not present at the scene. The only one of the men called apostles who appears to have been near the spot was Peter, and when he was accused of being one of Jesus' followers, it is said (Matthew xxvi, 74), "Then began he [Peter] to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man!" yet we are now called to believe the same Peter, convicted, by their own account, of perjury. For what reason, or on what authority, should we do this?

The accounts that are given of the circumstances that they tell us attended the crucifixion are differently related in those four books.

The book ascribed to Matthew says there was darkness over all the land from the sixth hour unto the

*According to John, the sentence was not passed till about the sixth hour (noon), and consequently the execution could not be till the afternoon; but Mark says expressly that he was crucified at the third hour (nine in the morning). (Mark xv, 25; John xix, 14.)



TRUMBULL'S PAINE.

Said to be the Last Portrait Made of the Author Hero.

ninth hour; that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; that there was an earthquake; that the rocks rent; that the graves opened; that the bodies of many of the saints that slept arose and came out of their graves after the resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many. Such is the account which this dashing writer of the book of Matthew gives, but in which he is not supported by the writers of the other books.

The writer of the book ascribed to Mark, in detailing the circumstances of the crucifixion, makes no mention of any earthquake, nor of the rocks rending, nor of the graves opening, nor of the dead men walking out. The writer of the book of Luke is silent also upon the same points. And as to the writer of the book of John, though he details all the circumstances of the crucifixion down to the burial of Christ, he says nothing about either the darkness, the veil of the temple, the earthquake, the rocks, the graves, nor the dead men.

Now if it had been true that those things had happened, and if the writers of these books had lived at the time they did happen, and had been the persons they are said to be, namely, the four men called apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, it was not possible for them, as true historians, even without the aid of inspiration, not to have recorded them. The things, supposing them to have been facts, were of too much notoriety not to have been known, and of too much importance not to have been told. All these supposed apostles must have been witnesses of the earthquake, if there had been any; for it was not possible for them to have been absent from it; the opening of the graves and resurrection of the dead men, and their walking about the city, is of still greater importance than the earthquake. An earthquake is always possible, and natural, and proves nothing; but this opening of the graves is supernatural, and directly in point to their doctrine, their cause, and their apostleship. Had it been true, it would have filled up whole chapters of those books, and been the chosen theme and general chorus of all the

writers; but instead of this, little and trivial things, and mere prattling conversation of "He said this" and "She said that" are often tediously detailed, while this most important of all, had it been true, is passed off in a slovenly manner by a single dash of the pen, and that by one writer only, and not so much as hinted at by the rest.

It is an easy thing to tell a lie, but it is difficult to support the lie after it is told. The writer of the book of Matthew should have told us who the saints were that came to life again, and went into the city, and what became of them afterwards, and who it was that saw them; for he is not hardy enough to say that he saw them himself; whether they came out naked, and all in natural buff, he-saints and she-saints; or whether they came full dressed, and where they got their dresses; whether they went to their former habitations, and reclaimed their wives, their husbands, and their property, and how they were received; whether they entered ejectments for the recovery of their possessions, or brought actions of *crim. con.* against the rival interlopers; whether they remained on earth and followed their former occupation of preaching or working; or whether they died again, or went back to their graves alive, and buried themselves.

Strange indeed that an army of saints should return to life, and nobody know who they were, nor who it was that saw them, and that not a word more should be said upon the subject, nor these saints have anything to tell us! Had it been the prophets who (as we are told) had formerly prophesied of these things, *they* must have had a *great deal* to say. They could have told us everything, and we should have had posthumous prophecies, with notes and commentaries upon the first, a little better at least than we have now. Had it been Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua, and Samuel, and David, not an unconverted Jew had remained in all Jerusalem. Had it been John the Baptist, and the saints of the times then present, everybody would have known them, and they would have out-preached and out-famed all

the other apostles. But, instead of this, these saints are made to pop up, like Jonah's gourd in the night, for no purpose at all but to wither in the morning. Thus much for this part of the story.

The tale of the resurrection follows that of the crucifixion; and in this as well as in that, the writers, whoever they were, disagree so much as to make it evident that none of them were there.

The book of Matthew states that when Christ was put in the sepulchre, the Jews applied to Pilate for a watch or a guard to be placed over the sepulchre, to prevent the body being stolen by the disciples; and that, in consequence of this request, the sepulchre *was made sure, sealing the stone* that covered the mouth, and setting a watch. But the other books say nothing about this application, nor about the sealing, nor the guard, nor the watch; and according to their accounts, there were none. Matthew, however, follows up this part of the story of the guard or the watch with a second part, that I shall notice in the conclusion, as it serves to detect the fallacy of those books.

The book of Matthew continues its account, and says (xxviii, 1) that at the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. Mark says it was sun-rising, and John says it was dark. Luke says it was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women, that came to the sepulchre; and John states that Mary Magdalene came alone. So well do they agree about their first evidence! They all, however, appear to have known most about Mary Magdalene; she was a woman of large acquaintance, and it was not an ill conjecture that she might be upon the stroll.

The book of Matthew goes on to say (verse 2), "And behold, there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it." But the other books say nothing about any earthquake, nor

about the angel rolling back the stone and sitting upon it; and, according to their accounts, there was no angel sitting there. Mark says the angel was *within* the sepulchre, sitting on the right side. Luke says there were two, and they were both standing up; and John says they were both sitting down, one at the head and the other at the feet.

Matthew says that the angel that was sitting upon the stone on the outside of the sepulchre told the two Marys that Christ was risen, and that the women went away quickly. Mark says that the women, upon seeing the stone rolled away, and wondering at it, went into the sepulchre, and that it was the angel that was sitting within on the right side that told them so. Luke says it was the two angels that were standing up; and John says it was Jesus Christ himself that told it to Mary Magdalene; and that she did not go into the sepulchre, but only stooped down and looked in.

Now, if the writers of these four books had gone into a court of justice to prove an alibi (for it is of the nature of an alibi that is here attempted to be proved, namely, the absence of a dead body by supernatural means), and had they given their evidence in the same contradictory manner as it is here given, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropped for perjury, and would have justly deserved it. Yet this is the evidence, and these are the books that have been imposed upon the world as being given by divine inspiration, and as the unchangeable word of God.

The writer of the book of Matthew, after giving this account, relates a story that is not to be found in any of the other books, and which is the same I have just before alluded to.

"Now," says he (that is, after the conversation the women had had with the angel sitting upon the stone), "behold, some of the watch [meaning the watch that he had said had been placed over the sepulchre] came into the city, and showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done; and when they were assembled with the elders and had taken counsel, they gave large

PRINTING HOUSE OF "LA CITOYENNE GORSAS."

No. 25 Rue des Petits Champs. Hotel Colbert, formerly the printing and publishing house of Gorsas, the editor who was guillotined. The widow Gorsas continued the business and printed the "Age of Reason" (Part II.) in French.

money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, that his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we *slept;* and if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying [that his disciples stole him away] is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

The expression, *until this day*, is an evidence that the book ascribed to Matthew was not written by Matthew, and that it has been manufactured long after the times and things of which it pretends to treat; for the expression implies a great length of intervening time. It would be inconsistent in us to speak in this manner of anything happening in our own time. To give, therefore, intelligible meaning to the expression, we must suppose a lapse of some generations at least, for this manner of speaking carries the mind back to ancient time.

The absurdity also of the story is worth noticing; for it shows the writer of the book of Matthew to have been an exceeding weak and foolish man. He tells a story that contradicts itself in point of possibility; for though the guard, if there were any, might be made to say that the body was taken away while they were *asleep*, and to give that as a reason for their not having prevented it, that same sleep must also have prevented their knowing how and by whom it was done; and yet they are made to say that it was the disciples who did it. Were a man to tender his evidence of something that he should say was done, and of the manner of doing it, and of the person who did it while he was asleep and could know nothing of the matter, such evidence could not be received; it will do well enough for Testament evidence, but not for anything where truth is concerned.

I now come to that part of the evidence in those books that respects the pretended appearance of Christ after his pretended resurrection.

The writer of the book of Matthew relates that the angel that was sitting on the stone at the mouth of the

sepulchre said to the two Marys (xxviii, 7), "*Behold, he* [Christ] *goeth before you into Galilee, there shall ye see him; lo, I have told you.*" And the same writer, at the next two verses [9, 10], makes Christ himself to speak to the same purpose to these women immediately after the angel had told it to them, and that they ran quickly to tell it to the disciples; and at the sixteenth verse it is said, "*Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee,* into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them; and, when they saw him, they worshiped him."

But the writer of the book of John tells us a story very different to this; for he says (xx, 19), "*Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week* [that is, the same day that Christ is said to have risen], *when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst.*"

According to Matthew, the eleven were marching to Galilee to meet Jesus in a mountain, by his own appointment, at the very time when, according to John, they were assembled in another place, and that not by appointment, but in secret, for fear of the Jews.

The writer of the book of Luke (xxiv, 13, 33, 36) contradicts that of Matthew more pointedly than John does; for he says expressly that the meeting was in *Jerusalem* the evening of the same day that he (Christ) rose, and that the *eleven* were *there.*

Now, it is not possible, unless we admit these supposed disciples the right of wilful lying, that the writer of these books could be any of the eleven persons called disciples; for if, according to Matthew, the eleven went into Galilee to meet Jesus in a mountain by his own appointment, on the same day that he is said to have risen, Luke and John must have been two of that eleven; yet the writer of Luke says expressly, and John implies as much, that the meeting was that same day, in a house in Jerusalem; and, on the other hand, if, according to Luke and John, the *eleven* were assembled in a house in Jerusalem, Matthew must have been one of that eleven; yet Matthew says the meeting was in a

mountain in Galilee, and consequently the evidence given in those books destroys each other.

The writer of the book of Mark says nothing about any meeting in Galilee; but he says (xvi, 12) that Christ, after his resurrection, appeared in another form to two of them, as they walked into the country, and that these two told it to the residue, who would not believe them. Luke also tells a story, in which he keeps Christ employed the whole of the day of this pretended resurrection until the evening, and which totally invalidates the account of going to the mountain in Galilee. He says that two of them, without saying which two, went that same day to a village called Emmaus, threescore furlongs (seven miles and a half) from Jerusalem, and that Christ, in disguise, went with them, and stayed with them unto the evening, and supped with them, and then vanished out of their sight, and reappeared that same evening at the meeting of the eleven in Jerusalem.

This is the contradictory manner in which the evidence of this pretended reappearance of Christ is stated; the only point in which the writers agree is the skulking privacy of that reappearance; for whether it was in the recess of a mountain in Galilee, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, it was still skulking. To what cause, then, are we to assign this skulking? On the one hand, it is directly repugnant to the supposed or pretended end—that of convincing the world that Christ was risen; and, on the other hand, to have asserted the publicity of it would have exposed the writers of those books to public detection, and, therefore, they have been under the necessity of making it a private affair.

As to the account of Christ being seen by more than five hundred at once, it is Paul only who says it, and not the five hundred who say it for themselves. It is, therefore, the testimony of but one man, and that too of a man who did not, according to the same account, believe a word of the matter himself at the time it is said to have happened. His evidence, supposing him to have been the writer of Corinthians xv, where this

account is given, is like that of a man who comes into a court of justice to swear that what he had sworn before was false. A man may often see reason, and he has, too, always the right of changing his opinion; but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.

I now come to the last scene—that of the ascension into heaven. Here all fear of the Jews, and of everything else, must necessarily have been out of the question; it was that which, if true, was to seal the whole, and upon which the reality of the future mission of the disciples was to rest for proof. Words, whether declarations or promises, that passed in private, either in the recess of a mountain in Galilee, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, even supposing them to have been spoken, could not be evidence in public; it was therefore necessary that this last scene should preclude the possibility of denial and dispute; and that it should be, as I have stated in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON, as public and as visible as the sun at noonday; at least it ought to have been as public as the crucifixion is reported to have been. But to come to the point.

In the first place, the writer of the book of Matthew does not say a syllable about it; neither does the writer of the book of John. This being the case, is it possible to suppose that those writers, who affect to be even minute in other matters, would have been silent upon this had it been true? The writer of the book of Mark passes it off in a careless, slovenly manner, with a single dash of the pen, as if he was tired of romancing, or ashamed of the story. So also does the writer of Luke. And even between these two, there is not an apparent agreement as to the place where this final parting is said to have been.

The book of Mark says that Christ appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, alluding to the meeting of the eleven at Jerusalem; he then states the conversation that he says passed at that meeting; and immediately after says (as a schoolboy would finish a dull story), "*So then*, after the Lord had spoken unto them,

he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." But the writer of Luke says that the ascension was from Bethany; that *he* (Christ) *led them out as far as Bethany, and was parted from them there, and was carried up into heaven.* So also was Mahomet; and, as to Moses, the *apostle* Jude says (verse 9), *that Michael and the devil disputed about his body.* While we believe such fables as these, or either of them, we believe unworthily of the Almighty.

I have now gone through the examination of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and when it is considered that the whole space of time from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension is but a few days—apparently not more than three or four—and that all the circumstances are reported to have happened nearly about the same spot, Jerusalem; it is, I believe, almost impossible to find, in any story upon record, so many and such glaring absurdities, contradictions, and falsehoods as are in those books. They are more numerous and striking than I had any expectation of finding when I began this examination, and far more so than I had any idea of when I wrote the former part of THE AGE OF REASON. I had then neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, nor could I procure any. My own situation, even as to existence, was becoming every day more precarious; and as I was willing to leave something behind me upon the subject, I was obliged to be quick and concise. The quotations I then made were from memory only, but they are correct; and the opinions I have advanced in that work are the effect of the most clear and long-established conviction that the Bible and the Testament are impositions upon the world; that the fall of man, the account of Jesus Christ being the Son of God, and of his dying to appease the wrath of God, and of salvation by that strange means, are all fabulous inventions, dishonorable to the wisdom and power of the Almighty; that the only true religion is Deism, by which I then meant, and now mean, the belief of one God, and an imitation of his moral character, or the practice of what are called

moral virtues; and that it was upon this only (so far as religion is concerned) that I rested all my hopes of happiness hereafter. So say I now—and so hēlp me God.

But to return to the subject. Though it is impossible, at this distance of time, to ascertain as a fact who were the writers of those four books (and this alone is sufficient to hold them in doubt, and where we doubt we do not believe), it is not difficult to ascertain negatively that they were not written by the persons to whom they are ascribed. The contradictions in those books demonstrate two things:

First, that the writers cannot have been eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of the matters they relate, or they would have related them without those contradictions; and, consequently, that the books have not been written by the persons called apostles, who are supposed to have been witnesses of this kind.

Secondly, that the writers, whoever they were, have not acted in concerted imposition, but each writer separately and individually for himself, and without the knowledge of the other.

The same evidence that applies to prove the one, applies equally to prove both cases; that is, that the books were not written by the men called apostles, and also that they are not a concerted imposition. As to inspiration, it is altogether out of the question; we may as well attempt to unite truth and falsehood as inspiration and contradiction.

If four men are eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses to a scene, they will, without any concert between them, agree as to time and place when and where that scene happened. Their individual knowledge of the *thing*, each one knowing it for himself, renders concert totally unnecessary; the one will not say it was in a mountain in the country, and the other at a house in town; the one will not say it was at sunrise, and the other that it was dark. For in whatever place it was, and whatever time it was, they know it equally alike.

And, on the other hand, if four men concert a story, they will make their separate relations of that story

agree, and corroborate with each other to support the whole. *That* concert supplies the want of fact in the one case, as the knowledge of the fact supersedes, in the other case, the necessity of a concert. The same contradictions, therefore, that prove there has been no concert, prove also that the reporters had no knowledge of the fact (or rather of that which they relate as a fact), and detect also the falsehood of their reports. Those books, therefore, have neither been written by the men called apostles nor by impostors in concert. How then have they been written?

I am not one of those who are fond of believing there is much of that which is called willful lying, or lying originally, except in the case of men setting up to be prophets, as in the Old Testament; for prophesying is lying professionally. In almost all other cases, it is not difficult to discover the progress by which even simple supposition, with the aid of credulity, will, in time, grow into a lie, and at last be told as a fact; and whenever we can find a charitable reason for a thing of this kind, we ought not to indulge a severe one.

The story of Jesus Christ appearing after he was dead is the story of an apparition, such as timid imaginations can always create in vision, and credulity believe. Stories of this kind had been told of the assassination of Julius Cæsar, not many years before, and they generally have their origin in violent deaths, or in the execution of innocent persons. In cases of this kind compassion lends its aid and benevolently stretches the story. It goes on a little and a little further, till it becomes *a most certain truth.* Once start a ghost, and credulity fills up the history of its life and assigns the cause of its appearance! one tells it one way, another another way, till there are as many stories about the ghost and about the proprietor of the ghost, as there are about Jesus Christ in these four books.

The story of the appearance of Jesus Christ is told with that strange mixture of the natural and impossible that distinguishes legendary tale from fact. He is represented as suddenly coming in and going out when the

doors are shut, and of vanishing out of sight and appearing again, as one would conceive of an unsubstantial vision; then again he is hungry, sits down to meat, and eats his supper. But as those who tell stories of this kind never provide for all the cases, so it is here; they have told us that when he arose he left his grave clothes behind him; but they have forgotten to provide other clothes for him to appear in afterwards, or tell to us what he did with them when he ascended; whether he stripped all off, or went up clothes and all. In the case of Elijah, they have been careful enough to make him throw down his mantle; how it happened not to be burnt in the chariot of fire, they also have not told us. But as imagination supplies all deficiencies of this kind, we may suppose, if we please, that it was made of salamander's wool.

Those who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history, may suppose that the book called the New Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ, as they suppose that the books ascribed to Moses have existed ever since the time of Moses. But the fact is historically otherwise; there was no such book as the New Testament till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived.

At what time the books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John began to appear is altogether a matter of uncertainty. There is not the least shadow of evidence of who the persons were that wrote them, nor at what time they were written; and they might as well have been called by the names of any of the other supposed apostles as by the names they are now called. The originals are not in the possession of any Christian church existing, any more than the two tables of stone written on, as they pretend, by the finger of God, upon Mount Sinai, and given to Moses, are in the possession of the Jews. And even if they were, there is no possibility of proving the handwriting in the case. At the time those four books were written there was no printing, and consequently there could be no publication

otherwise than by written copies, which any man might make or alter at pleasure, and call them originals. Can we suppose it is consistent with the wisdom of the Almighty to commit himself and his will to man upon such precarious means as these, or that it is consistent we should pin our faith upon such uncertainties? We cannot make nor alter, nor even imitate, so much as one blade of grass that he has made, and yet we can make or alter *words of God* as easily as words of man.*

About three hundred and fifty years after the time that Christ is said to have lived, several writings of the kind I am speaking of were scattered in the hands of divers individuals; and as the church had begun to form itself into a hierarchy, or church government with temporal powers, it set itself about collecting them into a code, as we now see them, called "The New Testament." They decided by vote, as I have before said in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON, which of those writings out of the collection they had made, should be the *word of God*, and which should not. The Rabbins of the Jews had decided, by vote, upon the books of the Bible before.

As the object of the church, as is the case in all national establishments of churches, was power and revenue, and terror the means it used, it is consistent to suppose that the most miraculous and wonderful of the writings they had collected stood the best chance of being voted. And as to the authenticity of the books,

---

* The former part of THE AGE OF REASON has not been published two years, and there is already an expression in it that is not mine. The expression is: "*The book of Luke was carried by a majority of one voice only.*" It may be true, but it is not I that have said it. Some person who might know of that circumstance has added it in a note at the bottom of the page of some of the editions printed either in England or in America; and the printers, after that, have erected it into the body of the work, and made me the author of it. If this has happened within such a short space of time, notwithstanding the aid of printing, which prevents the alteration of copies individually; what may not have happened in a much greater length of time, when there was no printing, and when any man who could write could make a written copy and call it an original by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John?

the *vote stands in the place of it;* for it can be traced no higher.

Disputes, however, ran high among the people then calling themselves Christians; not only as to points of doctrine, but as to the authenticity of the books. In the contest between the persons called St. Augustine and Fauste, about the year 400, the latter says, "The books called the Evangelists have been composed long after the times of the apostles, by some obscure men, who, fearing that the world would not give credit to their relation of matters of which they could not be informed, have published them under the names of the apostles; and which are so full of sottishness and discordant relations that there is neither agreement nor connection between them."

And in another place, addressing himself to the advocates of those books as being the word of God, he says, "It is thus that your predecessors have inserted in the scriptures of our Lord many things which, though they carry his name, agree not with his doctrines. This is not surprising, *since that we have often proved* that these things have not been written by himself, nor by his apostles, but that for the greatest part they are founded upon *tales*, upon *vague reports*, and put together by I know not what, half Jews, with but little agreement between them; and which they have nevertheless published under the names of the apostles of our Lord, and have thus attributed to them their own *errors and their lies.*"*

The reader will see by those extracts that the authenticity of the books of the New Testament was denied, and the books treated as tales, forgeries, and lies at the time they were voted to be the word of God. But the interest of the church, with the assistance of the fagot, bore down the opposition, and at last suppressed all investigation. Miracles followed upon miracles, if we will believe them, and men were taught to say they believed whether they believed or not. But (by way of

* I have taken these two extracts from Boulanger's Life of Paul, written in French; Boulanger has quoted them from the writings of Augustine against Fauste, to which he refers.

throwing in a thought) the French Revolution has excommunicated the church from the power of working miracles; she has not been able, with the assistance of all her saints, to work *one* miracle since the revolution began; and as she never stood in greater need than now, we may, without the aid of divination, conclude that all her former miracles are tricks and lies.*

When we consider the lapse of more than three hundred years intervening between the time that Christ is said to have lived and the time the New Testament was formed into a book, we must see, even without the assistance of historical evidence, the exceeding uncertainty there is of its authenticity. The authenticity of the book of Homer, so far as regards the authorship, is much better established than that of the New Testament, though Homer is a thousand years the most ancient. It was only an exceeding good poet that could have written the book of Homer, and, therefore, few men only could have attempted it; and a man capable

* Boulanger, in his Life of Paul, has collected from the ecclesiastical histories, and the writings of the fathers, as they are called, several matters which show the opinion that prevailed among the different sects of Christians at the time the Testament, as we now see it, was voted to be the word of God. The following extracts are from the second chapter of that work:

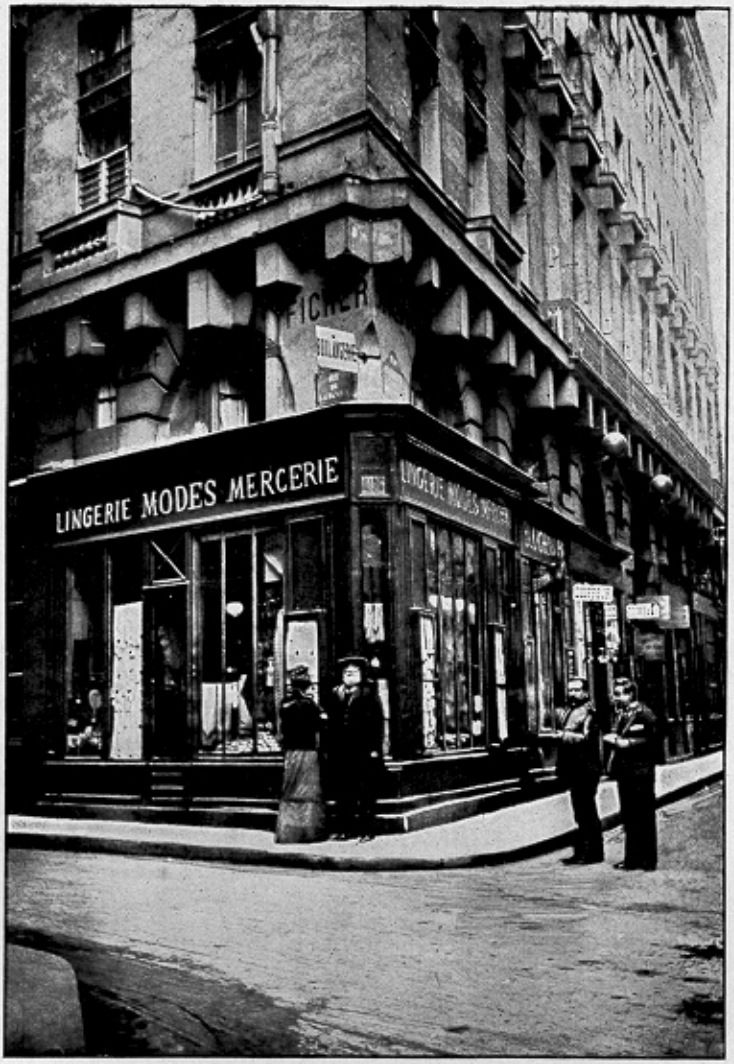
"The Marcionists (a Christian sect) asserted that the Evangelists were filled with falsities. The Manichæans, who formed a very numerous sect at the commencement of Christianity, *rejected as false all the New Testament*, and showed other writings quite different that they gave for authentic. The Cerinthians, like the Marcionists, admitted not the Acts of the Apostles. The Encratites and the Sevenians adopted neither the Acts nor the Epistles of Paul. Chrysostom, in a homily which he made upon the Acts of the Apostles, says that in his time, about the year 400, many people knew nothing either of the author or of the book. St. Irene, who lived before that time, reports that the Valentinians, like several other sects of the Christians, accused the scriptures of being filled with imperfections, errors, and contradictions. The Ebionites, or Nazarenes, who were the first Christians, rejected all the Epistles of Paul, and regarded him as an impostor. They report, among other things, that he was originally a pagan; that he came to Jerusalem, where he lived some time; and that, having a mind to marry the daughter of the high priest, he had himself been circumcised; but that not being able to obtain her, he quarreled with the Jews and wrote against circumcision, and against the observation of the Sabbath, and against all the legal ordinances."

of doing it would not have thrown away his own fame by giving it to another. In like manner, there were but few that could have composed Euclid's Elements, because none but an exceeding good geometrician could have been the author of that work.

But with respect to the books of the New Testament, particularly such parts as tell us of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, any person who could tell a story of an apparition, or of a *man's walking*, could have made such books; for the story is most wretchedly told. The chance, therefore, of forgery in the Testament is millions to one greater than in the case of Homer or Euclid. Of the numerous priests or parsons of the present day, bishops and all, every one of them can make a sermon, or translate a scrap of Latin, especially if it has been translated a thousand times before; but is there any amongst them that can write poetry like Homer, or science like Euclid; the sum total of a parson's learning, with very few exceptions, is *a-b ab*, and *hic, hæc, hoc;* and their knowledge of science is three times one is three; and this is more than sufficient to have enabled them, had they lived at the time, to have written all the books of the New Testament.

As the opportunities of forgeries were greater, so also was the inducement. A man could gain no advantage by writing under the name of Homer or Euclid; if he could write equal to them, it would be better that he wrote under his own name; if inferior, he could not succeed. Pride would prevent the former, and impossibility the latter. But with respect to such books as compose the New Testament, all the inducements were on the side of forgery. The best imagined history that could have been made, at the distance of two or three hundred years after the time, could not have passed for an original under the name of the real writer; the only chance of success lay in forgery, for the church wanted pretense for its new doctrine, and truth and talents were out of the question.

But as it is not uncommon (as before observed) to relate stories of persons *walking* after they are dead,



PHILADELPHIA (OR WHITE'S) HOTEL.

No. 1 Rue des Petits Pères. In 1793 it was the "Hôtel Philadelphie." There Paine resided from Sept., 1792, to April, 1793, rooming with Lord Edward Fitzgerald much of the time. Here he wrote his three speeches relating to the trial of Louis XVI. Here he wrote the first draft of Part I. "Age of Reason" for circulation in French only. Here at daybreak, Dec. 29, he was arrested and imprisoned.

and of ghosts and apparitions of such as have fallen by some violent or extraordinary means; and as the people of that day were in the habit of believing such things, and of the appearance of angels, and also of devils, and of their getting into people's insides, and shaking them like a fit of an ague, and of their being cast out again as if by an emetic (Mary Magdalene, the book of Mark tells us, had brought up, or been brought to bed of seven devils), it was nothing extraordinary that some story of this kind should get abroad of the person called Jesus Christ, and become afterwards the foundation of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each writer told the tale as he heard it, or thereabouts, and gave to his book the name of the saint or the apostle whom tradition had given as the eyewitness. It is only upon this ground that the contradictions in those books can be accounted for; and if this be not the case, they are downright impositions, lies, and forgeries, without even the apology of credulity.

That they have been written by a sort of half Jews, as the foregoing quotations mention, is discernible enough. The frequent references made to that chief assassin and impostor, Moses, and to the men called prophets, establishes this point; and, on the other hand, the church has complemented the fraud by admitting the Bible and the Testament to reply to each other. Between the Christian Jew and the Christian Gentile, the thing called a prophecy and the thing prophesied of —the type and the thing typified, the sign and the thing signified—have been industriously rummaged up, and fitted together like old locks and pick-lock keys. The story foolishly enough told of Eve and the serpent, and naturally enough as to the enmity between men and serpents (for the serpent always bites about the *heel*, because it cannot reach higher; and the man always knocks the serpent about the *head*, as the most effectual way to prevent its biting*)—this foolish story, I say, has been made into a prophecy, a type, and a promise to begin

* "It shall bruise thy *head*, and thou shalt bruise his *heel*" (Genesis iii, 15).

with; and the lying imposition of Isaiah to Ahaz, "That a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," as a sign that Ahaz should conquer, when the event was that he was defeated (as already noticed in the observations on the book of Isaiah), has been perverted and made to serve as a winder-up.

Jonah and the whale are also made into a sign and type. Jonah is Jesus, and the whale is the grave; for it is said (and they have made Christ to say it of himself), Matthew xii, 40, "For as Jonas was *three days and three nights* in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be *three days and three nights* in the heart of the earth." But it happens, awkwardly enough, that Christ, according to their own account, was but one day and two nights in the grave; about thirty-six hours instead of seventy-two; that is, the Friday night, the Saturday, and the Saturday night; for they say he was up on the Sunday morning by sunrise, or before. But as this fits quite as well as the *bite* and the *kick* in Genesis, or the *virgin* and her *son* in Isaiah, it will pass in the lump of *orthodox* things. Thus much for the historical part of the Testament and its evidences.

Epistles of Paul.—The epistles ascribed to Paul, being fourteen in number, almost fill up the remaining part of the Testament. Whether those epistles were written by the person to whom they are ascribed, is a matter of no great importance, since that the writer, whoever he was, attempts to prove his doctrine by argument. He does not pretend to have been witness to any of the scenes told of the resurrection and the ascension; and he declares that he had not believed them.

The story of his being struck to the ground as he was journeying to Damascus, has nothing in it miraculous or extraordinary; he escaped with life, and that is more than many others have done who have been struck with lightning; and that he should lose his sight for three days, and be unable to eat or drink during that time, is nothing more than is common in such conditions. His companions that were with him appear not to have suffered in the same manner, for they were well enough to

lead him the remainder of the journey; neither did they pretend to have seen any vision.

The character of the person called Paul, according to the accounts given of him, has in it a great deal of violence and fanaticism; he had persecuted with as much heat as he preached afterwards; the stroke he had received had changed his thinking without altering his constitution; and either as a Jew or a Christian he was the same zealot. Such men are never good moral evidences of any doctrine they preach. They are always in extremes, as well of actions as of belief.

The doctrine he sets out to prove by argument is the resurrection of the same body, and he advances this as an evidence of immortality. But so much will men differ in their manner of thinking, and in the conclusions they draw from the same premises, that this doctrine of the resurrection of the same body, so far from being an evidence of immortality, appears to me to be an evidence against it; for if I had already died in this body, and am raised again in the same body in which I have died, it is presumptive evidence that I shall die again. That resurrection no more secures me against the repetition of dying than an ague fit, when past, secures me against another. To believe, therefore, in immortality, I must have a more elevated idea than is contained in the gloomy doctrine of the resurrection.

Besides, as a matter of choice, as well as of hope, I had rather have a better body and a more convenient form than the present. Every animal in the creation excels us in something. The winged insects, without mentioning the doves and eagles, can pass over more space with greater ease in a few minutes than man can in an hour. The glide of the smallest fish, in proportion to its bulk, exceeds us in motion, almost beyond comparison, and without weariness. Even the sluggish snail can ascend from the bottom of a dungeon, where man, by the want of that ability, would perish; and a spider can launch itself from the top, as a playful amusement. The personal powers of man are so limited, and his heavy frame so little constructed to exten-

sive enjoyment that there is nothing to induce us to wish the opinion of Paul to be true. It is too little for the magnitude of the scene—too mean for the sublimity of the subject.

But, all other arguments apart, the *consciousness of existence* is the only conceivable idea we can have of another life, and the continuance of that consciousness is immortality. The consciousness of existence, or the knowing that we exist, is not necessarily confined to the same form, nor to the same matter, even in this life.

We have not in all cases the same form, nor in any case the same matter, that composed our bodies twenty or thirty years ago; and yet we are conscious of being the same persons. Even legs and arms, which make up almost half the human frame, are not necessary to the consciousness of existence. These may be lost or taken away, and the full consciousness of existence remain; and were their place supplied by wings, or other appendages, we cannot conceive that it could alter our consciousness of existence. In short, we know not how much, or rather how little, of our composition it is, and how exquisitely fine that little is, that creates in us this consciousness of existence; and all beyond that is like the pulp of a peach, distinct and separate from the vegetative speck in the kernel.

Who can say by what exceeding fine action of fine matter it is that a thought is produced in what we call the mind? and yet that thought when produced, as I now produce the thought I am writing, is capable of becoming immortal, and is the only production of man that has that capacity.

Statues of brass and marble will perish; and statues made in imitation of them are not the same statues, nor the same workmanship, any more than the copy of a picture is the same picture. But print and reprint a thought a thousand times over, and that with materials of any kind—carve it in wood, or engrave it on stone, the thought is eternally and identically the same thought in every case. It has a capacity of unimpaired existence, unaffected by change of matter, and is essen-

tially distinct, and of a nature different from everything else that we know of or can conceive. If then the thing produced has in itself a capacity of being immortal, it is more than a token that the power that produced it, which is the self-same thing as consciousness of existence, can be immortal also; and that as independently of the matter it was first connected with, as the thought is of the printing or writing it first appeared in. The one idea is not more difficult to believe than the other, and we can see that one is true.

That the consciousness of existence is not dependent on the same form or the same matter is demonstrated to our senses in the works of the creation, as far as our senses are capable of receiving that demonstration. A very numerous part of the animal creation preaches to us, far better than Paul, the belief of a life hereafter. Their little life resembles an earth and a heaven—a present and a future state; and comprises, if it may be so expressed, *immortality in miniature.*

The most beautiful parts of the creation to our eye are the winged insects, and they are not so originally. They acquire that form and that inimitable brilliancy by progressive changes. The slow and creeping caterpillar-worm of to-day passes in a few days to a torpid figure and a state resembling death; and in the next change comes forth in all the miniature magnificence of life, a splendid butterfly. No resemblance of the former creature remains; everything is changed; all his powers are new, and life is to him another thing. We cannot conceive that the consciousness of existence is not the same in this state of the animal as before; why then must I believe that the resurrection of the same body is necessary to continue to me the consciousness of existence hereafter.

In the former part of THE AGE OF REASON I have called the creation the true and only real word of God; and this instance, or this text, in the book of creation not only shows to us that this thing may be so, but that it is so; and that the belief of a future state is a rational belief, founded upon facts visible in the creation; for it is

not more difficult to believe that we shall exist hereafter in a better state and form than at present, than that a worm should become a butterfly, and quit the dunghill for the atmosphere, if we did not know it as a fact.

As to the doubtful jargon ascribed to Paul in 1 Corinthians xv, which makes part of the burial service of some Christian sectaries, it is as destitute of meaning as the tolling of the bell at a funeral; it explains nothing to the understanding, it illustrates nothing to the imagination, but leaves the reader to find any meaning if he can. "All flesh [says he] is not the same flesh. There is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." And what then?—nothing. A cook could have said as much. "There are also [says he] celestial bodies and bodies terrestial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." And what then?—nothing. And what is the difference?—nothing that he has told. "There is [says he] one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars." And what then?—nothing; except that he says that *one star differeth from another star in glory*, instead of distance; and he might as well have told us that the moon did not shine so bright as the sun. All this is nothing better than the jargon of a conjuror, who picks up phrases he does not understand, to confound the credulous people who come to have their fortune told. Priests and conjurors are of the same trade.

Sometimes Paul affects to be a naturalist and to prove his system of resurrection from the principles of vegetation. "Thou fool [says he], that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." To which one might reply in his own language, and say: "Thou fool, Paul; that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die *not;* for the grain that dies in the ground never does, nor can, vegetate. It is only the living grains that produce the next crop. But the metaphor, in any point of view, is no simile. It is succession, and [not] resurrection."

The progress of an animal from one state of being to

another, as from a worm to a butterfly, applies to the case; but this of a grain does not, and shows Paul to have been what he says of others—*a fool.*

Whether the fourteen epistles ascribed to Paul were written by him or not is a matter of indifference; they are either argumentative or dogmatical; and as the argument is defective, and the dogmatical part is merely presumptive, it signifies not who wrote them. And the same may be said for the remaining parts of the Testament. It is not upon the epistles, but upon what is called the gospel, contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and upon the pretended prophecies, that the theory of the church calling itself the Christian church is founded. The epistles are dependent upon those, and must follow their fate; for if the story of Jesus Christ be fabulous, all reasoning founded upon it as a supposed truth must fall with it.

We know from history that one of the principal leaders of this church, Athanasius, lived at the time the New Testament was formed; * and we know also from the absurd jargon he has left us under the name of a creed, the character of the men who formed the New Testament; and we know also from the same history that the authenticity of the books of which it is composed was denied at the time. It was upon the vote of such as Athanasius that the Testament was decreed to be the word of God; and nothing can present to us a more strange idea than that of decreeing the word of God by vote. Those who rest their faith upon such authority put man in the place of God, and have no true foundation for future happiness. Credulity, however, is not a crime; but it becomes criminal by resisting conviction. It is strangling in the womb of the conscience the efforts it makes to ascertain truth. We should never force belief upon ourselves in anything.

I here close the subject on the Old Testament and the New. The evidence I have produced to prove them

---

* Athanasius died, according to the church chronology, in the year 371.

forgeries is extracted from the books themselves, and acts like a two-edged sword, either way. If the evidence be denied, the authenticity of the scriptures is denied with it, for it is a scripture evidence; and if the evidence be admitted the authenticity of the books is disproved. The contradictory impossibilities contained in the Old Testament and the New, put them in the case of a man who swears for and against. Either evidence convicts him of perjury, and equally destroys reputation.

Should the Bible and the Testament hereafter fall, it is not that I have done it. I have done no more than extract the evidence from the confused mass of matters with which it is mixed, and arranged that evidence in a point of light to be clearly seen and easily comprehended; and, having done this, I leave the reader to judge for himself, as I have judged for myself.

CONCLUSION.

IN THE former part of THE AGE OF REASON I have spoken of the three frauds, *mystery*, *miracle*, and *prophecy;* and as I have seen nothing in any of the answers to that work that in the least affects what I have there said upon those subjects, I shall not encumber this Second Part with additions that are not necessary.

I have spoken also in the same work upon what is called *revelation*, and have shown the absurd misapplication of that term to the books of the Old Testament and the New; for certainly revelation is out of the question in reciting anything of which man has been the actor or the witness. That which man has done or seen needs no revelation to tell him he has done it or seen it; for he knows it already; nor to enable him to tell it or to write it. It is ignorance or imposition to apply the term revelation in such cases; yet the Bible and Testament are classed under this fraudulent description of being all *revelation.*

Revelation, then, so far as the term has relation between God and man, can only be applied to something which God reveals of his *will* to man; but though the power of the Almighty to make such a communication is necessarily admitted, because to that power all things are possible, yet the thing so revealed (if anything ever was revealed, and which, by the bye, it is impossible to prove) is revelation to the person *only to whom it is made.* His account of it to another is not revelation; and whoever puts faith in that account, puts it in the man from whom the account comes; and that man may have been deceived, or may have dreamed it; or he may be an impostor, and may lie. There is no possible criterion whereby to judge of the truth of what he tells; for even the morality of it would be no proof of revelation. In all such cases the proper answer should be, "When it is revealed to me, I will believe it to be revelation; but it is not, and it cannot be incumbent upon me to believe it to be revelation before; neither is it proper that I should take the word of man as the word of God, and put man in the place of God." This is the manner in which I have spoken of revelation in the former part of THE AGE OF REASON, and which, whilst it reverentially admits revelation as a possible thing, because, as before said, to the Almighty all things are possible, it prevents the imposition of one man upon another, and precludes the wicked use of pretended revelation.

But though, speaking for myself, I thus admit the possibility of revelation, I totally disbelieve that the Almighty ever did communicate anything to man by any mode of speech, in any language, or by any kind of vision or appearance, or by any means which our senses are capable of receiving, otherwise than by the universal display of himself in the works of the creation, and by that repugnance we feel in ourselves to bad actions, and disposition to good ones.

The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries that have afflicted the human race, have had their origin in this thing

called revelation or revealed religion. It has been the most dishonorable belief against the character of the divinity, the most destructive to morality and the peace and happiness of man, that ever was propagated since man began to exist. It is better, far better, that we admitted, if it were possible, a thousand devils to roam at large, and to preach publicly the doctrine of devils, if there were any such, than that we permitted one such impostor and monster as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and the Bible prophets, to come with the pretended word of God in his mouth, and have credit among us.

Whence arose all the horrid assassinations of whole nations of men, women, and infants, with which the Bible is filled, and the bloody persecutions, and tortures unto death, and religious wars, that since that time have laid Europe in blood and ashes; whence arose they but from this impious thing called revealed religion, and this monstrous belief that God has spoken to man? The lies of the Bible have been the cause of the one and the lies of the Testament of the other.

Some Christians pretend that Christianity was not established by the sword; but of what period of time do they speak? It was impossible that twelve men could begin with the sword; they had not the power; but no sooner were the professors of Christianity sufficiently powerful to employ the sword than they did so, and the stake and fagot too; and Mahomet could not do it sooner. By the same spirit that Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant (if the story be true) he would have cut off his head, and the head of his master, had he been able. Besides this, Christianity grounds itself originally upon the Bible, and the Bible was established altogether by the sword, and that in the worst use of it; not to terrify, but to extirpate. The Jews made no converts; they butchered all. The Bible is the sire of the Testament, and both are called the *word of God*. The Christians read both books; the ministers preach from both books; and this thing called Christianity is made up of both. It is then false to say that Christianity was not established by the sword.

The only sect that has not persecuted are the Quakers; and the only reason that can be given for it is that they are rather Deists than Christians. They do not believe much about Jesus Christ, and they call the scriptures a dead letter. Had they called them by a worse name, they had been nearer the truth.

It is incumbent on every man who reverences the character of the creator, and who wishes to lessen the catalogue of artificial miseries, and remove the cause that has sown persecution thick among mankind, to expel all ideas of revealed religion as a dangerous heresy and an impious fraud. What is it that we have learned from this pretended thing called revealed religion? Nothing that is useful to man, and everything that is dishonorable to his maker. What is it that the Bible teaches us? —rapine, cruelty, and murder. What is it the Testament teaches us?—to believe that the Almighty committed debauchery with a woman engaged to be married; and the belief of this debauchery is called faith.

As to the fragments of morality that are irregularly and thinly scattered in those books, they make no part of this pretended thing called revealed religion. They are the natural dictates of conscience, and the bonds by which society is held together, and without which it cannot exist; and are nearly the same in all religions and in all societies. The Testament teaches nothing new upon this subject, and where it attempts to exceed, it becomes mean and ridiculous. The doctrine of not retaliating injuries is much better expressed in Proverbs, which is a collection as well from the Gentiles as the Jews, than it is in the Testament. It is there said (Proverbs xxv, 21), "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink;" * but when it is said, as in the Testament, "If

* According to what is called Christ's Sermon on the Mount, in the book of Matthew, where, among some good things, a great deal of this feigned morality is introduced, it is there expressly said that the doctrine of forbearance, or of not retaliating injuries, *was not any part of the doctrine of the Jews;* but as this doctrine is found in Proverbs it must, according to that statement, have been copied from

a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also," it is assassinating the dignity of forbearance, and sinking man into a spaniel.

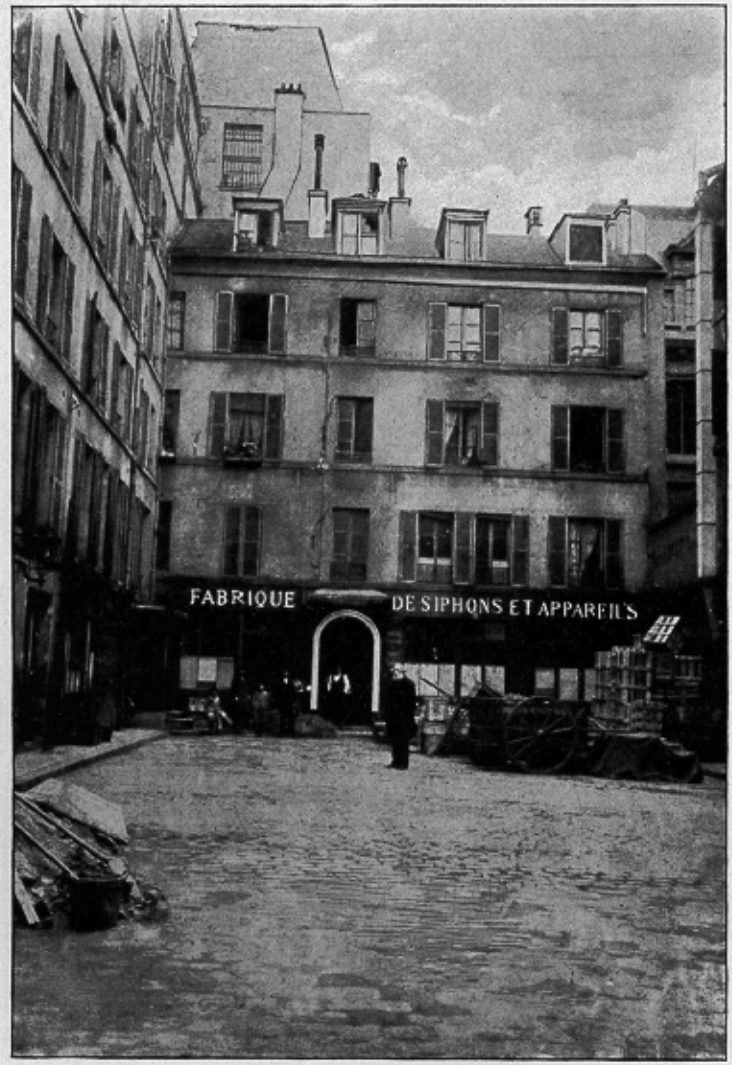
"Loving of enemies" is another dogma of feigned morality, and has besides no meaning. It is incumbent on man, as a moralist, that he does not revenge an injury; and it is equally as good in a political sense, for there is no end to retaliation; each retaliates on the other, and calls it justice; but to love in proportion to the injury, if it could be done, would be to offer a premium for crime. Besides, the word "enemies" is too vague and general to be used in a moral maxim, which ought always to be clear and defined, like a proverb. If a man be the enemy of another from mistake and prejudice, as in the case of religious opinions, and sometimes in politics, that man is different from an enemy at heart with a criminal intention; and it is incumbent upon us, and it contributes also to our own tranquillity, that we put the best construction upon a thing that it will bear. But even this erroneous motive in him makes no motive for love on the other part; and to say that we can love voluntarily, and without a motive, is morally and physically impossible.

Morality is injured by prescribing to it duties that, in the first place, are impossible to be performed, and if they could be would be productive of evil; or, as before said, be premiums for crime. The maxim *of doing as we would be done unto* does not include this strange doctrine of loving enemies; for no man expects to be loved himself for his crime or for his enmity.

Those who preach this doctrine of loving their ene-

---

the Gentiles, from whom Christ had learned it. Those men whom Jewish and Christian idolaters have abusively called heathens had much better and clearer ideas of justice and morality than are to be found in the Old Testament, so far as it is Jewish, or in the New. The answer of Solon on the question, "Which is the most perfect popular government?" has never been exceeded by any man since his time, as containing a maxim of political morality. "That," says he, "*where the least injury done to the meanest individual is considered as an insult on the whole constitution.*" Solon lived about 500 B. C.



A VERY ANCIENT HOUSE.

Old house reached through 148 Faubourg St. Denis, but contiguous with the court of 146, where stood the residence of Paine, with which this old house was probably connected.

mies are in general the greatest persecutors, and they act consistently by so doing; for the doctrine is hypocritical, and it is natural that hypocrisy should act the reverse of what it preaches. For my own part, I disown the doctrine, and consider it as a feigned or fabulous morality; yet the man does not exist that can say I have persecuted him, or any man, or any set of men, either in the American Revolution or in the French Revolution; or that I have in any case returned evil for evil. But it is not incumbent on man to reward a bad action with a good one, or to return good for evil; and wherever it is done, it is a voluntary act, and not a duty. It is also absurd to suppose that such doctrine can make any part of a revealed religion. We imitate the moral character of the Creator by forbearing with each other, for he forbears with all; but this doctrine would imply that he loved man, not in proportion as he was good, but as he was bad.

If we consider the nature of our condition here, we must see there is no occasion for such a thing as *revealed religion.* What is it we want to know? Does not the creation, the universe we behold, preach to us the existence of an almighty power that governs and regulates the whole? And is not the evidence that this creation holds out to our senses infinitely stronger than anything we can read in a book, that any impostor might make and call the word of God? As for morality, the knowledge of it exists in every man's conscience.

Here we are. The existence of an almighty power is sufficiently demonstrated to us, though we cannot conceive, as it is impossible we should, the nature and manner of its existence. We cannot conceive how we came here ourselves, and yet we know for a fact that we are here. We must know also that the power that called us into being can, if he please and when he pleases, call us to account for the manner in which we have lived here; and therefore, without seeking any other motive for the belief, it is rational to believe that he will, for we know beforehand that he can. The probability, or even possibility, of the thing is all that we ought to

know; for if we knew it as a fact, we should be the mere slaves of terror; our belief would have no merit, and our best actions no virtue.

Deism then teaches us, without the possibility of being deceived, all that is necessary or proper to be known. The creation is the Bible of the Deist. He there reads, in the handwriting of the Creator himself, the certainty of his existence, and the immutability of his power, and all other Bibles and Testaments are to him forgeries. The probability that we may be called to account hereafter will, to a reflecting mind, have the influence of belief; for it is not our belief or disbelief that can make or unmake the fact. As this is the state we are in, and which it is proper we should be in, as free agents, it is the fool only, and not the philosopher, nor even the prudent man, that would live as if there were no God.

But the belief of a God is so weakened by being mixed with the strange fable of the Christian creed, and with the wild adventures related in the Bible, and the obscurity and obscene nonsense of the Testament, that the mind of man is bewildered as in a fog. Viewing all these things in a confused mass, he confounds fact with fable; and as he cannot believe all, he feels a disposition to reject all. But the belief of a God is a belief distinct from all other things, and ought not to be confounded with any. The notion of a trinity of gods has enfeebled the belief of one God. A multiplication of beliefs acts as a division of belief; and in proportion as anything is divided it is weakened.

Religion, by such means, becomes a thing of form instead of fact; of notion instead of principle; morality is banished to make room for an imaginary thing called faith, and this faith has its origin in a supposed debauchery; a man is preached instead of God; an execution is an object for gratitude; the preachers daub themselves with the blood, like a troop of assassins, and pretend to admire the brilliancy it gives them; they preach a humdrum sermon on the merits of the execu-

tion; then praise Jesus Christ for being executed, and condemn the Jews for doing it.

A man, by hearing all this nonsense lumped and preached together, confounds the God of the creation with the imagined God of the Christians, and lives as if there were none.

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid or produces only atheists and fanatics. As an engine of power, it serves the purpose of despotism; and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests; but so far as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here or hereafter.

The only religion that has not been invented, and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple Deism. It must have been the first, and will probably be the last, that man believes. But pure and simple Deism does not answer the purpose of despotic governments. They cannot lay hold of religion as an engine, but by mixing it with human inventions, and making their own authority a part; neither does it answer the avarice of priests but by incorporating themselves and their functions with it, and becoming, like the government, a party in the system. It is this that forms the otherwise mysterious connection of church and state; the church human, and the state tyrannic.

Were man impressed as fully and strongly as he ought to be with the belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief; he would stand in awe of God and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be concealed from either. To give this belief the full opportunity of force, it is necessary that it act alone. This is Deism.

But when, according to the Christian trinitarian scheme, one part of God is represented by a dying man, and another part, called the Holy Ghost, by a flying

pigeon, it is impossible that belief can attach itself to such wild conceits.*

It has been the scheme of the Christian church, and of all the other invented systems of religion, to hold man in ignorance of the Creator, as it is of government to hold him in ignorance of his rights. The systems of the one are as false as those of the other, and are calculated for mutual support. The study of theology, as it stands in Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing, and admits of no conclusion. Not any thing can be studied as a science without our being in possession of, the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is not the case with Christian theology, it is therefore the study of nothing.

Instead, then, of studying theology, as is now done, out of the Bible and Testament, the meanings of which books are always controverted, and the authenticity of which is disproved, it is necessary that we refer to the Bible of the creation. The principles we discover there are eternal, and of divine origin; they are the foundation of all the science that exists in the world, and must be the foundation of theology.

We can know God only through his works. We cannot have a conception of any one attribute but by following some principle that leads to it. We have only a confused idea of his powers if we have not the means of comprehending something of its immensity. We can have no idea of his wisdom but by knowing the order and manner in which it acts. The principles of science lead to this knowledge; for the Creator of man is the Creator of science; and it is through that medium that man can see God, as it were, face to face.

---

* The book called the book of Matthew says (iii, 16) that *the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove.* It might as well have said a goose; the creatures are equally harmless, and the one is as much a nonsensical lie as the other. Acts ii, 2, 3, says that it descended in a mighty *rushing wind*, in the shape of *cloven tongues*; perhaps it was cloven feet. Such absurd stuff is only fit for tales of witches and wizards.

Could a man be placed in a situation, and endowed with the power of vision, to behold at one view, and to contemplate deliberately, the structure of the universe; to mark the movements of the several planets, the cause of their varying appearances, the unerring order in which they revolve, even to the remotest comet; their connection and dependence on each other, and to know the system of laws established by the Creator that governs and regulates the whole; he would then conceive, far beyond what any church theology can teach him, the power, the wisdom, the vastness, the munificence of the Creator. He would then see that all the knowledge man has of science, and that all the mechanical arts by which he renders his situation comfortable here, are derived from that source; his mind, exalted by the scene and convinced by the fact, would increase in gratitude as it increased in knowledge; his religion or his worship would become united with his improvement as a man; any employment he followed that had connection with the principles of the creation, as everything of agriculture, of science, and of the mechanical arts has, would teach him more of God and of the gratitude he owes to him than any theological Christian sermon he now hears. Great objects inspire great thoughts; great munificence excites great gratitude; but the groveling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt.

Though man cannot arrive, at least in this life, at the actual scene I have described, he can demonstrate it because he has a knowledge of the principles upon which the creation is constructed. We know that the greatest works can be represented in model, and that the universe can be represented by the same means. The same principles by which we measure an inch or an acre of ground will measure to millions in extent. A circle of an inch diameter has the same geometrical properties as a circle that would circumscribe the universe. The same properties of a triangle that will demonstrate upon paper the course of a ship, will do it on the ocean, and, when applied to what are called the heavenly bodies,

will ascertain to a minute the time of an eclipse, though those bodies are millions of miles distant from us. This knowledge is of divine origin, and it is from the Bible of the creation that man has learned it, and not from the stupid Bible of the church that teacheth man nothing.*

All the knowledge man has of science and of machinery, by the aid of which his existence is rendered comfortable upon earth, and without which he would be scarcely distinguishable in appearance and condition from a common animal, comes from the great machine and structure of the universe. The constant and unwearied observations of our ancestors upon the movements and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, in what are supposed to have been the early ages of the world, have brought this knowledge upon earth. It is not Moses and the prophets, nor Jesus Christ, nor his apostles that have done it. The Almighty is the great mechanic of the creation; the first philosopher and original teacher of all science. Let us then learn to reverence our master, and not forget the labor of our ancestors.

Had we, at this day, no knowledge of machinery, and were it possible that man could have a view, as I have before described, of the structure and machinery of the

* The Bible-makers have undertaken to give us, in the first chapter of Genesis, an account of the creation; and in doing this they have demonstrated nothing but their ignorance. They make there to have been three days and three nights, evenings and mornings, before there was any sun; when it is the presence or absence of the sun that is the cause of day and night—and what is called his rising and setting, that of morning and evening. Besides it is a puerile and pitiful idea to suppose the Almighty to say, "Let there be light." It is the imperative manner of speaking that a conjuror uses when he says to his cups and balls, "Presto! be gone" and most probably has been taken from it, as Moses and his rod are a conjuror and his wand Longinus calls this expression the sublime; and by the same rule the conjuror is sublime too; for the manner of speaking is expressively and grammatically the same. When authors and critics talk of the sublime, they see not how nearly it borders on the ridiculous. The sublime of the critics, like some parts of Edmund Burke's sublime and beautiful, is like a windmill just visible in a fog, which imagination might distort into a flying mountain, or an archangel, or a flock of wild geese.

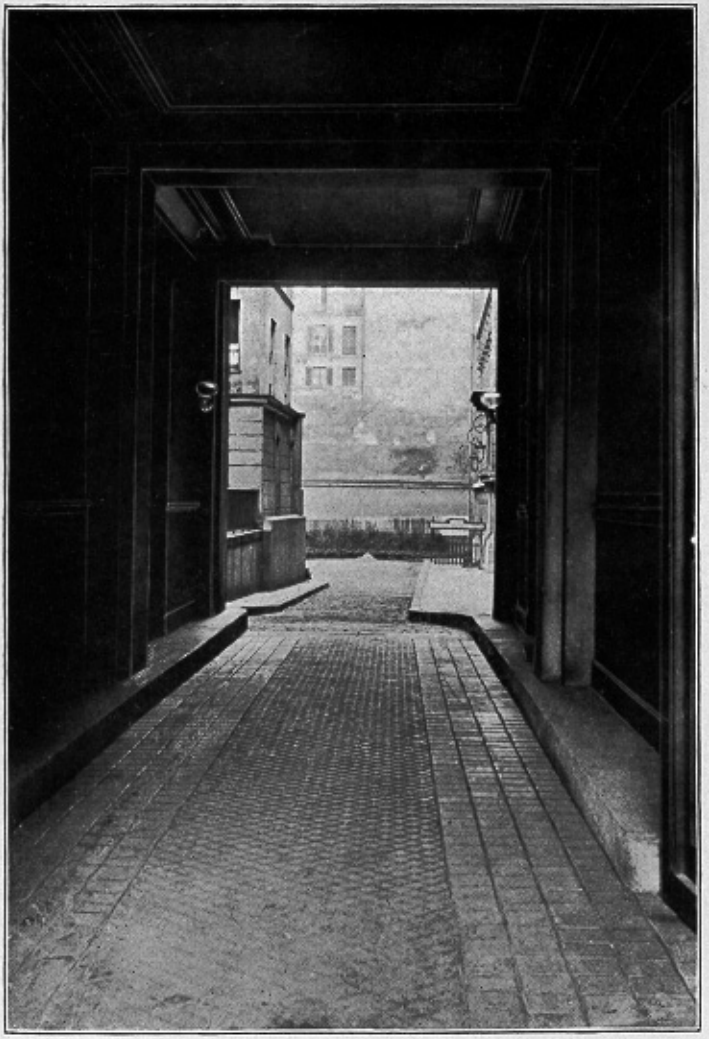
universe, he would soon conceive the idea of constructing some at least of the mechanical works we now have; and the idea so conceived would progressively advance in practice. Or could a model of the universe, such as is called an orrery, be presented before him and put in motion, his mind would arrive at the same idea. Such an object and such a subject would, whilst it improved him in knowledge useful to himself as a man and a member of society, as well as entertaining, afford far better matter for impressing him with a knowledge of and a belief in the Creator, and of the reverence and gratitude that man owes to him, than the stupid texts of the Bible and the Testament, from which, be the talents of the preacher what they may, only stupid sermons can be preached. If man must preach, let him preach something that is edifying, and from the texts that are known to be true.

The Bible of the creation is inexhaustible in texts. Every part of the science, whether connected with the geometry of the universe, with the systems of animal and vegetable life, or with the properties of inanimate matter, is a text as well for devotion as for philosophy —for gratitude as for human improvement. It will perhaps be said that if such a revolution in the system of religion takes place, every preacher ought to be a philosopher. *Most certainly;* and every house of devotion a school of science.

It has been by wandering from the immutable laws of science and the light of reason, and setting up an invented thing called revealed religion, that so many wild and blasphemous conceits have been formed of the Almighty. The Jews have made him the assassin of the human species, to make room for the religion of the Jews. The Christians have made him the murderer of himself, and the founder of a new religion, to supersede and expel the Jewish religion. And to find pretense and admission for these things, they must have supposed his power or his wisdom imperfect, or his will changeable; and the changeableness of the will is the imperfection of the judgment. The philosopher knows

that the laws of the Creator have never changed with respect either to the principles of science or the properties of matter. Why, then, is it to be supposed they have changed with respect to man?

I here close the subject. I have shown in all the foregoing parts of this work that the Bible and Testament are impositions and forgeries; and I leave the evidence I have produced in proof of it to be refuted, if anyone can do it; and I leave the ideas that are suggested in the conclusion of the work to rest on the mind of the reader; certain, as I am, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.



ONE OF PAINE'S RETREATS.

No. 146 Faubourg St. Denis, court with box-trees and flowers, at the side of the business edifice of the railway "d'Est." Here stood the residence (then No. 63) of Paine from the beginning of April, 1793, to his imprisonment. Here he wrote Part I. "Age of Reason" as we have it. The lower wall of the court is the gable end of a very old house (more than 200 years) which was probably connected as a wing with the back of Paine's house.

In the original book this is a

BLANK PAGE

and this page is included

to keep page numbering consistent.

==========

The Bank of Wisdom reproduces the best of scholarly, Philosophical, Scientific, Religious and Freethought books produced by the great thinkers and doers throughout human history. It is our duty and our pleasure to do this necessary work.

The Bank of wisdom is always looking for lost, suppressed, and unusual old books, sets, pamphlets, magazines, manuscripts and other information that needs to be preserved and reproduced for future generations. If you have such old works please contact the Bank of Wisdom, we would be interested in obtaining this information either by buying or borrowing the book(s), or in obtaining a good clear copy of all pages.

Help us help your children find a better tomorrow.

Emmett F. Fields
Bank of Wisdom

Bank of Wisdom
P.O. Box 926
Louisville, KY 40201
U.S.A.

APPENDIX.

Editions of THE AGE OF REASON that have passed for the first do not contain the dedication of the work to the author's "fellow-citizens of the United States of America," but it is in the edition "printed for Barrois, senior," now reproduced. As Gouverneur Morris, American Minister in Paris, was keeping Paine in prison under the pretext that he was not an American citizen, this dedication may have been as influential in causing him (Morris) to have the edition suppressed as were the disclosures made by Paine in the Postscript. (See Preface.)

Page x, Preface. A French edition of THE AGE OF REASON was published in Paris, 1794, said to be by "Thomas Paine, Citoyen et cultivateur de l'Amerique septentrionale, secretaire du Congres du departement des affaires etrangeres pendant la guerre d'Amerique, et auteur des ouvrages intitules La Sens Commun et Les Droits de l'Homme" (Conway). Here we have our author accredited with cultivating an entire continent—*l'Amerique septentrionale*—North America. It would be of interest to know what was in the mind of the framer of the Paris title-pages when he introduced the word "cultivator."

Page 12. For the sentence beginning, "Between the two," in line 4, Conway says that the French edition has "However this may be, for one or the other of these suppositions this virtuous reformer, this revolutionist, too little imitated, too much forgotten, too much misunderstood, lost his life." It does not sound much like Paine's phrasing, but it expresses his sentiment, and reveals the despicable nature of Gouverneur Morris's innuendo in a letter to Jefferson, Jan. 21, 1794, that "Thomas Paine is in prison, where he amuses himself with publishing a pamphlet against Jesus Christ."

Page 17 "Moses was not an Israelite." The first verse of the second chapter of Exodus says that the parents of Moses were "a man of the house of Levi," and "a daughter of Levi." Moses was a Hebrew by birth and an Egyptian by education. The word "not" is possibly a printer's error. Authorship of Genesis: "The book of Genesis was not written by one man, but was put together from works of very different dates; works, too, whose authors by no means stood upon the same religious level" (Dr. H. Oort).

Page 25. Purgatory. Sir J. G. Wilkinson says that in Egypt "the priest induced the people to expend large sums on the celebration of funeral rites; and many who had barely sufficient to obtain the necessaries of life were anxious to save something for the expenses of their death. Numerous demands were made upon the estate of the deceased for the celebration of prayer and other services for the soul." The services "continued to be administered at intervals as long as the family paid for their performance" The priests of the Christian system are the successors of the priests of Egypt, whose rites and ceremonies, to a great extent, they have inherited.

Page 26. Redemption. "The doctrine of the Atonement, of Christ's death having been a sacrifice in expiation of the sins of mankind, is the keystone of the common form of modern orthodoxy. It takes its origin from the epistles, and we believe can appeal to only *three* texts in the evangelists, for even partial confirmation. In Matt. xx, 28, it is said, 'The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life *a ransom for many*,' an expression which may *countenance* the doctrine, but assuredly does not contain it. Again in Matt. xxvi, 28, we find, 'This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins*. Mark (xiv, 24) and Luke (xxii, 20), however, who give the same sentence, *both omit the significant expression;* while John omits, not only the expression, but the entire narrative of the institution of the Eucharist, which is said elsewhere to have been the occasion of it. In the fourth gospel, John the Baptist is represented as saying of Jesus (i, 29), 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,' an expression which may possibly be intended to convey the doctrine, but which occurs in what we have already shown to be about the most apocryphal portion of the whole gospel" (Greg: "Creed of Christendom," 232). Greg elsewhere (ibid, 33-34) enlarges after the fashion of Paine on the immoral nature of the atonement or redemption. As Paine hints, it is a priestly fabrication.

For Addison's version of the nineteenth psalm (p. 30) the French edition substituted one by Rousseau.

Page 32. "The writings ascribed to the men called apostles," . . . "the gloominess of the subject they dwell upon, that of a man dying in agony on a cross, is better suited to the gloomy genius of a monk in a cell, by whom it is not impossible they were written," etc. Prof Edwin Johnson, of London, author of the "Rise of Christendom," thinks that the New Testament books are the work of "a literary Round Table of Basilian and Benedictine monks" of the sixteenth century.

Page 41. "Virgilius." Dr. Andrew D White, in his "Warfare of Science" (i, 106), states that Pope Zachary declared the doctrine of the antipodes "perverse, iniquitous, and against Virgil's own soul," and indicated a purpose of driving him from his bishopric—that of Salzburg—but it is disputed that the purpose was carried out, or that Virgilius paid any other penalty.

Page 42. Paine's contention that mythology—if by that he means, as he seems to mean, polytheism—is a corruption of a previous system of theism (monotheism) is not borne out by studies of the evolution of the god idea. Its fallacy is paralleled by the statement in Genesis xi, 1, that "the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech." Says J M. Wheeler ("Footsteps of the Past," p. 1): "Instead of having fallen from a perfect religion, man has but slowly emerged from the grossest superstitions." There never was and is not now in existence a purely monotheistic system of theology Early man was a polytheist and was forced to recognize the existence of many other gods than his own, though he would not worship them. As Wheeler remarks (*ibid*, 134), "Religious evolution follows the course of social development. . . . Not till large monarchies were established, the rulers of which claimed to be king of kings and lord of lords, was any claim made for the sole rule of the sovereign of the skies. It was the large empires which paved the way for the so-called universal religions. Everywhere we see that the progress of religion followed that of society." In the evolutionary view of religion, Paine did not anticipate the writers of to-day.

Page 43 "But the Christian system laid all waste; and if we take our stand about the beginning of the sixteenth century, we look back through the long chasm to the times of the ancients as over a vast sandy desert, in which not a shrub appears to intercept the vision of the fertile hills beyond" (Paine). "The establishment of Christianity, beginning a new evolution of theology, arrested the normal development of the physical sciences for over fifteen hundred years" (White: "Warfare of Science." i, 375). A remarkable agreement as to date between the Master of Arts of the University of Pennsylvania and the President of Cornell University.

Page 44. Politics and "Jockeyship" Paine spent the winter of 1772-3 in London trying to influence members of Parliament in favor of the excisemen, of whose cause he had become the spokesman. He was unsuccessful, owing probably to the jockeyship in the politics of the day, and his absence caused him to lose his own place in the excise, while his business went to ruin and was sold at auction.

Page 45 "Two classes of thoughts." From Paine's admission that some thoughts "bolt into the mind of their own accord," he has

been deemed "mediumistic" by Spiritualists, who hold that he wrote under the inspiration of ideas projected into his mind by denizens of the spirit-world. He does not seem to have thought of that explanation of involuntary thinking.

Page 46. "A sermon read by a relation of mine." Conway thinks this was "Paine's aunt, Miss Cooke [Cocke?], who managed to have him confirmed in the parish church at Thetford."

Page 69. "The intolerant spirit of church persecution had transferred itself into politics; the tribunals, styled Revolutionary, supplied the place of an Inquisition; and the guillotine of the stake." Dr. Conway intimates that the Symonds edition (London, 1795-6) is responsible for the perversion of this sentence so that it reads: "The intolerant spirit of religious persecution had transferred itself into politics; the tribunals, styled Revolutionary, supplied the place of the Inquisition; and the Guillotine of the State outdid the fire and Faggot of the Church." The continuation of the locution in its perverted form in American editions led Dr. Conway to conclude that Symonds' stolen issue got ahead of that sent by Paine to Franklin Bache (see Preface to this volume). It is curious to observe, however, that in Mrs. Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner's reprint, based on Daniel Isaac Eaton's authorized edition of 1796, with a prefatory note by Paine himself, the sentence appears as it was corrupted by the rogue who copied Paine's manuscript in Paris and sold it to the pirate Symonds.

Page 70. The petition of the Americans in Paris for Paine's release was referred to the Committees of Public Safety and General Surety, where it was said by Billaud Varennes, a member of the committees and doubtless a tool of Gouverneur Morris, that the reclamation was "only the act of individuals, without any authority from the American government." The petition never reached the Convention, as Vadier promised and perhaps intended that it should.

Page 71. Paine expresses the belief that his illness preserved him in existence. Afterward, in his "Letters to American Citizens," he gives an account of what he subsequently discovered: "The room in which I was lodged was on the ground floor, and one of a long range of rooms under a gallery, and the door opened outward and flat against the wall; so that when it was open the inside of the door appeared outward, and the contrary when it was shut. . . . When persons by scores and by hundreds were to be taken out of the prison for the guillotine it was all done in the night, and those who performed that office had a private mark or signal, by which they knew what rooms to go to and what number to take. We, as I have stated, were four, and the door of our room was marked, unobserved by us, with that number in chalk; but it happened, if happening is a proper

word, that the mark was put on when the door was open, and flat against the wall, and thereby came on the inside when we shut it at night, and the destroying angel passed by it" (National Intelligencer, Dec. 29, 1802).

Page 105. Peter Pindar. Although the Rev. Dr. John Wolcot (1738–1819), who as "Peter Pindar" made himself conspicuous by his poetical productions, who sometimes got himself thrashed for his personalities, and who finally accepted a pension of £300 per annum to cease his attacks on the king and ministry, found it almost impossible to refer to Thomas Paine without a slur, this is, we believe, the only place in the writings of Paine where the author deigns to notice him; and the reference is not flattering. In each of Wolcot's five volumes of poetry, which might sometimes cause Dean Swift to blush, he makes one or more allusions to "Tom" Paine. The following was doubtless intended as a hint of the enormity of Paine's offense—an offense that has since become a merit. Perhaps Wolcot thought to prove his own loyalty and escape prosecution by attacking the author of the "Rights of Man."

> "Importance, in a nutshell hide thy head!
> I deem'd myself a Dare-devil in Rhyme;
> To *whisper* to a King in modern time,
> And try to strike a Royal *foible* dead!
> While dauntless *thou* of treason makest no bones,
> But strikest at *Kings themselves* upon their thrones."

The poet has at least a dozen flings at Paine. He wrote more than he published. Royall Tyler is quoted as follows: "I have preserved an epigram of Peter Pindar's written originally in a blank leaf of a copy of Paine's 'Age of Reason,' and not inserted in any of his works.

> "'Tommy Paine wrote this book to prove that the Bible
> Was an old woman's dream of fancies most idle;
> That Solomon's proverbs were made by low livers,
> That prophets were fellows who sang demi-quavers;
> That religion and miracles all were a jest,
> And the devil in torment a tale of the priest.
> Though Beelzebub's absence from hell I'll maintain,
> We all must allow that the Devil's in Paine.'"

Wolcot's lampoons whetted public curiosity to see what Paine had written, and thus the satirist did good without intending to. Peter Pindar's work was local and temporary, and the last edition of his poems was published in 1816. He probably had no thought that the fame of the man he calumniated would be taking on a new lustre a half century after he himself was forgotten and his rhymes had ceased to amuse.

Page 110. Aben Ezra: A Spanish Jew and commentator on the

Bible, born at Toledo (in Spain) about 1090–1100. Spinoza: A pantheistic philosopher born of Jewish parents at Amsterdam in 1632. Satan: The occurrence of the word in Job is not "the first and only time this name is mentioned in the Bible" (when Paine says "Bible" he means the Old Testament). It appears at 1 Chron. xxi, 1, the marginal reading in the Revised Version being "an adversary;" and in Zechariah iii, 1; marginal, "*the* Adversary." In the King James translation Satan is mentioned in Psalms cix, 6, but the revisers have substituted "an adversary." The New Testament writers use the word some thirty-five times.

Page 114. Jest-books. "Paine had for some time [prior to 1797] been attaining unique fame in England. Some publisher had found it worth while to issue a book, entitled 'Tom Paine's Jests: Being an entirely new and select Collection of Patriotic Bon Mots, Repartees, Anecdotes, Epigrams, &c., on Political Subjects. By Thomas Paine.' There are hardly half a dozen items by Paine in the book (72 pages), which shows that his name was considered marketable" (Conway's "Life of Thomas Paine," ii, 268). Before Paine's arrival in America from France a Scotchman named Donald Fraser had written a long Recantation for him, the title page being so worded as to make it appear authentic. Paine called the author to account, and the Scotchman pleaded that after trying without success to make a living by various shifts, including preaching, he had written the Recantation and got eighty dollars for it. Paine forgave him on account of his needy family, and dismissed him with some improving advice In the year 1897, a Louisville, Ky., preacher, the Rev. H. R. Coleman, vouched for by the editor as "an esteemed minister of the Kentucky conference, Methodist church South, had the assurance to send this "Recantation" to the Louisville Dispatch, where it was printed in the issue of that paper for April 25, as the *bona fide* expression of Paine's regret for his "inconsiderate attack on the Christian religion." The Rev. Coleman asserts that it "bears every mark of genuineness and authorship by Thomas Paine, as anyone who is acquainted with the writing of Tom Paine can easily see." He then vouches for the "correctness and genuineness" of the copy he has made "on the highest principles of Christian integrity." His integrity is on a level with that of the London publisher of one hundred years ago who, to combat the "pernicious doctrine of Paine" that 'there is no God," issued a tract in which the evidences of divine existence adduced were taken from Paine's own works.

Page 115. Ecclesiastes. Luther declared that Solomon did not write the book of Ecclesiastes. Professor Delitzsch, the eminent and orthodox Hebrew scholar, assigned Ecclesiastes to the latest date of

any book of the Hebrew Bible. The Encyclopedia Britannica has this ironical remark: "On the Continent, where Biblical criticism has been cultivated to the highest degree, and where Old Testament exegesis has become an exact science, the attempt to prove that Solomon is not the author of Ecclesiastes would be viewed in the same light as adducing facts to demonstrate that the earth does not stand still."

Page 119. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son" (Isaiah vii, 14), "It certainly was not a difficult thing, in any time of the world, to find a girl with child, or to make her so; and perhaps Isaiah knew of one beforehand" (Paine). This "perhaps" is a good guess at the truth, for the revised version of Isaiah puts the matter in the present tense and gives the marginal reading: "A maiden is with child, and beareth a son."

Page 143. The immaculate conception as known to the church has to do with the fœtal life of the Virgin Mary, and not that of Christ, whose conception was "miraculous." The confusing of miraculous and immaculate is a common but unimportant error.

Page 157, footnote. "The spurious addition to Paine's work alluded to in his footnote drew on him a severe criticism from Dr. Priestley ('Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever,' p. 75), yet it seems to have been Priestley himself who, in his quotation, first incorporated into Paine's text the footnote added by the editor of the American edition (1794). The American added: 'Vide Moshiem's (*sic*) Ecc. History,' which Priestley omits" (Conway's ed. A. of R., p. 171). Mr. Conway observes in his Life of Paine (ii, 195) that "while Paine in Paris was utilizing the ascent of the footnote to his text, Dr. Priestley in Pennsylvania was using it to show Paine's untrustworthiness!" The addition occurs immediately after the word "God," in the ninth line on page 16. Priestley's criticism was as follows: "As to the gospel of Luke being carried by a majority of one only, it is a legend, if not of Mr. Paine's own invention, of no better authority whatever."

Paine in Yorktown, Pa. Foreseeing that Philadelphia would fall into the hands of the British – as it did on Sept. 27, 1777 – the American Congress placed itself on the other side of the Susquehanna river, adjourning first to Lancaster and later to Yorktown, where its sessions were held until June of the following year. Paine, having been appointed (April 17, 1777) secretary of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, followed the Congress to York. It was here that he wrote numbers of his "Crisis." An extended account of "Thomas Paine at Yorktown" was printed in the New York Truth Seeker, June 4, 1898.

The Photogravure frontispiece in this book is from the Romney

portrait of Paine now owned by J. H. Johnston of New York. This painting was exhibited in London in the Paine collection, and pronounced by experts to be either the original painting or a direct copy of that painting. The Romney is the most accurate of the portraits painted, and in the form we present it our reproduction is the best picture of Paine in print.

Acknowledgment. The frequency with which the name of Dr. Moncure D. Conway appears in our Preface and in this Appendix reveals the extent of our indebtedness to that distinguished author for information regarding Thomas Paine. That indebtedness is hereby acknowledged. Without recourse to the writings of Dr. Conway, none of the works of Thomas Paine can be published accurately or intelligently edited. In 1892 he published the Life of Paine in two volumes, from the press of G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London. Here the Author-Hero of the Revolution first secured adequate treatment at the hands of a biographer. Though a half dozen others have been issued, this is the only Life of Paine we can conscientiously recommend as thorough. Following the Life, Dr. Conway published (1894–96) the Writings of Thomas Paine, from the same press, in which the author's works appear with completeness, and with historical, introductory, and marginal matter of the greatest interest and value. His edition of THE AGE OF REASON, bound separately from the other writings of Paine, derives its excellence from the editor's introduction and notes, and from the correctness of its text. Thanks beyond expression are due Dr. Conway from all admirers of that "great Commoner of Mankind, founder of the Republic of the World, and emancipator of the human mind and heart, THOMAS PAINE."

INDEX.