THE DIVINE INSPIRATION

OF THE

Holy Scriptures

VINDICATED AGAINST THE OBJECTIONS

CONTAINED IN

'THE AGE OF REASON,' by THOMAS PAINE.

BY THOMAS SCOTT,
Rector of Aston Sandford.

Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

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PREFACE.

As the author has entirely written over again his former work against 'The Age of Reason,' with every improvement, which he was capable of making; and as, while he has greatly abridged it, he has added much new matter, and several striking quotations, especially from Bp. Watson; this present may more properly be considered as a new publication on the subject, at the close of his life and labours, than merely as an abridgment. The pages, in the former work referred to in 'The Age of Reason,' not answering, as he supposes, to those in the later editions; and he not having any inclination to ransack that work afresh, has wholly omitted those references. Should his pamphlet fall into the hands of those, who are conversant with 'The Age of Reason;' they will know where to look for the passages referred to, or quoted: but he rather writes in the hope of meeting the objections, which late events have occasioned to be so generally circulated in Newspapers, and periodical pamphlets, that many thousands are brought acquainted with them, who never saw, or never may see, the book itself. And if he has shewn all the leading objections to be either frivolous, or the result of ignorance, error, misrepresentation, and calumny; and to establish the divine inspiration of the sacred scriptures, on the firmest grounds; so as, in comparatively a few instances, to preserve those who were in danger of being seduced by these pestileft delusions, he would be very thankful to the God of salvation, and count his labour richly recompensed.

Aston Sandford,
Dec. 23, 1819.

THOMAS SCOTT.
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MR. PAINÉ'S work by no means accords to its title. 'The Age of Reason' is far more replete with wit, and rhetorical flourishes, than with solid argument, or sober discussion. It is in fact an attempt to reduce to practice Lord Shaftsbury's famous maxim, that *ridicule is the test of truth*; except that scurrility and acrimony generally predominate. It is easy to answer Mr. P.'s reasonings, in which there is very little that is new: but his confident assertions, vehement declamations, and smart repartees, are very imposing. Every reader of such a book ought therefore to pause, from time to time, and seriously to ask himself, What argument does this contain?

When Mr. P. thought himself near death, he rejoiced that he had published the first part of 'The Age of Reason.' This indeed proved the *sincerity of his enmity to the Bible*; but not that his opinion of the Bible was well grounded. Should a Christian adduce such a circumstance, as a proof that his principles were true, he would be counted an enthusiast. He elsewhere swears, that he thinks the Christian religion is not true; and concludes his Deistical creed, by saying 'So help me God.' This is an advance above all preceding infidels, and may
evidence that he was sincere in his opposition to the gospel; and so was Saul of Tarsus. (Acts xxvi, 9.) But was he right in his opinion on the subject?

Mr. P. professes to draw all his arguments against the Scriptures from the Scriptures themselves. This is specious, and politick, but very delusive.

'In case any of your readers should think you had not put forth your whole strength, by not referring for proof of your opinion to ancient authors; lest they should suspect that all ancient authors are in your favour, I will venture to affirm, that had you made a learned appeal to all the ancient books in the world, sacred or profane, Christian, Jewish, or Pagan; instead of lessen- ing, they would have established the authority of the Bible as the word of God.' Bp. Watson.

Though priests be not allowed to pay the same regard to their credit, interest, or even subsistence, as all other men do without censure; yet they are bound in conscience, and office to defend the Bible: and why should they not be as competent to write on religion, or in defence of it, as other men are concerning their several professions?
BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAP. I.

The Books of Moses.

By way of introducing our subject, I would observe, that the credit given to the Bible is often ascribed to the prejudices of education. But I am impelled to declare, that for some years I was not much more disposed to believe the scriptures than Mr. P. was: and having shaken off the shackles of Education, I was much gratified by my emancipation, and flattered myself greatly on my superior discernment, with proportionable contempt of seniors and superiors, who adhered to the faith. Yet, at length after much about forty years, diligently employed in examining the evidences and contents of the Bible; I am more and more fully convinced, that it is "THE "WORD OF GOD."

Mr. Paine undertakes to demonstrate, that Moses did not write those books, which are ascribed to him, and consequently that they are destitute of authority. This, however, would not follow: for they might be authentick records, even if written by another author.

Let us then consider a few of the most obvious proofs, that Moses did write the main substance of these books which bear his name; and that he wrote them "by "inspiration of God:" and then a little notice may properly be taken of Mr. P.'s boasted demonstration of the contrary.

1. The books themselves give plain intimations to that effect. "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord.—And "he took the book of the covenant, and read it in "the audience of the people." Exod. xxiv, 4, 7. "When "Moses had made an end of writing the words of this
“law in a book, until they were finished;—He commanded “the Levites, saying, Take this book of the law, and put “it in the sides of the ark.” Deut. xxxi, 24-26.

Reference to the law written by Moses is continually made in most of the subsequent books of the scripture. The testimony of all antiquity, Jews and Pagans; with that of the whole Christian church, and of the modern Jews, the avowed enemies of Christianity; concur in ascribing these books to Moses. Now how could such a unanimous opinion have prevailed in the world, if there had been no foundation for it? If it did not originate at the time assigned for the first publication of these books, at what time could it have been introduced? Is it possible that the whole nation of Israel should have been persuaded, that the recent writings of an anonymous impostor, were books always known and reverenced by them? Or that they had always been governed by laws, and observed weekly, monthly, and annual institutions, and been conversant with histories, which they had never seen before? If priests and princes had attempted such an imposition, and forcibly endeavoured to silence opponents; would not two parties have been formed? Would there have been no trace of it in any history? It is indeed too late to attempt disproving the claim of books, which have certainly borne the name of Moses, by the general consent of mankind much above 2000 years.

2. The history contained in these books is confirmed by the most ancient records of the pagan world, and even by the fables of the poets; and has every mark of authenticity. It indeed throws more light on the original of nations, and many other coincident subjects, than all the records of antiquity taken together.

3. The views given in the books of Moses of the moral perfections, works, and government of God, and of his self-existence, eternity, and all other attributes, is in every respect, most rational, sublime, and satisfactory; and as much excels all that the pagans wrote on these subjects, as the sun outshines a taper. The creation of the world by the one living and true God, is peculiar to these books, and the other parts of the Bible, and to writings taken from them; while obscurity and uncertainty, in this most
important matter, not only disfigures the writing of heathen poets, but awfully predominates in the speculations of their jarring sects of philosophers.

The moral law, the sum of which is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart: and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is perfectly "holy, just, and good;" and only needs to be reduced to practice, to render men happy beyond our present conception. But what Gentile ever gave such a delineation of man's duty? The judicial laws will be discovered to be wise, equitable, and beneficial, in proportion as they are well understood: and may boldly challenge a comparison, with every other code of laws, either of ancient or modern legislators. The ceremonial laws, were barriers against idolatry, ordinances of divine worship, and shadows of good things to come; for which purposes they, for the time allotted, were admirably suited; and they constitute a kind of prophecy, which is accomplished in Christ and Christianity.

4. The miracles wrought by Moses were such as could not be counterfeited. Millions of enemies as well as friends were appealed to as eye-witnesses; and if they had not been actually performed by him who recorded them, and at the time assigned; when and how could it have been possible to persuade the whole nation, that they and their forefathers had always believed them, and had in all preceding ages observed stated memorials of them? And if really performed by Moses, the authenticity and divine inspiration of the books which record them, is put beyond all doubt.

5. The prophecies contained in these books, which have been already fulfilled, and are fulfilling at this day, demonstrate the same. Not to dwell on the first promise of "the seed of the woman;" has not the prophecy of Noah concerning Ham and Canaan been fulfilling in every age to the present time? (Gen. ix, 20–27.) Has not God made the name of Abraham great, almost above every other name of antiquity? (Gen. xii, 1–3.) Has not the condition of Ishmael, Edom, and Israel, in every age, fulfilled the words of Moses respecting them? Have not the descendants of Jacob's sons been illustrious or obscure, according to the dying predictions of Jacob?
Especially, has not Judah been the most illustrious, from whom the Jews take their name? Have not the descendants of Joseph, of Ephraim in particular, been next, in eminence, as was expressly foretold? (Gen. xlviii, 17--20; xlix, 8--10; 22--26.) Have not even Balaam's prophecies, recorded in these books, been surprisingly fulfilled; especially in the dominion of the Greeks and Romans over the countries possessed by the Assyrians and Hebrews? (Numb. xxiv, 24.) And can any thing be more completely fulfilled, than the prediction, that Israel "shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations?" (Numb. xxiii, 9.) Indeed the state of the Jews for almost 1800 years, since the destruction of Jerusalem, is predicted in the most explicit and circumstantial manner. (Deut. iv, 25--29; xxviii, 49--67.) "Thus it was written, and thus it must be;" for "the scripture cannot be broken."

Finally. The testimony of our Lord and his Apostles; and every evidence, brought in proof of the divine original and authority of Christianity, confirms also that of the Old Testament in general, and the books of Moses in particular.

We will now proceed to notice a few of Mr. P.'s objections, by which he purposed to demonstrate, that the books of Moses were not written by him.

Moses could not be the author; because the writer speaks in the third person. Suppose I should argue thus, and say, 'Caesar's commentaries, or Xenophon's Anabasis, could not be written by Caesar, or Xenophon; for the writers speak in the third person.' If learned men supposed me to be in earnest, what would they think of my intellect, or competency on such subjects?

In Deuteronomy, however, Moses speaks principally in the first person, which Mr. P. says is confused, or dramatical. But it is obvious, that as the historian records facts in the third person; so the same writer delivers exhortations in the first person; far more in the way of a modern preacher, than in that of a dramatical writer.

The city Laish did not receive the name of Dan, till long after the death of Moses, yet Dan is mentioned in Genesis. (Gen. xiv, 14.) By the way, where did Mr. P. learn this, but from one of the books, which he explores
as of no authority? (Judg. xviii, 29.) If the word Dan were substituted for Laish, by Ezra, or some other person, as more intelligible to his readers than the ancient name; it can prove nothing against the substance of the history being written by Moses, in opposition to the proofs already adduced that it was so. But 'I desire it may be proved that Dan mentioned in Genesis, was the name of a town, and not of a river.---A river was full as likely as a town to stop a pursuit:---Jordan, we know,' was composed of two rivers, called Jor and Dan.' Bp. Watson. Arguments must be very scarce, when a single word is adduced, with much parade, as a full demonstration, that the books of Moses were anonymous impostures.

Without all doubt some parts of the 36th of Genesis were inserted long after the death of Moses; probably, by some transcriber making additions, from the genealogies contained in the first chapter of the first of Chronicles. Studious men have always been aware of this; and 'The Age of Reason' has not shewn that any new solution is requisite.

Zedekiah is spoken of in the 2d of Chronicles, and Mr. P. taking it for granted, that the book of Genesis was written after the books of Chronicles, concludes that 'Genesis was not extant till after the captivity: and that the first book in the Bible was written 300 years after Homer's Iliad.' But who can believe, that the whole religious system of Israel, and their whole civil polity, had existed for above a thousand years before the captivity; when the books prescribing them were unknown till after that event? And when those books, which Mr. P. allows were written before that crisis, as the Psalms especially, are very full of references to them?

In fact the history in Chronicles is brought down some generations lower than the time of Zerubbabel; (1 Chr. iii, 17-24.) and if this too were written before the books of Moses; the Jews had no written law, till within about 400 years before Christ! But at that time, the whole nation, by some strange infatuation, was led with one consent to receive the work of an anonymous impostor as sacred books, which they had always possessed, read, and obeyed; or been severely punished for disobeying!
who can believe this has no right to declaim against either ignorant priests, or their credulous dupes.

5. The size of Og’s Bedstead, and the place where Moses said it was kept, furnish Mr. P. with another demonstration. He seems to think all accounts of giants must be fabulous; and consequently that the Bible is a fable. But men of very large size are now and then seen, even in our days. Somewhat also may be allowed for royal ostentation; as Alexander the great ordered his soldiers to enlarge the size of their beds, that they might give to the Indians in succeeding ages an idea of his soldiers, as men of enormous stature. ’My philosophy teaches me to doubt of many things; but it does not teach me to reject every testimony which is opposite to my experience: had I been born in Shetland, I could, on proper testimony, have believed in the existence of the Lincolnshire ox, or of the largest dray-horse in London; though the oxen and horses in Shetland had not been bigger than mastiffs.’ Bp. Watson. I suppose Moses knew as well at that time, as Mr. Paine can now know, where the bedstead of Og had been deposited, having probably been seized, or perhaps purchased, by the Ammonites, and preserved as a curiosity.

Mr. P.’s ingenious scheme for subsisting about two millions of people for forty years, on a kind of mushroom, will doubtless amuse some readers, and with them invalidate the divine authority of the books of Moses. But as Moses lived till Israel was possessed of the countries before governed by Sihon and Og; and as he died in the plains of Moab, over against Canaan; why might he not write “The children of Israel did eat manna till they came to a land inhabited:—they did eat manna till they came to the borders of Canaan?” (Ex. xvi, 35.) And what cause is here given for Mr. P. to exclaim against the lies and contradictions of the Bible?

The historian remarks, that ‘the man Moses was meek, above all men, which were upon the face of the earth,’ (Numb. xii, 3.) ‘Therefore,’ says Mr. P. ‘Moses could not be the writer, for to boast of meekness is the averse of humility, and a lie in the sentiment.’ “Meekness,” in this connexion, is opposed to an irascible temper: and the conduct of Moses, on that and other occasions, proves
him to have been very meek. But to speak truth of ourselves is not always vain-glorious boasting. And I know no reason why other men as well as infidels, may not on some occasions, speak in their own commendation, and appeal to others for the truth of it. But Moses without any extenuation, records his own faults likewise.

The fourth commandment in Deuteronomy, varies from the original law written in the 20th of Exodus. This furnishes Mr. P. with an argument against the books of Moses. In fact, Moses, delivering a most impressive exhortation, did not confine himself to the exact words, which he had recorded as an historian. The people well knew the original ground and reason for hallowing the sabbath: and he felt himself at liberty to remind them, in that connexion, of their obligations to Jehovah their Redeemer from Egyptian bondage, and of the humanity due to their bond servants; for this constituted another important reason for hallowing the sabbath.—Certainly, Moses did not write the history of his own death and burial; and what Christian ever believed that he did? Perhaps Joshua or Eleazar added the last chapter; or it was taken from authentick records of a later date, when the words "No man know-"eth of his sepulchre to this day," were evidently fulfilled—"Moses died there in the land of Moab, according to "the word of the Lord, and he buried him." Deut. xxxiv, 5, 6. Mr. P. cannot find the antecedent in this passage, "The Lord—buried him;—lest Israel should idolize his "relicks, as they did the brazen serpent," (2 Kings xviii, 4;) or as Papists do the bones of the saints; and he made it known to his prophets by revelation.

We now proceed to objections, intended to prove the books of Moses in all respects unworthy of God.

Mr. P. says, concerning the history of the creation, 'It 'begins abruptly: it is nobody that speaks; it is addressed 'to nobody; it has neither the first, nor the second, nor 'the third person.'—Is there either argument or even com-
sists in its beautiful simplicity, and inimitable sublimity. The Pagan Longinus thought so; and the most even of infidels, of any taste in composition, will agree with him; especially if they compare it with the whimsical absurdities of the other world-makers whom Mr. P. mentions.

Many infidels have attempted to burlesque the history of the fall of Adam; though in some respects he seems to have out-done all of them. But surely, it is far more likely that the pagan fables were distorted traditions from Moses and the sacred writers, concerning apostate angels; than that these borrowed their doctrine from pagan mythology. The apostle John, in the Revelation, (Rev. xii, 7–9.) predicts important events, under the image of war in heaven, and of Satan being vanquished and cast out; which no doubt refers to the fall of angels. And that book was written long after many or most of the heathen fables. But the doctrine of fallen angels is contained in the books of the Old Testament, of much more ancient date than any of them. It is, however, certain that ‘the Christians’ did not let Satan out of the pit, to ‘introduce him into Eden:’ unless Genesis was forged after the Revelation of John was extant; and unless the Jews first received the Old Testament from the Christians, whom they despised and execrated.

Fallen angels, in Scripture, are considered, as originally the creatures of God, holy, and excellent, and glorious: but they rebelled, and apostatized, and became unholy, ambitious, malignant, and haters of God, and of his creatures. They are considered as exceedingly numerous, sagacious, powerful, malicious, and deceitful; and as united under one head, generally called Satan, or the Devil. Hence every thing done by “the Devil and his angels,” is often ascribed to the leader, personally; as it is common, in speaking of the actions performed by great princes, or generals, from Alexander to Buonaparte. Omnipresence, and Omnipotence, therefore, are not ascribed to Satan: and it is a direct calumny to say, ‘that Christian divines give him a power equally great, or even greater, than they ascribe to the Creator.’ Under certain limitations; evil spirits are permitted to tempt and prove mankind; but the Lord is represented as over-ruling the whole for the benefit of his faithful servants, and for the glory of his own great name.
Thus, Satan was permitted to tempt our first parents; and he prevailed against them: for though created perfectly holy, they were not unchangeable; immutability being a divine perfection. A test of their obedience was appointed; full warning was given them of the consequences of disobedience; yet they were inveigled by the Devil, in the form of a serpent; they actually disobeyed; and became “dead in sin,” mortal, and exposed to unspeakable sufferings in life, till they returned to the dust whence they were taken; and as “it is appointed to men once to die,” so “after death the judgment.”

Nothing is easier than ridicule, to a man, who pays no regard to piety, equity, and decorum. The transaction may be called “a tête à tête, between the serpent and the woman;” “the woman in her longing eating an apple;” “the snake persuading her to eat an apple;” and the eating of that apple damning all mankind.” But is this argument? Is it not a profane and vain attempt to be witty, on a subject of the most momentous, and mournful nature? For could the Mosaic account of the fall be explained away, as an allegory, or demonstrated to be false: the evidently ruined condition of the human race would still remain as an undeniable fact. Man is certainly depraved, and mortal, and wretched; the world is replete with moral and natural evil; the existence of sin and misery in the Creation of an infinitely good and powerful God, cannot be controverted, however it may remain unaccounted for. He could have prevented it; he did not: this presses alike upon all men, with inexplicable difficulties; except on the avowed Atheists, whose difficulties are, if possible, still greater. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

I will not here enter on a needless vindication of the justice of God, either in respect of the desert of Eve and Adam, or on the state of infants, whom we may safely leave in the hands of a just and merciful God. “Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” And, as to the consequences after death, even infidels, at some times, have their misgivings; and few indeed, if any, can permanently exclude the fears of a future and awful judgment: as the death-bed scenes of many infidels, and even of Mr. P. himself, as far as we can learn it, most fully prove.
Mr. P. can clearly see the doctrines of evil spirits in the Scriptures: but as Satan's kingdom is "the power of darkness," and he is most successful when least suspected; it is not impossible, that Mr. P. may be indebted for his most brilliant thoughts, especially such as bolt into the "mind of their own accord," to Satan's suggestions. And he may abundantly repay his obligations, even while he denies the existence of evil spirits, by endeavouring to prejudice men against the religion of him, who "was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil."

'Take away from Genesis,' says Mr. P. 'the belief that Moses was the author, on which the strange belief that it is the word of God hath stood, and nothing remains, but an anonymous book of stories,—absurdities,—or downright lies. The story of Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his ark, drop to the level with the Arabian tales, without the merit of being entertaining: and the account of men living to eight or nine hundred years, becomes as fabulous as the immortality of the giants.'

But man lives as long as God sees good: he is surely able to prolong the life of man, to what extent he pleases; and it is more wonderful: in fact, that he should at all destroy the work of his own hands; than that he should preserve it for eight or nine hundred years.

It has been shewn that the divine inspiration of the book of Genesis rests on other foundations, than merely the assumption that Moses wrote it. Traces and traditions of the general deluge are found among all nations. And this despised book contains the most satisfactory account extant in the world, of the creation, the entrance of sin, the origin of the several nations, and the history of remote ages. And, in the opinion of the most competent judges, the narrative of Joseph is the most pathetic and interesting, that ever was written.

Balak, king of Moab, not succeeding in his project of getting Balaam to curse Israel; the covetous prophet put him in the way of seducing them to bring a curse upon themselves; by means of the Midianitish women, with whom committing fornication, they were allured unto idolatry also: so that 24,000 of Israel fell in one day. Moses was therefore commanded to avenge Israel on the Midian-
ites. Twelve thousand of Israel invaded the country, and by the immediate aid of God, vanquished the Midianites, without the loss of one man; and took an immense spoil, and a very great number of captives. This Mr. P. calls a plundering excursion.

But afterwards Moses ordered all the grown women to be put to death: and this excites his indignant declamation. Yet in fact these were the principal delinquents on whom God had commanded him to avenge Israel; and had they been spared, they would have been still the seducers of God’s people to fornication and idolatry. The male infants also were commanded to be put to death: and had they been spared, they would have been the avowed avengers of Midian’s cause. The guilt contracted was adjudged by the Lord of the world, to be a national sin; and he was pleased, that it should be thus punished: but of this somewhat more presently.

By divine command the virgins were spared to the number of 32,000 persons: and Mr. P. says, ‘that an order was given to debauch the daughters; and, that the whole number was consigned to debauchery.’ Could he indeed prove this, he would have a strong ground to declaim against Moses and all concerned, and to dispute against their profession of acting by commission from God; who cannot, without denying himself, command any one to violate his own holy and righteous laws. ‘Prove this, or excuse my warmth if I say to you, as Paul said to Elymas, the sorcerer, “O full of all subtlety and all mischief, “thou child of the Devil; thou enemy of all righteousness, “wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the “Lord?” I did not, when I began these letters, think that I should have been moved to this severity of rebuke; but when so gross a misrepresentation is made of God’s proceedings, coldness would be a crime.’ Bp. Watson.

But where did Mr. P. learn, that the Israelites were ever allowed to debauch their female slaves? Certainly not in the books of Moses. For the law of Moses forbade an Israelite even to marry a captive, without delays and previous formalities; and if afterwards he divorced her, he was bound to set her at liberty “because he had humbled her.” (Deut. xxiv, 10–14.). They were then allowed.
nothing more, but to retain these captives as slaves, educating them in their families, and employing them as domesticks.

The male children, however, as well as the women, were consigned to the slaughter: and was not this very dreadful? Certainly; and very wicked also, if Moses did it of his own mind, and to gratify his own passions. But this coincides with some other subjects of a similar nature: namely the orders given by Moses, and executed by Joshua, and Israel, in the indiscriminate slaughter of the Canaanites and Amalekites.

All those, who declaim against the directors, and executioners, in these transactions, argue completely in a circle, and beg the question. They assume it, as self-evident that the just and merciful God could never require them, to do this work of extirpation; that they were, of course, most cruel and unjust in doing it; and consequently, that God would never reveal himself to mankind by such monsters of iniquity.

But should they not first of all prove, that the Judge of all the earth could not justly give these orders? Till this be demonstrated, all their conclusions must be false or disputable; and all their virulent declamations, mere rhetorical arts of imposing on the understanding, by appealing to the passions.

A judge may condemn a criminal to die, and the authorized person may execute the sentence, without committing murder or even injustice; yet if an unauthorized person should kill him, he would be adjudged a murderer.

Now man is surely accountable to his Creator: wickedness deserves punishment; and the supreme Judge may inflict deserved punishment in what manner he sees good. According to the scriptures, death, in every form, is the execution of a righteous sentence, against men, as sinners: and all our maladies and miseries, terminating, as to this world, in death, constitute the execution of that awful sentence. The justice of God is also the same, in whatever way the sentence is executed. The Canaanites, and Amalekites, and others were sinners against the Lord exceedingly; and their atrocious guilt is described in the most energetick language.
Now will any man contend, that he might not justly have extirpated them by deluges, pestilences, or earthquakes? Will any one maintain, that it would have been unjust in an angel, to execute the divine mandate, for extirpating them, as Sennacherib's army was slain? And why might not the Lord select a nation, and a commander of that nation, and sealing the commission by publick and undeniable miracles, command, require, and enable them, to extirpate an abominable race, who had filled up the measure of their iniquities? (Gen. xv, 16.) Should it be urged, that famines, earthquakes, inundations, pestilences, though equally destructive, do not run so counter to our notions of God, and of his moral government: it might suffice to answer, that our notions on these subjects are not uniformly right, nay far more commonly erroneous; "the world by wisdom knew not God." But it will, I trust, appear, that this very circumstance illustrates the wisdom of God, in thus varying from his general conduct.

But, says Mr. P. 'wherein could crying or smiling 'infants offend? To read without horror of their 'slaughter must undo every thing tender, sympathizing, 'and benevolent in our nature; and the sacrifice I must 'make to believe the Bible would be sufficient to deter- 'mine my choice.'—Unbelief then is the effect of choice: not the result of deliberate, impartial examination of evidence. Who indeed can read of the ravages made by a conflagration, the miseries of a famine or pestilence, or the desolations of an earthquake, without horror? Yet who disbelieves a well-attested narrative of such events on that account? And I fear, Mr. P.'s principles will lead his followers, for the same reasons; to choose to disbelieve in any particular agency of Providence, or of the God of nature, in the terrible and undistinguishing desolations, which continually occur in the affairs of men. The execution of criminals is never intended to gratify the finer feelings of benevolence, but calculated to excite horror; yet no sober man will declaim against them, and revile all concerned in them as sanguinary monsters. The aversion which men feel against the scriptural history in this respect, above all other records of bloodshed and destruction, arises from the self-flattery of the human heart; and
because these executions directly contradict all men’s pal-
liating notions concerning the evil of sin, and the de-
merit of despising and rebelling against God.

No doubt every humane heart revolts from the idea of
slaughtering infants, who have never offended; yet infants
die by thousands and millions all over the world, and with
far more suffering and pain, than a speedy, undreaded
death by the sword would occasion.—In various ways
children suffer, in this world, by reason of their parents’
crimes; and parents are punished in the sufferings and
death of their children. Even if the smiling or crying
babes are supposed to have been as sinless as angels, God
is able to over-rule their sufferings and death, for their
everlasting advantage. Set aside the doctrine of original
sin, and allow pain and death, to be the appointment of
God, and deny the future happiness of infants dying with-
out actual transgression; and I could declaim as plausibly,
and as vehemently, against the conduct of God, in this
respect, as Mr. P. does against the Bible; had I no more
reverence for the works, than he has for the word of God.*

But if some important ends were answered by the pe-
culiar method in which God punished the Canaanites and
others; not only is this objection obviated, but the divine
wisdom is illustrated, and a presumptive argument afforded
that these books are a revelation from God. If then the
Canaanites were addicted to the most abominable idolatries,
and most unnatural lusts; if their altars reeked with hu-
man sacrifices, and their worship was connected with the
most shameless impurities; and if this was notoriously
the case, to inflict vengeance on them in a way as unpre-
cedented as their crimes were atrocious, was suited to
produce durable and extensive effects on all the surround-

* 'We believe that the earth, at the express command of God,
opened her mouth, and swallowed up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram,
with their wives, their sons, and their little ones. This you esteem
so repugnant to moral justice, that you spurn as spurious, the book
in which the circumstance is related. When Catania, Lima, and
Lisbon, were severally destroyed by earthquakes, men with their
wives, their sons, and their little ones, were swallowed up alive:—
why do you not spurn as spurious the book of nature, in which this
fact is certainly written, and from the perusal of which you infer
the moral justice of God?' Bp. Watson.
ing nations. The world had been destroyed by a deluge; Sodom and Gomorrah, by fire from heaven; and Egypt desolated by ten tremendous plagues.—Let, however, anoth¬er, and hitherto unexampled, way of taking vengeance on guilty nations, be adopted. Let the powerful hand and awful justice of Israel's God, as contrasted with the idols of other nations, be exhibited in another form. Let his hand be rendered conspicuous and tremendous, by com¬missioning Israel his people to extirpate the guilty nations; and by enabling them, beyond all human probability, and in defiance of all their idols, to execute that commission.

The sufferings, especially of the women and children, would not be greater, nor more indiscriminating, than an inundation, an earthquake, or fire from heaven would have caused; the example would be far more impressive: for these events are commonly ascribed to second causes, and God is forgotten in them; but the success of Israel, and the extermination of devoted nations, would stand recorded, as the judgment and work of Israel's God, to all future generations. It was especially calculated to warn the Israelites against the abominations which they were commissioned to punish; and they were assured that if they imitated them, they would be visited in a similar manner. *Lev. xviii, 22--30; Jos. xxiii, 15, 16.*

The whole history throws immense light on the plan of the divine government; it shews that sin deserves far more severe punishment, than men naturally imagine: it teaches all who reverence the Bible, to fear the wrath of God, to submit to his righteousness, and to seek his mercy; and the beneficial effects of these judgments, to very great multitudes, in other ages and nations, exceeds all calculation.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness of it;" and who dare deny his right to give what portion of it he pleased to his worshippers? He gave Israel the forfeited possession of the Canaanites, and they in his name claimed it, and enforced their claim, and aided by Omnipotence succeeded. Such of the inhabitants as submitted, were treated with clemency: and others might have been spared, if they had not hardened their hearts in defiance of Almighty God. (*Josh. xi, 19, 20.*)
It by no means appears that Israel, in general, contracted ferocious habits, by this exterminating war: few nations, if any, ever engaged less frequently, or in fewer offensive wars, than Israel: and their agricultural habits, with other circumstances, operated against such wars of ambition and conquest. If any individuals, or the nation in some instances, did gratify a ferocious spirit, they proportionably violated their own laws, which required love to neighbours, strangers, and enemies.

The most remote shadow of proof cannot be adduced that Moses carried on war under pretence of religion. He made no proselytes by the sword; and neither he nor any other person, mentioned with approbation in scripture, made war on any nation, beyond the borders of the promised land, because they were idolaters. If any man plead the example of Moses, or Joshua, as a precedent for exterminating wars; let him work such miracles in proof of his commission as they did. Otherwise he will deserve the indignant reproach, which Mr. P. has poured out against some of the most excellent persons, that ever appeared on earth.

Mr. P. virulently reprobates the law, which condemns the stubborn and rebellious son to be stoned! (Deut. xxii, 18–21.) But let it be considered, that by this law, the parents were the only allowed prosecutors; and both parents must concur. The prosecution was not admitted except for contemptuous and obstinate rebellion against parental authority, gluttony, and drunkenness; crimes destructive to families and communities. These offences must be fully proved, so as to induce the elders to condemn and order the execution of the criminal. Natural affection would almost always prevent the prosecution; the required proof would secure all, but the most atrociously criminal, from the hasty rage, or the deliberate malice of those few parents, who were capable of such desperate wickedness, as combining to murder their own children. We do not read of any instance in the whole history of this law having been carried into execution. If however, such an extraordinary event at any time occurred; it could not fail to excite general notice, and to produce a deep and lasting impression on the minds of both parents.
and children. So that the solemn execution of one incorrigible criminal would be a most salutary warning to tens of thousands. The very existence of such a law would confirm greatly the authority of parents, and give energy to their admonitions; as well as fortify the minds of young persons against various temptations; and so prevent crimes. And it would constantly excite all parents, who attended to the law of Moses, to restrain, correct, and watch over their children, when young; to give them good instruction, set them a good example, and pray for them without ceasing; and to keep them as much as possible out of bad company, and from contracting bad habits.

This law, therefore, so harmless and beneficial in its operations, yet so contrary to human policy, proves, instead of invalidating, the divine original of that code, in which alone it is found.

And now, what do all these objections amount to, when stripped of the attempt to be witty, the ridicule, the reviling, the scoffing, and declamation, with which they are seasoned? A few frivolous, and a few groundless cavils, are called demonstrations: and the author deems himself warranted to treat not only Moses, but all the prophets and priests as liars and impostors, and to abuse them in terms even still more gross, which I shall not repeat. If his book had not more to recommend it to the hearts of ungodly men, than to the understandings of impartial enquirers after truth, it would not be worth while to notice it.

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CHAP. II.

THE HISTORICAL BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Joshua.

This book is named from Joshua, either as the author, or the principal subject of it: and it is probable that the substance of it was written by him. (xxiv, 26.) The writer speaks of himself, as a person concerned in the transactions which he relates; (v, 1,) and the mention of
'Rahab, as still living in Israel, implies that he was a con-
temporary. (vi, 25.) But some passages doubtless were
added afterwards, perhaps by Phinehas, or rather by a
subsequent prophet, (xix, 47; xxiv, 29-33.) Preface to
Joshua, Family Bible. It does not appear, that any thing
further is needful to obviate Mr. P.'s objections to the
book of Joshua on this ground.

It is certainly a very ancient record: and it attests that
the written law of Moses was extant, when it was com-
piled. (xxiii, 6; xxiv, 28.) The whole of the subsequent
history of Israel stands inseparably connected with it, as
recording the division of the land among their tribes and
families. And it is referred to in the New Testament,
as authentick history, (Acts xiii, 19; Heb. iv, 8.) and
quoted in a manner, which both honours it, and the whole
word of God. (Comp. Josh. i, 5; Heb. xiii, 5.)

"The book of Jasher" seems to have been a collection
of records and poems, made at the time when the events
happened: and it would have been absurd in the extreme
for the historian to refer to it, had it not been then known,
and considered as authentick.

Horace, a man of great genius, gloried that his poems
would be celebrated in all future ages: and Mr. P. speaks
of his own fame, as celebrated on both sides of the Atlan-
tick: yet the book of Joshua must be rejected as spurious,
because the writer says of Joshua, "His fame was noised
"through all that country!" (vi, 27.)

Joshua was about to assault Jericho, "and there stood
"a man over against him, with his sword drawn in his
"hand, and he said, As Captain of the Lord's host am I
"now come." "Loose thy shoes from off thy feet; for
"the place whereon thou standest, is holy. And Joshua
"did so," (v, 13-15.) "And what then?" says Mr. P.
"Nothing: here ends the story and the chapter too."--
Here, it is true, 'ends the chapter;' and the division of
the chapters, (a modern arrangement) is here peculiarly
judicious. But the story proceeds; and the Captain of the
Lord's hosts, now called JEHOVAH, promises to deliver up
Jericho into Joshua's hands, and directs him how to con-
duct the assault: and Joshua following these directions is
completely successful. (vi.)
To put off the shoes was a customary token of reverence in the worship of God, (Ex. iii, 5;) and was imitated in many heathen nations. Joshua's conduct, if he who appeared to him was no more than a man, was idolatry, as Mr. P. supposes: let Socinians answer this on their principles: but Joshua owned and worshipped Jehovah, as thus appearing in human form. (Gen. xviii, 33; xxxii, 28-30; xlviii, 15, 16; John i, 18.)

This champion of infidelity ridicules the miracle of the sun standing still at the command of Joshua: but wit and humour are not arguments, and a descant on 'the sublime and the ridiculous,' does not prove the fact to be impossible with God. It is unreasonable to expect any record of such an event in authentick pagan history; the very beginning of which is of far later date: but some traces of it are supposed to be discoverable in Herodotus; and the fable of Phaeton, for one day driving the chariot of the sun, is a plain intimation of a tradition, that one day had occurred unlike all that preceded or followed it. Had the writer used the language of modern astronomy, in recording it, the objection to the antiquity of the book would have been more plausible. Indeed no modern astronomer would have done it, in a popular narrative. And all objections may be answered in our Lord's words, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."

The cavils on the Book of Judges are few and frivolous. The writer says, "Judah had fought against Jerusalem, "and taken it." (i, 8.) Mr. P. expressly contradicts him: but it appears from other places, that Judah or Benjamin had taken, and were possessed of Jerusalem, long before David took Mount Zion. (Josh. xv, 63; xviii, 28; Judg. i, 21; 2 Sam. v, 6, 8.)

There is allowedly some difficulty in the chronology of this book; but how this can prove 'the fabulous and uncertain state of the Bible' does not appear. It were easy to shew that the events recorded in it, are referred to as certain facts, in almost all the subsequent parts of the scriptures. (1 Sam. xii, 11; 2 Sam. xi, 21; Ps. lxxxii, 9-11; Is. x, 26; Hos. x, 9; Heb. xi, 32.)

Mr. P. thinks the book of Ruth a humping story: but
very competent judges have thought otherwise. It is a
direct, and inexcusable calumny to call Ruth "a strolling
"country girl, &c." and a slander invented for the express
purpose of calumniating the word of God. She had been
married, and acted very honourably for nearly ten years;
and had been long esteemed as a virtuous widow: and her
conduct and character were approved by all those con-
cerned in the transactions; though some particulars do
not accord to modern usages. The simple piety and bene-
volence of Boaz is worthy of admiration, and imitation:
and the book contains a genealogy of David, which is re-

Mr. P.'s argument, to prove that the whole of the books
of Samuel was not written by him, is perfectly conclusive:
for most of the events happened after his death. But it by
no means proves, that they are destitute of authority; or
not authentick history, and divinely inspired.—Perhaps
they were called 'The Books of Samuel,' as contain-
ing the history of that revolution in Israel, from the govern-
ment of judges, to that of kings, which began in his days,
and in which he acted so conspicuous a part. But the
titles of the books in scripture, are not considered as of
divine authority: and the title of 'The First and Se-
cond Books of Kings,' as they are called by the Sep-
tuagint, and the Vulgate, seems more appropriate. Pro-
bably they were brought into their present form, from the
original records, by Nathan, and Gad, or other prophets in
the days of David. The history contained in them has
every mark of authenticity, and it is assumed as true and
indisputable, throughout the remaining part of scriptural his-
tory and prophecy; but especially in the book of Psalms.

The writer of these books is not answerable for the
crimes or folly, which it records, whether of Saul, or any
other man. Mr. P. says, 'Many senseless and broken
'passages are found in the Bible,' for instance, "Saul
"reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years
"he chose him two thousand men." (1 Sam. xiii, 1.) That
is, nothing remarkable happened in the first year of his
reign, but in the second year, (or "after two years" ac-
cording to the Hebrew idiom,) the subsequent events oc-
curred. Such remarks can be made only to prejudice
superficial readers against the scriptures.
Saul executed the command of God by Samuel, in slaying without mercy even the women and children of Amalek: but, probably, out of respect to royalty, he had spared Agag, whose “sward had made women childless.” In this single instance, Samuel, who had long officiated as chief magistrate, and now acted by the command of God, “hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord:” and hatred to prophets renders even Mr. P. so humane a friend to kings, and even tyrants; that he reprobrates Samuel’s conduct in most virulent language.

Others, before Mr. P. have found a difficulty, in respect of Saul’s not knowing David, when he returned from slaying Goliath: and I shall not here attempt to shew how it may easily be reconciled with the previous history, without allowing the writer to contradict himself.

Mr. P.’s eloquent harangue, against ‘ the callous indifference and stubbornness of priests,’ is no argument against the divine inspiration of the scriptures. The true minister of religion will welcome railing and obloquy from the man, who calls the Bible ‘ a blasphemous fraud.’—Numbers will no doubt find ‘their minds tranquilised’ by his labours; which produce the same effect on those who listen to them, as the words of the serpent, “God doth know that ye shall not surely die,” did on Eve. But should they at last find themselves fatally deceived, (and how can they know that this will not be the case?) they will not own their obligations to this humane deist, at the day of judgment, and in the eternal world.

Mr. P. represents the prophets as party-men, and aduces as an instance the prophet from Judah, who prophesied against Jeroboam. No doubt he took part with the worshippers of JEHOVAH against those of the golden calves: but the old prophet at Bethel did not side with Jeroboam, though he had not honesty and courage to protest against his idolatry. Mr. P. also asserts that ‘the prophet of Judah was found dead by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel, who no doubt called him a lying prophet.’ Let the reader consider the chapter, (1 Kings xiii,) and judge of the insinuation, and of him that made it! He next attacks Elisha, as a Judahmite prophet; though he spent his life in Israel; and never prophesied in
Judah! When Joram, a very wicked king, son of tyrannical, persecuting, and idolatrous Ahab and Jezebel, along with Jehosaphat king of Israel, and the king of Edom, were in great distress; Elisha shewed respect to pious Jehosaphat, but would, shew none to Joram. In another man Mr. P. would have admired his noble spirit and conduct: but in this case he calls it 'the venomous vulgarity 'of a party prophet!'

Elisha on this occasion called for a minstrel, probably to calm his disturbed mind, and prepare it for the expected prophetick impulse. Mr. P. strangely mistakes the minstrel, or the player on the instrument, for the instrument itself! And adds, 'Elisha said, (singing most probably to the tune he was playing,) "Thus saith the Lord, make "the valley full of ditches:" 'that is,—without farce or 'fiddle, the way to get water is to dig for it.' Does this jumble of buffoonery and absurdity need an answer? None of the kings or military commanders expected to find water by digging in that desert: whole armies have perished from thirst in similar situations: the water that filled the ditches, did not spring up in them, but "came "by the way of Edom:" the Moabites were deceived by the appearance: the kings and their armies were preserved and made victorious by Elisha's means, and according to his predictions: yet must he be branded, as venomous and virulent, for protesting against Joram's crimes, in language far milder, than Mr. P. and his friends have used against the kings of France or England! (2 Kings iii.) The conduct of Elisha, in "cursing the children of Bethel, in "the name of the Lord," (2 Kings ii, 23-25.) has been objected to by more serious, and candid, and well-informed men: but it suffices to say, that if the prophet had cursed them in his own spirit, JEHOVAH would not have sanctioned his malignity: and as the bears were not at the prophet's command, "the curse causeless," would have been harmless in its effect.

**Kings and Chronicles.**

Mr. P. says, 'the Jewish kings were in general a parcel 'of rascals:' I suppose he meant to include the kings of Israel; but these were not Jewish kings. No one of the
kings of Israel, from Jeroboam to Hosea, has a good character given him by the historians; and their history is indeed that of 'assassinations, treachery and war:' for all were apostates from God, and idolaters, and most of them cruel and murderous usurpers. The tyranny and persecution of Ahab and his family had been so detestable; that if a Brutus had stabbed any of them; or a modern convention had doomed them to the scaffold; the deed would have been applauded by men of Mr. P's principles: but when God employed Jehu to execute his righteous vengeance on them, it becomes murder and assassination.

Ahab's seventy descendants, whom Mr. P. speaks of as 'smiling infants,' were most of them at least grown men: and they were slain by the elders of Jezreel, who had been Jezebel's instruments in the murder of Naboth and his sons. We are no more required to vindicate the conduct of JeBu, in these transactions; than to insist on the virtue of the executioner, in justifying the punishment of a murderer. (2 Kings x, 29-31; Hos. i, 4.)

In Judah, from David to Josiah inclusive, comprising nearly four hundred and fifty years, the throne was filled with David's posterity in lineal descent: nor was there all the while, one revolution, or civil war; and but one short interruption by Athaliah's usurpation. The reigns of David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah, amount together to three hundred and thirteen years of this period; to which may be added the year of Joash, during the life of Jehoiada, with the latter years of Manasseh: by far the greatest part of these years were passed either in profound peace, or remarkable prosperity. Of the whole number of kings, two were slain in battle, (2 Kings ix, 27; xxiii, 29.) three were murdered by their own servants, none of whom succeeded to the throne, all the rest died natural deaths. (2 Chr. xxiv, 25; xxv, 27; xxxiii, 24, 25.) Let any impartial man, then, compare the state of Judah, from the accession of David, to the death of Josiah, with the same term of years in the history of Greece or Rome; and he will be constrained to allow, that the condition of Judah was far preferable. How many revolutions, usurpations, murder of reigning kings, and civil wars carried on with savage cruelty, occur in the history
of England, during the space of four hundred and fifty years? yet who thinks this a sufficient reason for indiscriminate railing against the English nation.

The wickedness of the nation of Israel was doubtless very great; and was severely punished, as directly contrary to their holy law and peculiar obligations. It decisively proves the depravity of human nature: yet when compared with the conduct of other nations, even Greece and Rome, it suffers nothing by the comparison. But the crimes of idolaters are concealed or excused: while those of God’s professed worshippers are painted in the most horrid colours, that ingenuity and malignity can devise, and aggravated by palpable and shameful misrepresentations: and all this, in order to expose the scriptures to obloquy and contempt!

Mr. P. asserts that the genealogy from Adam to Saul takes up ‘the first nine chapters of Chronicles;’ but he who will for himself examine them, will see how little Mr. P. knew of the subject, and how entirely incompetent he is for his bold attempt.

The books of Chronicles are not, as many inadvertently suppose, a repetition of the books of kings: but consist in a considerable degree of history, not contained in those books. The second book of Chronicles especially contains: the history of Judah exclusively, from the revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, and gives a much more copious narrative, than that found in Kings. The latter resembles a history of England and Scotland carried on together, with continual transitions from the one to the other. The books of Chronicles resemble the history of England alone; in which the affairs of Scotland are only mentioned, when connected with those of England.

What does Mr. P. mean, by reviling the historians as ‘impostors and liars,’ because they do not relate exactly the same events? Had they written the history of the same kingdom, they surely would have selected the peculiar facts, which they deemed it proper to record: for no historian can record every thing. But the writer of the Books of the Chronicles had nothing immediately to do with the affairs of the kingdom of Israel. He who writes the annals of England is not bound to relate the edicts and
acts of the French convention: and should some writer, in future ages, on this ground assert that the historians of England and France did not believe one another, they knew each other too well; he would not obtain much credit, either for his candour, or his penetration. Now the instances adduced by Mr. P. as omissions in Chronicles, belong to the history of Israel, not of Judah. The other objections to these books, are too frivolous to need any answer.

Ezra and Nehemiah.

Mr. P. speaks of Ezra and Nehemiah, as if they returned with the first Jews from Babylon. He says, 'The book of Ezra was written immediately after, or about five hundred and thirty-six years before Christ, and Nehemiah was another of the returned persons, who wrote an account of the same affair.' This only shews his consummate ignorance of the contents of these books. The temple, after many delays, was completed some time before Ezra arrived at Jerusalem; which occurred, in the judgment of the most competent chronologers, nearly eighty years after Cyrus’s decree. Nehemiah obtained his commission thirteen years afterwards, and relates none of the same events. The difficulties, concerning the genealogies, however solved, are no proof that the whole history is false, or uncertain.

Mr. P. seems to allow that Ezra and Nehemiah wrote the books ascribed to them: but he says, ‘they are nothing to us.’ Surely he forgets, that the prophecy of Jeremiah was extant when the book of Ezra was written, and the liberation of the Jews by Cyrus, was a declared fulfilment of Jeremiah’s predictions. Ezra i, 1. We may also add, that these two books so constantly refer to all the preceding parts of scripture, at least from the days of Moses; that they fully prove these books to have been then extant, and received by the Jews as authentick records of divine authority: and this concession fully confutes all his assertions and conjectures, about the time when the books of Moses were forged, and first known to the Jews.

Esther.

‘If Madam Esther,’ says Mr. P. ‘thought it any honour
‘to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus, &c.’
Now where did he learn, that Esther thus offered herself to be the king’s ‘kept mistress?’ Certainly, not from the history itself.—Such calumniating, and groundless insinuations, too much resemble the conduct of hypocritical priests, who say, ‘if the people chose to be deceived, let them be deceived.’

CHAP. III.

FROM JOB TO SOLOMON’S SONG.

Job.

Mr. P. speaks respectfully of this book; but tries to prove it of Gentile extraction. Certainly Job was not an Israelite, and probably the book was written before the promulgation of the Mosaic law. It coincides, however, so fully with the other Scriptures, both in its doctrines and standard of holy practice, that no part of the Old Testament speaks more strongly of human depravity, of the impossibility of man’s justifying himself before God, of “a Redeemer who would stand at the latter day upon the earth,” and of the resurrection from the dead; or of the presumption of our reasonings against the works and ways of God: and the New Testament scarcely exceeds the delineation of that law of love, by which Job avowed that he had regulated his conduct: comp. Job xxi, xxii, with Matt. v–vii; Rom. xii.—‘The word SATAN, is not mentioned,’ says Mr. P. ‘except in Job.’ The reader may judge of the accuracy of this dashing writer, even in respect of the English Bible, by turning to the following texts. 1 Chr. xxi, 1; Ps. cix, 6; Zech. iii, 1, 2.

He says ‘Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus’ (Job ix, 9; xxxviii, 31, 32.) ‘are Greek names; and that the Jews were so ignorant of Astronomy, that they had no words answerable to them.’ And this also proves, that he is merely a reader of the English Bible; for the Hebrew contains no such words, but has Chima, Asp, and Chassil in the place of
them. Besides which, neither Job nor the writer of the book was a Jew.

Psalms.

If "the Spirit of God spake," by the Psalmist; most, if not all of those passages, which Mr. P. (following a number of less inflammatory objectors,) calls 'revengeful,' were prophecies, and denunciations of divine wrath, on the enemies of the promised Messiah; which have undeniably, and most tremendously been accomplished. Mr. P. considers the Psalms of David, to be nothing but a collection from different song-writers. Undoubtedly the book forms a collection of the most beautiful odes, and the most exalted strains of heavenly devotion extant in the world; compared with which, the odes of Anacreon, Pindar, and Horace, appear, in general frivolous, and in most things "earthly, sensual, devilish."

The Psalms ascribed to David, so wonderfully coincide with his history, as recorded in the books of Samuel, that they reciprocally establish each other's authority. Several Psalms, however, were written by other prophets: and no sober man ever thought that David wrote the 137th Psalm. But it serves the purpose of buffoonery thus to consider it; and gives occasion to the writer of declaring against the imposition of the Bible, and of diverting his readers with the whimsical fancy of 'a man's walking in procession at his own funeral.' But is this becoming an inquirer after truths of the highest possible importance?

Proverbs.

At a time, when Mr. P. had no Bible, he decided, as he informs us, that the Proverbs of Solomon were inferior to those of the Spaniards, or to the maxims of Dr. Franklin! He now, however, allows that there is some wisdom in them. But as he considers the Psalms as a song-book; so he seems, consistently enough, to regard 'the Proverbs as a jest-book. It was the fashion of those days to make 'proverbs, as it is now to make jest-books.' If so, that was the age of reason; and this is the Age of folly: for surely, wise Proverbs are more reasonable, than profane, obscene, and scurrilous jests, which abound in modern jest-books.
Mr. P. highly approves Agur's prayer, as the only 'sensible, well-conceived, and well-expressed prayer in the 'Bible,' Prov. xxx, 7-9. I would then heartily recommend it to the daily and fervent use of his disciples, especially that clause, "Remove from me vanity and lies." He supposes Agur to have been a Gentile, or else probably he would not have commended his prayer. But I imagine he knows no more than the rest of us, who Agur and Lemuel were.

He adds, 'The Jews never prayed but when they were 'in trouble; and never for any thing, but' victory, ven- 'geance, and riches.' Let his disciples read Solomon's prayer for wisdom, (1 Kings iii, 9-14;) and at the dedication of the temple, (1 Kings viii,) and be ashamed of so rash and reviling a calumniation. Deliverance from injurious and hostile invaders; exemption from famine, and pesti- lences, and for plentiful harvests, constitute the far greatest part of the publick prayers which are recorded. The Psalms are full of prayers for spiritual and eternal bless- ings. Even Mr. P. commends the nineteenth Psalm: yet the latter part of it is a prayer neither for victory, ven- geance, nor riches. He who thus wantonly slanders a whole nation, is not a proper person to declaim against the wick- edness of prophets, or priests.

Ecclesiastes.

Mr. P. treats Ecclesiastes as 'the reflections of a worn- 'out debauche,' and supposes the exclamation "All is "vanity" to relate entirely to Solomon's thousand wives and concubines: and he represents him not as penitent, but melancholy. He also asserts that "Solomon had his 'house full of wives and mistresses at the age of one and 'twenty." But where did he learn this? Solomon had one wife, the mother of Rehoboam, when David died; and he soon after married Pharaoh's daughter: the Scriptures record nothing more of Solomon's conduct, in this respect, during his youth. And, 'bearing false witness,' is not excusable even in protesting against debauchery. But in fact his wives and concubines are but once hinted at, (Ec. vii, 26-28.) while the writer shews most affectingly the vanity and vexation of all earthly things; and closes, by
saying, "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man; for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." xii, 13, 14. Such language is not often heard from worn-out, melancholy, impertinent debauchees.

Solomon's Song.

Our author makes himself, and doubtless many of his readers, very merry, upon 'Solomon's songs,' as he calls this book. I agree with him that he wanted the tunes, and could not sing such songs; but this is no argument against the book itself.

The order in which the books are placed in our Bibles differs from that of the Hebrew Bible, and is a mere human arrangement. But how does this disprove the divine inspiration of the Scriptures?

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CHAP. IV.

THE PROPHETS.

Isaiah.

IT is probable, that Mr. P. is the first writer, capable of attracting much notice, who ever considered "the Book of Isaiah" as bombastical rant, extravagant metaphor, such stuff as a school boy would have been scarcely excusable in writing. The most competent critics have, on the contrary, decidedly preferred many parts of his writings, for elegance and sublimity, to all other compositions extant in the world. I shall leave Mr. P.'s admirers to settle this point with these critics.

Occasional sermons or poems are not always arranged in exact order; a cursory perusal may not enable a man to discover the regular arrangement, even where it exists: and the historical parts of the book were evidently added to illustrate the prediction, and to prevent confusion.

It is easy for one, who has no reserve in what he says, to ridicule "the burden of Damascus," or "the burden of Babylon:" but by what means could Isaiah foresee.
that Babylon, then advancing in greatness, and shortly to be the metropolis of the world, should be at length “swept with the besom of destruction?” Is. xiv, 23. At the present day it is not certainly known, where this exceedingly large and magnificent city stood! Which forms one out of very many demonstrations, that God spake by his servant Isaiah.

Mr. P. cannot say of this prediction, as he does concerning that in which Cyrus was predicted by name, above a hundred years before he was born, that the whole passage was written 150 years after Isaiah’s death, in compliment to Cyrus. This he confidently asserts; and confident assertion may pass for proof, with a large proportion of his readers. A man, however, must have taken a singular method of complimenting a victorious and powerful monarch; who should forge predictions tending to pour contempt on his religion, and to degrade the Gods which he continually worshipped. Is. xlv, 5–7.

Had this prediction stood alone, some little plausibility might have been given to the groundless assertion: but all the connected chapters are full of predictions, which have been receiving their accomplishment, through every succeeding generation; and with challenges to the idols, or their worshippers, to utter or produce similar prophecies. (xli, 21–26; xliii, 9–13; xlv, 6, 7, 24–28.)

The testimony of the Jews, in every age, to this book, as genuine, and divine, though replete with prophecies exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, whom they scornfully rejected as a deceiver, determines this point with all sober and reflecting men: but what can satisfy scorers? How could it be possible to persuade a whole nation, that for 150 years they had been acquainted with prophecies, of which they had never before heard?

Mr. P. speaking of our Lord’s miraculous conception, as predicted by Isaiah, says, ‘This doctrine has stained every spot in Christendom with blood, and marked it with desolation.’ Blood in abundance has, alas, been shed by men called Christians; but this doctrine has seldom been so much as the pretence for it. Indeed there would be much difficulty in specifying half a dozen spots in Christendom, at all stained with blood, or marked
with desolation,' on account of the doctrine of Christ's miraculous conception, simply as such. It was not denied, however explained, by Arians or other ancient heretics: and modern Socinians have not been greatly persecuted on account of it. (Prov. xiv, 5.)

Mr. P. has brought a direct charge of imposture and falsehood against Isaiah. The kings of Israel and Syria confederated to invade Judah, to destroy the family of David, and make the son of Tabeal king over Judah: and Isaiah predicted that this counsel should not stand: (vii, 1-9.) 'Yet we find,' says Mr. P. 'that the Lord delivered Ahaz into the hand of the king of Syria, and into the hand of the king of Israel. (2 Chr. xxviii, 5-8.) The two kings did succeed. Ahaz was defeated and destroyed. Thus much for this lying prophet and his book of falsehoods.' But did the two kings succeed, in dethroning Ahaz, destroying the family of David, and advancing the son of Tabeal to the throne of Judah? Ahab was not established, because he did not believe: he was defeated, but not destroyed, as Mr. P. falsely asserts: for he survived both the confederate princes, and died a natural death. The whole prophecy of Israel was exactly fulfilled; and the reader must determine, whether Mr. P.'s language does not rebound upon himself; nothing, but gross ignorance of the subject, and inexcusable carelessness in examining it, can ward off the blow. 'There is certainly,' says Bishop Watson, 'some novelty, at least in your manner: for you go beyond all others in boldness of assertion, and in profaneness of argumentation: Bolingbroke and Voltaire must yield the palm of scurrility to Thomas Paine.'

Jeremiah.

This prophet, after continuing the self-denying friend of his people for forty years; and notwithstanding he refused the favours offered by Nebuchadnezzar, when Jerusalem had been desolated according to his predictions, and chose to live and die among the remnant of his ungrateful nation; is charged as a traitor to his king and country by Mr. P.

The disorder, charged on the book of Jeremiah, might
arise from those, who collected his detached prophecies after his death. The predictions, however, are generally dated, though his sermons are not.

Jeremiah is accused by Mr. P. with contradicting himself, because two different accounts are given of his imprisonment by Zedekiah: but nothing can be more evident than that he was twice imprisoned, and twice liberated. (xxxvii, 18–21; xxxviii, 6–15.)

He undertakes to prove, by the example of Jeremiah, that 'a man of God could tell a lie:' and had he succeeded, it would have been quite beside his purpose: for the prophets, and apostles also, acknowledge that in many things we 'offend all.' The authenticity, and divine inspiration of their writings does not imply that they were impeccable. This attempt is, however, completely unsuccessful. Zedekiah directed the prophet to say to the princes, 'I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house to die there:—and he told them according to the words of the king.' (xxxviii, 24–28.) 'Now,' says Mr. P. 'Jeremiah did not go to Zedekiah to make his supplication, neither did he make it.' It is not said that he went to Zedekiah, nor even implied: but Jeremiah says, that 'he did make it:' and I shall believe his affirmation; and leave others, if they please, to believe Mr. P. What the prophet said was true: and even a man of God is not bound to tell an impertinent or malignant enquirer all he knows. Such accusations too much resemble those of 'the accuser of the brethren.'

The prophet had told Zedekiah, that 'his eyes should behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and that he should speak to him mouth to mouth; and should go to Babylon: and that he should die in peace.' (xxxiv, 3–5.) Mr. P. contrasts this with the history of the event, (lii, 10, 11;) and then exclaims, 'What shall we say of these prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?'

Yet the prediction was most exactly fulfilled. Zedekiah must have seen the eyes of the king of Babylon, at Hamath, when he slew his sons before his eyes: his eyes were then put out, and he was carried in chains to Babylon, which he did not see. Thus the prophecy of
Ezekiel was exactly fulfilled, which, probably, Zedekiah deemed inconsistent with that of Jeremiah. "I will bring him to Babylon;—yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there." Ez. xii, 13. There he died, not by the sword, but in peace; and doubtless received funeral honours from the Jews, by permission of the king.

His assertion, that Jeremiah joined himself to Nebuchadnezzar, and went about prophesying for him, against the Egyptians, is a still less plausible calumny; as it militates against the whole history, on which it is grounded: while the exact accomplishment of all his predictions against the Egyptians, and especially against Babylon, will stand to the end of time as demonstrations, that Jeremiah spake by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel and Daniel.

Mr. P. is of opinion that the books of Ezekiel and Daniel are genuine. This might surprise us, if we were not aware of the fecundity of his genius. Perhaps he was afraid, lest his readers' attention should flag, without some new source of amusement; which he supplies by imagining these books to contain a political cypher, or secret alphabet, under the pretence of dreams and visions, and that they relate to plans about recovering Jerusalem: Hence he infers, that we have nothing to do with them; and provided that the inference, numbers will excuse the want of proof, or probability.

It is, however, wonderful that these political devices, should contain so many prophecies which have been exactly fulfilled. Egypt has been subject to a foreign yoke almost from the time when Ezekiel predicted that it would be "a base kingdom;" nay, "the basest of the kingdoms." (Ez. xxix, 14, 15.)

Prosperous Tyre is now a place for fishermen to dry their nets. (xxvi, 14.) The four great monarchies which succeeded each other, have, in their dominion and subversion, with all the events respecting Alexander and his successors, exactly fulfilled Daniel's prophecies. (Dan. ii, 31-45; vii, viii, xi.) At the appointed time, the Messiah came, and was cut off, and Jerusalem desolated. (ix, 24-27.) And the state of that city, and of the Jews, after more
than 1700 succeeding years, confirms Porphyry's confident assertion, that the predictions were written subsequent to the event. Mr. P. states, that Ezekiel and Daniel were carried captive both together nine years before the desolation of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. This forms another instance of his ignorance on these subjects. Ezekiel was carried captive in the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, about six years before Jerusalem was taken. Daniel was carried captive in the third year of Jehoiakim, about eighteen years before that catastrophe. (Ez. i, 2; Dan. i, 1.)

Mr. P. asserts, that Ezekiel's prediction concerning the desolation of Egypt never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books that I have reviewed are; but it requires a far more complete knowledge of the events, which occurred in those ages, than either he, or any man living has or can have, to prove this negative. It is evident that Nebuchadnezzar invaded and conquered Egypt; and that long-continued desolations prevailed; and forty years from the time of these events bring us to the days of Cyrus, when probably the Egyptians were allowed to return home and reinhabit their desolated country.

Mr. P.'s most ridiculous exposition of Ezekiel's vision may remind the reader of his own words: 'Such applications of scripture show the fraud or extreme folly, to which the credulity of modern infidels may go.'

**Jonah.**

Mr. P. after having diverted himself and his readers with 'the story of Jonah and his whale,'* undertakes to prove that whole book was a Gentile fable, intended to ridicule and satyrize the Jews and their prophets.

Jonah's conduct too much indeed 'resembled that malevolence, that blackness of character, which men ascribe to the devil;' that is, depraved nature greatly shewed itself; and the Lord sharply rebuked him for his rebellious pride, and severity. Yet he is not to be blamed for faithfully delivering his message.

* 'It would have approached nearer to the idea of a miracle, if Jonah had swallowed the whale: this may serve as a specimen of all miracles.' This may indeed serve as a specimen of Mr. P.'s candour and seriousness.
"Three days, and three nights," in the Hebrew idiom, denote any portion of time ending on the third day: and as the Jews never objected on this ground to the application of the history of Jonah, to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; it is vain for others to attempt it. Our Lord's express testimony confirms the narrative; it stands on all the evidence of the New Testament; and the fables of Hercules swallowed by a sea-monster; and shipwrecked Amphion carried on shore by a dolphin, seem to have arisen from the vague report of Jonah's extraordinary deliverance.

Mr. P. leaves the minor prophets 'to sleep undisturbed in the laps of their nurses the priests:' I suppose, because he could not find in them, any new occasion of buffoonery or scurrility. He, however, ridicules 'the idea of the greater and the lesser prophets;' which common sense understands to mean, that the books of the latter are much shorter than those of the former.

'I have now,' says this self-confident writer, 'gone through the Bible,' (meaning the Old Testament,) '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 stick them in the ground, but they will never grow.' A man going through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees; differs widely, from a man's cutting down the whole wood, and preventing the future growth of trees in it: and if Mr. P. supposed that he done this; it was 'when an hungry man dreameth that he eateth, but he awaketh and his soul his empty.' 'You have busied yourself in exposing to vulgar contempt a few unsightly shrubs; you have entangled yourself in thorns and briars: you have lost your way on the mountains of Lebanon: the goodly trees whereof, lamenting the madness, and pitying the blindness of your rage against them, have scorned the blunt edge and base temper of your axe, and laughed unhurt at the feebleness of your stroke.' Bp. Watson. So far from it he has not substantiated one charge brought against the sacred writers; but has in very many instances proved himself ignorant of the book which he opposes; and a false witness and calumniator.
He has shown indeed, that the contents of the Old Testament do not always accord to modern nations, and man's imaginations, and self-flattering opinions; that its arrangement is not formed on modern notions of method; and that in a history of much above 3000 years, some trivial difficulties are found, for which after above 2000 years, since the close of it, it is not easy for us to account. But the grand design, tendency, and effect of the whole; and all the unanswerable proofs of a divine original from miracles, prophecies, internal evidences, and the present state of the Jews, and other nations, remains untouched; and I will venture to affirm, beyond the reach of every hostile assailant.

Aware of Mr. P.'s talents, and determined hostility and resolution, I opened his book with a kind of trepidation; conscious that a joyless life, and hopeless death must be the consequence, if this source of my confidence and consolation should be taken from me. But I never felt more confident, that the Bible is the word of God, than I do at this moment: nay, this confidence is increased, by discovering to how very little, and how very frivolous, the sum total amounts, which the keenest capacity, and the most virulent enmity can produce against it.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The Gospels.

The New Testament, they tell us, is founded on the prophecies of the old; if so, it must follow the fate of its foundation. Thus Mr. P. begins his attack on this part of the sacred scriptures: and if it were so, it would have nothing to fear from his assaults.

The prophecies of the Old Testament prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah; and, as accomplished in Jesus Christ, form an unanswerable demonstration that Christianity is from God. The testimony of our Lord and his apostles likewise confirms the divine inspiration of the Old Testament: and when the apostles reasoned with the Jews, they reasoned from the Scriptures as allowed by them to be "the oracles of God;" not resting the cause
exclusively on miracles. But they addressed the Gentiles in another manner.

The New Testament, however, stands on its own basis: external and internal proofs confirm unanswerably its divine original: and it might alone support the authority of the Old Testament, had we not other proof in abundance. Indeed the two parts of scripture give symmetry and stability to each other. The Old Testament led to an expectation of the New, as its completion: and the New Testament presupposes the truth of the history, and the divine authority of the laws, ordinances, and instructions of the Old.

Mr. P. admits, in a hesitating manner, that such a person as Christ might exist, adding, 'there is no ground either to believe, or disbelieve.' Indeed! Was the existence of any one man ever so undeniably proved? It would be a moderate degree of scepticism, to doubt, whether Alexander, or Julius Cæsar, or Mohammed ever existed: for the effects of their existence, on the state of the world, through all succeeding generations, though very great, have been immensely less than those produced by Christianity. And how could Christianity have existed, if Christ never existed?—But, 'it is the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrines raised thereon,' that he contends against.——It would have been more explicit had he stated what he thought to be the fable, and what he allowed to be possibly the fact. But as he has not done this; we can only say, that the indisputable facts allowed by Jews and Gentiles, and commemorated in days and ordinances, from those times to the present day, leave but scanty materials for the fable, which he meant to oppose.

It is now generally allowed, that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph in the line of Solomon; and Luke that of Mary, in the line of Nathan, son of David.——I suppose the evangelists copied the genealogies as they stood in the publick registers: they must however have wanted common sense, to insert manifest contradictions in their writings: and lists of names are strange things to forge!——The genealogy of Matthew contains no more than twenty-seven generations from the birth of David to Christ, a term of
nearly 1080 years. Mr. P. computes that, upon an average, every one in the succession lived to the age of forty before his eldest son was born; and he hence concludes, that it is not so much as a reasonable lie. But we know from the history, that the three immediate successors of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat are omitted in the genealogy; as is likewise Jehoiakim, son of Josiah. David had many sons, and some advanced to manhood, when Solomon was born. Rehoboam had several sons, before Abijah, or Abia, his successor. There were nineteen successions from the succession of David to the captivity; and similar omissions probably occurred between the captivity and the birth of Christ. What then does all this amount to? Mr. P.'s language, concerning the miraculous conception of Christ, is such a compound of misrepresentation, absurdity, indecency, and blasphemous impiety, as probably never was equalled. It is too vile to be quoted, even in order to expose it to just and indignant abhorrence. ‘Impure in deed must that man's imagination be, who can discover any obscenity in the angel's declaration to Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that Holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.”’ Bp. Watson.

However men have differed, in respect of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost: none, I suppose, before Mr. P. thought of explaining the term of a ghost, or departed spirit, according to the vulgar acceptation of the word. Had Mary's testimony to the appearance of the angel, and the miracle of her pregnancy, been single, and unconnected, it would not have been entitled to credit: but as connected with the prophecies of the Old Testament, and supported with the testimony of Zacharias and Elizabeth; the well known circumstances preceding the birth of John the Baptist; the way, in which the mind of Joseph was fully satisfied respecting it, and all the subsequent events; it is not only credible, but indisputable; for every evidence that Christianity is from God authenticates it. —Mr. P. makes the most he can of the old objection against the evangelists, taken from the disagreement of their different narratives with each other: but he has failed of substantiating any
material charge against them. Had the four evangelists recorded precisely the same miracles, discourses, and events, with the very same circumstances, the charge of forgery would have been more plausible; it might have been said, These men have combined to deceive us, had not this been the case, there would have been some variations in the narrative. Four historians of England, or France, of China, or Japan, if they did not write in concert, even when recording real facts, would certainly state them with some difference of circumstance: many things in one history would be recorded, which were not mentioned in the other; and he, who wrote last, supposing he had seen and approved what his predecessors had written, would from his own information add such things as they had omitted: and if he did contradict the preceding histories, he would so far be considered as admitting the truth of them. This seems precisely the case of the four evangelists; and the silence of John, who wrote last, effectually confirms his judgment concerning the truth of the events which they recorded; and which he omitted.—Industry, ingenuity, and malice, nay learning itself, have for ages been employed to prove the evangelists inconsistent with each other: but not a single instance, in which they contradict each other has yet been discovered: while the circumstantial variations, only prove that their narratives were original, not copied.

One thing however is fact, that these four writers, who are now spoken of so contemptuously, and with such gross scurrility, have, apparently without intending it, done what none else ever could do, by all their efforts. They have drawn a perfect human character without a single flaw: they have given the history of one, whose spirit, words, and actions were in all things what they ought to have been; who always did that which was most proper, and in the best manner imaginable; who never once deviated from the most perfect wisdom, purity, benevolence, meekness, humility, piety, zeal, patience, and fortitude; who in no instance let one virtue or holy disposition entrench upon another; but exercised all in entire harmony, and exact proportion. This subject challenges investigation and defies infidelity. Either these men surpassed all other writers in genius and capacity, or they were divinely in-
spired.—Indeed, it might have been supposed, that even infidels of taste and judgment in composition, must also have admired the simplicity, and sublimity of the manner, in which these writers record the most extraordinary events.

The story of Herod’s slaying the children rests on Matthew’s testimony: and therefore it is false, says Mr. P. Yet it perfectly accords to the character given even by Josephus of that jealous cruel tyrant.—John Baptist was born at Hebron, at a considerable distance from the coasts of Bethlehem; so that his preservation does nothing to prove ‘that the story belies itself, and is ridiculous in the extreme.’

The evangelists give the substance of the inscription over our Lord’s cross; in this they perfectly agree; and nothing would have been more easy than exact coincidence, had they thought it an object, or had they written in concert.

Mr. P. asserts, that ‘Peter was the only one of the men called apostles, who appears to have been near the spot at the crucifixion.’ We may infer from such an assertion, trivial it may seem, how little the author has studied the subject. (See John xix, 25–27; 35–37.) John was certainly present; and the beautiful simplicity, in which he records the address of our Lord from the cross to him, as to his deeply afflicted mother; and John’s subsequent conduct towards her; is inimitably pathetic, and stamps the narrative as indisputably genuine. Thomas also speaks as one, who saw his Lord pierced with the nails; (John xx, 25.) and with the spear; and probably most or all the apostles were present, though perhaps at a greater distance.

However the variation of St. John’s account concerning the hour, when our Lord was nailed to the cross, may be explained: (probably it has arisen from inaccuracy in some ancient transcriber, in respect of numeral letters:) what can it amount to, as an objection, to the authenticity and certainty of the most important facts; in which they all agree?

Matthew records, that when Jesus expired, “the earth did quake, the rocks rent, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of their graves after his
"resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." 'Such,' Mr. P. says, '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.' If, however, he had not testified what was true, would not the historians, who wrote after him have contradicted his account? Indeed the circumstances were of so extraordinary and publick a nature, that they could not have escaped detection, had they not been known to be true.

To have noticed such subjects as Mr. P.'s questions imply, respecting the risen saints, would have degraded the sacred history—"Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."—'Had it been Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua, and Samuel, and David, not an unconverted Jew had remained in Jerusalem.'—None of the persons here mentioned, except David, were buried at Jerusalem: and how would the Jews have known them, if they had appeared, to be Moses and Aaron, &c. except by their own testimony, or by immediate revelation? The reader, however, has his choice, whether he will credit Mr. P.'s assertion, or our Lord's declaration, as put into the mouth of Abraham, "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Luke xvi, 31.

As Matthew alone mentioned the Roman guard placed at the sepulchre; Mr. P. says, 'According to the other evangelists there were none.' But surely their silence admits the truth of his preceding record. Matthew, by publishing his gospel, challenged the priests and rulers to disprove the fact alleged against them: and would they silently have endured so disgraceful an imputation, if they could have disproved it?

The absurdity of the story, which the rulers put into the mouth of the soldiers, (Matt. xxviii, 11-15.) is evident enough: but if men will act absurdly, historians are not answerable for it. The appeals for the truth of the fact recorded, was made to the whole nation, rulers as well as people: and to the soldiers and their officers: and no man stepped forward to deny any part of it, though sufficiently disgraceful to them all: and the writer adds, "This say-
"ing is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day." Hence Mr. P. argues, that Matthew did not write the gospel, and that it was manufactured long afterwards. But seven or eight years, in such a case, would fully warrant the use of these words: and we have abundant proof that Matthew's gospel was extant at a very early period; if however, this were otherwise, the later it was published, the more completely would it establish the fact, that so it was reported;" for an appeal to contemporaries some ages afterwards, that it was so reported until that day, must have still greater weight. How could men have been persuaded that such a report had been current; if they had never before heard of it? and that it was still current; if every one knew it was not so? An anonymous forgery containing such an assertion, would confute itself.

'The tale of the resurrection,' says Mr. P. 'follows that of the crucifixion.' And the variations, in the Evangelists, in their several narratives, have often been urged as an objection to the history of that event: but Mr. P. by confounding things entirely distinct, and by using, with great confidence, various delusive methods of embarrassing the subject, has given the whole an appearance of self-contradiction, very much suited to impose on the incautious reader.

The several accounts have been, by different writers, shewn to be capable of being formed into one harmonious narrative: but this is a subject, that requires great exactness to explain, and much attention well to understand. Four men, deeply interested, record transactions, as to the first and principal part of this variation, occupying only a few hours; yet replete with most affecting circumstances. Their accounts, though in some respects circumstantial, are very compendious. They evidently did not aim to record precisely the same circumstances, or to write in concert. But as to the grand outline, they all agree: women, of whom several names are mentioned, went to the sepulchre, after the dawning of the day, and before sun-rise, on the first day of the week, with spices, to anoint the body of their deceased Lord. Matthew relates, that an angel had "rolled back the stone from the door:" the others say it was rolled away. They all saw an angel or angels, who
informed them that Jesus was risen: they none of them saw any of the Roman guard: they all were satisfied that the body was not in the sepulchre: and Jesus himself appeared to some of them, and they reported it to the apostles and disciples. But, whether some of them did not go twice to the sepulchre; whether they were all there at the same time; or all went in company, or all by the same road; or all saw the angel or angels, at the same time, or in the same manner, does not appear; nor are these things asserted by any of the historians. Each narrative may be strictly, and circumstantially correct, considered apart: and yet variations, as to circumstances will occur, as in other histories, or in examining of the most faithful witnesses on any trial. And if, after so many ages, we should be incapable of forming these distinct statements into one harmonious narrative, the cause must be sought in our want of full information, and not in the want of correctness in the history.*

"If the writers of these books," says Mr. P. "had gone into any court of justice to prove an alibi ..., and had 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." The contrary conclusion, however, is far more rational. Their brevity occasions the difficulty: a few questions proposed to each of them would have removed it: they did prove the alibi, beyond all doubt; they proved that they saw Jesus, as risen, on the day when the body was gone; that they were sure it was he himself; and that, on subsequent occasions, he had shewed them his hands and his feet, with the print of the nails in them, and the hole, which the spear had made in his side: no other account, in the least plausible, was ever given of what had become of the body: and ancient enemies, whose credit,

* "Mary Magdalen, was a woman of large acquaintance, and it was not an ill conjecture that she was upon a stroll." -- To your insinuation, that Mary Magdalen was a common woman, I wish it to be considered whether there be any scriptural authority for that imputation. The conjecture, which you adopt concerning her, is nothing less than an illiberal, indecent, and unfounded calumny, not excusable in the mouth of a libertine, and intolerable in yours." Bishop Watson.
authority, and lives were at stake, never attempted to answer this proof of an alibi; or to charge the witnesses with contradicting each other.

Matthew says, "the angel, sat on the stone," (xxviii, 2.) according to the others," says Mr. P. 'there was no angel sitting upon it.'---This evangelist adds, "for fear of him, the keepers became as dead men." (4:) but before the women arrived, the keepers were fled, and the angel had taken another station. (Mark xvi, 5, 6.) For there is, in none of the evangelists, the least intimation, that the keepers were present at the conversation of the women with the angel, as Mr. P. confidently asserts.

Mr. P. introduces the angel, as saying of Jesus, according to Matthew's account, "Behold, he is gone into Galilee;" though the same evangelist just afterwards mentions his meeting with the women. But our translation has it "He goeth into Galilee:" and the original would perhaps be more exactly rendered, "He is going into Galilee," as we say of any one 'He is going to London.' And no writer would directly contradict himself, in the manner which the misquotation charges on Matthew.

The evangelist, in his very compendious narrative, says, the eleven disciples went into Galilee;" (xxviii, 16.) but he does not say, that they went on the same day, on which he rose, How then does he contradict the record of John? (John xx, 19--29.) It appears from the latter, that the apostles remained at Jerusalem at least eight days, after our Lord's resurrection. Yet Mr. P. boldly says, 'It appears from the evangelists, that the whole space of time, from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension, is but a few days, not more than three or four; and all the circumstances are reported to have happened nearly about the same spot.' In this he either wilfully asserted what he knew to be false; or he was more ignorant, and carelessly ignorant, of the writings which he would expose to contempt, than any other author ever was of his subject. Much more time than three or four days passed most evidently, between the resurrection and the ascension. Luke, one of the evangelists, says in the Acts, "forty days," and several of the transactions occurred in Galilee, at least
sixty or seventy miles distant from Jerusalem. (Matt. xxviii, 16; John xxi; Acts i, 3.)

Proceeding on this false statement, and supposing that our Lord appointed the meeting in Galilee, on the very evening of his resurrection ('though distant about seventy miles,') he says, 'Luke tells us a story, which totally invalidates the account of his going to the mountain in Galilee.' The story of our Lord's meeting with the two disciples when going to Emmaus, and the subsequent events, certainly invalidates Mr. P.'s most absurd account of his going into Galilee; but well agrees with that of the evangelists.

He next objects to the 'skulking privacy of our Lord's appearance in the recess of a mountain, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem.' But a situation similar to that, from which he addressed a very large multitude, in the sermon on the mount, could not be a skulking privacy, or the recess of a mountain: and the original expression is precisely the same, σις το ορος, and translated the same, 'into a mountain.' Matt. v, 1; xxviii, 16.

The Galileans, among whom our Lord had principally lived and laboured, were the most unexceptionable witnesses, that it was even he whom they saw as risen and standing before them. It cannot be reasonably doubted but on this occasion he "was seen of above 500 brethren at once," (1 Cor. xv, 6;) and of the numbers assembled, some doubted: this would have been omitted by a writer, who wished to establish a forgery. A select number of witnesses was far more suitable, in such a case, than a much greater publicity. Had our Lord appeared openly among all the Jews at Jerusalem and elsewhere, for a number of days: either all must have been convinced and believed, and so the whole would have had the face of a political and national contrivance. Or, if they had persisted, as most of them would, in unbelief; the proof would have laboured under additional disadvantages: and at the last posterity would have possessed no other external evidence of the fact, than the testimony of the historians which recorded it; and the proof which God gave that they were divinely inspired.

Mr. P. says, 'Only Paul says five hundred saw Christ
at once, and that the five hundred do not say it 'themselves.' If they had, and their several testimonies had been preserved; our difficulties would have at least been five hundred times greater, in determining whether they were genuine, and accorded with each other. Paul, by appealing to about three hundred living witnesses, gave his enemies the opportunity of disproving his testimony, if they could. Mr. P. however endeavours to turn it quite aside, for he says, 'His evidence is like that of a man, who comes into a court of justice to swear, that what he hath sworn before is false. A man may see reason, and he always too has a right changing his opinion: but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.' Now it is true, a man has neither right, liberty, or power, to change matters of fact: but surely he may change his opinion concerning them. When the apostle embraced, professed, preached the gospel; which he knew before opposed as false, and suffered even to bonds and death; he avowed most emphatically that he had changed his opinion as to the matter of fact; being assured that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead. It is, I must think, certain, that Mr. P. has ere this changed his opinion on this subject; and I pray God, that many of his conceded disciples may change their's; before the light of the eternal world convince them.

'The story of Jesus Christ appearing after he was dead is the story of an apparition,' says Mr. P. By a marvellous power, indeed, he entered the room, where the disciples were assembled, without the door having been opened to him by the disciples; but there is no proof that it was not opened. (John xx, 19, 26; Acts v, 19; xii, 10.) After he disappeared, or ceased to be seen, by the disciples (Luke xxiv, 31; John viii, 59.) On other occasions however, he shewed them his hands and his feet, and appealed to their senses, that he was a living man, and not a disembodied spirit. (Luke xxiv, 36-41; John 20, 27.)

The divine authority of the commission given to the apostles, did not at all require that the Jews should see Jesus ascend into heaven: but it rested on the miracles which they wrought upon and after the day of Pentecost.
and on other concurrent divine attestations. Yet the combined testimony of eleven unexceptionable witnesses to words spoken in a cellar, or actions done upon a mountain, is sufficient to prove any fact, not impossible in itself, in the judgment of all reasonable men; and "the "only wise God" did not see good to ask counsel, either of ancient or modern Sadducees, what kind and degree of evidence it was proper for him to afford.

Thomas—as they say, would not believe without having an ocular and manual demonstration: so neither will I: and the reason is as good for me, and for every person, as for Thomas." Certainly; because it was good for nothing in Thomas; and he was soon ashamed of it. Let the same incredulity be adopted, as to temporal concerns: and a man must cease from taking food, or medicine, or engaging in any business: for he cannot have 'ocular and manual demonstration,' that he shall not be poisoned by his cook or his apothecary, or cheated in all his concerns. In their eternal interests, if a man will not believe till there be no possibility of denial or dispute; the conviction cannot come, till his doom is irreversible.

In respect of our Lord's ascension, Mr. P. alludes to the fact of men having ascended into the air by means of a balloon. But would any reasonable man, doubt or deny the fact, attested as it has been, because he had not ocular demonstration of it?

Mr. P. himself cannot find any avowed opposer of Christianity, who denied the gospels to be authentick histories, before A.D. 400. And surely all, that come after that period, may be supposed very incompetent judges. Yet even modern Jews do not deny this: but say, 'All was by enchantment,' that is, all the miracles of Christ and his apostles. The narrative of his resurrection is indeed wholly discredited; otherwise they could not continue his open opposers.

Mr. P. is welcome to all the support, that forged gospels can give him: for forgery always admits the existence of the thing forged, and commonly its excellence. And the 'heretics, who at the commencement of Christianity, rejected as false all the New Testament,' at lea
testified, contrary to one of Mr. P.'s bold assertions, that the book then existed, and was generally received as authentick and divine.

Again, if a type and the antitype; the prophecy and its fulfilment, actually and exactly accord; as the proper key opens the lock which has the greatest variety and intricacy of wards; the word picklock will never convince a reflecting man, that they were not intended for each other.

**The Acts of the Apostles.**

Mr. P. says 'this book is anonymous, and anecdotal.' Yet it is an avowed appendix to Luke's gospel, and inscribed to the same person, Theophrilus. (Luke i, 3; Acts i, 1.) Mr. P. indeed numbers Luke among the apostles, and supposes, that he must have been present with them, when our Lord is reported to have met them: but in this, as in numerous other instances, he only betrays his own ignorance, and inexcusable carelessness. Luke was not an apostle; and he states that he received his account from those "who were eye-witnesses." (Luke i, 2.)

But this book is of far more importance in the argument, than Mr. P. would be thought to assign to it. For it gives us a most distinct and probable account of an undeniable fact, namely, the establishment of the religion of Jesus, after his crucifixion, in opposition to all the learning and ignorance, the false religion and irreligion, the proud philosophy, and the licentious manners of the world, by the labours of a few poor fishermen, and others of obscure rank in life, by no other arms, than preaching, prayer, example, and patient persevering labours and sufferings.

One most extraordinary circumstance also attends this narrative, that there is no other history extant which can be substituted in its place: so that an event productive of far more extensive and permanent consequences, than any other on record, took place in a manner of which no account has been transmitted to posterity, if this history be rejected. Neither Jewish priests nor scribes, nor Gentile philosophers, historians, or moralists, ever at-
tempted to write a history of the first establishment of Christianity, in order to confront that contained in this book. The things here recorded were not done in a corner. Jerusalem, Cæsarea, Antioch, Ephesus, nay Rome itself, and the whole civilized world, was the theatre on which they were publickly exhibited, in the full view of powerful and vehement opposers: the fact that the religion of the crucified Nazarene was widely and immoveably established, was and is undeniable: yet what other original history exists, or ever existed that we know of, concerning the manner in which this was effected, except The Acts of the Apostles?

Mr. P. denies the conversion of Saul to have been miraculous. Does he then mean, that "the light above the brightness of the sun;" "the voice calling to Saul by name in the Hebrew tongue;" and saying, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest;" with all the other circumstances on record concerning that event, may be accounted for as the effects of a flash of lightning? Yet he knows nothing of the fact, but from the apostle's own narration of it. Would not his companions have contradicted that narration, if it had not been true? And were not his subsequent labours and sufferings in the cause a demonstration of his own full conviction, that the whole was wrought by the power of the risen and glorified Jesus?

Mr. P. objects to Paul's testimony to Christ, because he was a zealot; in other words, because he spake and acted as a man in earnest, who fully believed the testimony which he delivered. He was zealous: but his most vehement zeal was reasonable, prudent, gentle, loving, and patient; the fire of love to God and man. Besides all the proofs of the Christian religion, which may be drawn from the prophecies of the Old Testament, from the necessary connexion it has with the whole system of the Jewish religion, from the miracles of Christ, and from the evidence of his resurrection by all the other apostles, I think the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, is, of itself, a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation. Lord Lyttleton. This is the opinion, not of a priest, or
prophet, but of a learned and highly respectable nobleman; and established by arguments, which it would be far more easy to ridicule than to answer.

*The Epistles of St. Paul.*

Mr. P. seems to have very slightly examined this most important part of Scripture, for he scarcely notices any thing in it, except the apostle's discourse concerning the resurrection.

'If,' says he, 'I have already died, and am raised again in the same body, it is presumptive evidence I shall die again.' Now our Lord's answer to the Sadducees, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God," clearly meets all cavils of this kind. When, however, the Apostle says, "We shall all be changed.—The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," (1 Cor. xv, 51-54.) he, as if by anticipation, more directly answers it.

Mr. P. says, 'I should prefer a better body, with a more convenient form;' and he thinks that every animal has the advantage of us. Probably, most of those, who have deeply considered the subject, whatever their creed may be, will widely differ from him, on this point; and think that the human form, and especially the hands, give man a most decided advantage over all animals, and fit him to rule over them. We have, however, such bodies, as it has pleased the Creator to give us; and presumption, irreverence, and ingratitude, as inconsistent with sober Deism, as with Christianity, are prominent in the statement. In another world also, we shall exist, according to the good pleasure of God, whatever we might choose or prefer.

The Apostle says, to a presumptuous objector, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die;" and he illustrates his doctrine by the case of seeds perishing in the earth, yet springing up and producing an increase of the same kind, (1 Cor. xv, 36-38.) Mr. P. retorts repeatedly on the Apostle his own words, and calls him, Fool; involving our Lord himself in the same charge. John xii, 24. To discuss the subjects connected with this illustration, would require far more room, than can here
be allowed: suffice it to say, that death is not ceasing to exist, as Mr. P.'s argument implies, or requires; but ceasing to exist in the former manner, which is sufficient for the Apostle's purpose of illustration.

'Your abuse of holy men and holy things will be remembered, when your arguments against them are refuted, or forgotten. You call Moses 'an arrogant coxcomb, a 'chief assassin; Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, 'monsters and impostors;' the Jewish kings 'a parcel of 'rascals;' Jeremiah, and the rest of the prophets, 'liars,' 'and St. Paul, 'a fool;' for having written one of the 'sublimest compositions, and on the most important sub- 'jects, that ever occupied the mind of man.' Bp. Watson.
Will any man, after a few minutes' reflection, think such language as is here brought together, from Mr. P.'s book, to be that of an impartial enquirer after divine truth?

The rest of the epistolary writings are passed over, with the same neglect, as he has shewn to the minor prophets; except an insinuation, that they were forged. I suppose he was either weary himself, or afraid of wearying his readers, by endless repetitions of the same sarcasms, revilings, and blasphemous mockery; and did not readily see how to vary 'any further the method of exhibiting it, with amu-

sive appearance of novelty. The charge of forgery will come in our way in another place. 'The whore of Bab-

ylon', says Mr. P. 'has been the common whore of all the 'priests, and each has accused the other of keeping the 'strumpet.' This poor attempt to be witty, is intended, I suppose, as his refutation of the Revelation of St. John: for he advances nothing else on the subject, except an as-

sertion, that 'it is a book of riddles, which requires a reve-

lation to explain it.' Yet the prophecies, contained in this book, which have been already fulfilled, amount to a complete moral demonstration, that it is the word of God.
BOOK THE SECOND.

CHAP. I.

Revelation.

I SHALL now proceed, very briefly, to call the reader’s attention to several leading subjects, which are not peculiar to any part of Scripture; and to meet the detached thoughts of Mr. P. on each of them, with such remarks as seem most suitable to clear away the perplexity, with which he has attempted to involve them.

‘Revelation, (says he) when applied to religion, means something communicated immediately from God to man.’ This definition may be admitted, as it respects the revelation made to prophets, and apostles: but it is calculated, and intended, to convey the sentiment, that no revelation can be made from God to man in general, by the intervention of either prophets or apostles; but must all remain and die with them; for he is confident that God cannot enable the man, who first receives this communication, to authenticate it to another person; so as to render belief of it a duty. This is a strange and most presumptuous position. Men in general are able to send messages and letters by servants, or in other ways; to give all needful assurance to those at a distance, from whom the letter or message comes; and to render it incumbent on them, if inferiors, to act as those who believe it. I can make my will, and so attest it, that after my death all concerned shall be satisfied that it was my act and deed, and deem themselves and each other, bound to act according it: and yet the omnipotent and eternal God cannot make known his will, by the intervention of any messenger. Is this the language of the age of reason?

Mr. P. gives another definition of Revelation. ‘It is a communication of what a man did not know before;’
thence he infers, that 'all the historical and anecdotal part of the Bible is not within the compass of the word revelation; and therefore is not the word of God.' This definition, however, implies, that every accession to our knowledge may be called revelation; and why not the accession to our historical knowledge? Many things, in the sacred history could not be known, except by immediate revelation; as those especially, which relate to the creation, the fall of man, and many circumstances attending on the deluge. A superintending revelation was also requisite, to preserve the sacred historians from errors or misrepresentations, through forgetfulness, prejudice, misinformation, or inadequate information. In this view of the subject I am induced to stand the ground of maintaining the divine inspiration of the Scripture, in every part. The sacred writers everywhere claim it for themselves and for each other: our Lord sanctions both the Old Testament, and the writings of his disciples and apostles, as the words of the inspiring divine Spirit: and without this, who can inform us, what we are to regard as the word of God, and what as the word of fallible man?

If the whole Scripture be admitted to be divinely inspired, sober criticism will generally discover the interpolations and variations, which have occurred in the lapse of ages; and which, after all, in no degree affect our rule of faith and practice: and if a few passages remain doubtful, they only serve to prove our humility and teachableness: whereas every other plan renders the rule and standard of faith and obedience vague and uncertain.

Mr. P. says, 'Revelation could not make fictions true.' It might, however, preserve men from writing fictions: and how much these abound in history, through the passions and misapprehensions of historians, needs not be enumerated.

He observes, that 'not only unchangeableness, but even the impossibility of a change taking place, by any means or accident whatever, is an idea that must be affixed to what we call the word of God.' Now what is this but asserting, without the least proof, that God cannot reveal himself to his intelligent creatures? Notwithstanding the

* See a full discussion of this subject, in the author's Preface to the Family Bible.
imperfections of language, the want of an universal one, the errors of copyists, translators, and printers, authors make a tolerable shift to communicate their sentiments to mankind, and some of them even to remote ages and nations; and with little hazard of material mistake: yet the Almighty God cannot communicate his truth and will to mankind, because of these impediments and others of the same kind!

But he says, 'Translations of Revelation cannot be depended on.'—Yet he thinks that in respect of natural science, (which is his revelation) 'translations may very well answer the purpose. There is nothing new to be learned from the dead languages; all the useful books are translated, and the time expended in teaching and learning them, is wasted.' Let this oracular inconsistency be noted.

But without the knowledge of these languages, how shall such translations be given? Or, how can they be depended on? Who, but learned men, can give warning to the mere English reader, if a palpably erroneous translation be published; or a forgery, under the name of a translation? This is equally the case, with the Scriptures and other books. Learned men have translated the Bible; learned men alone can know that the translation is fair and right: and the various discordant attempts to translate the whole, or a part of it better, prove, that on the whole, it is faithfully translated: and the unlearned may learn from the translation, of it, all that "pertaineth to life and godliness." Even the controversies of Christians with the Jews, and with each other, too fiercely conducted, may not warrant his confidence, that these contending parties have so watched over one another as to prevent any material alteration being made, in the book to which they all appeal; and in England, to the authorized version of the Scriptures.

To reject reason in receiving Revelation, is, as if a man should shut his eyes, that he may simply avail himself of the light of the sun.—Reason should be humbly and seriously employed, in weighing the evidences, and understanding the meaning, of Revelation. Faith itself is the only exercise of our reasoning powers, by which we can
derive information from testimony: as every court of justice, and almost every transaction of common life, evinces. To believe "the sure testimony of God," indeed, implies a state of the heart, widely different from the presumptuous reasonings of proud and worldly men, and even, if possible, still further from that of scoffers and jesters in the most sacred and awful concerns: but it is in all respects most reasonable; unless man knows more of eternal and invisible things than God himself does!

Mr. P. considers false revelations, as a proof that there is no true revelation. Do reasonable men argue thus in their secular concerns; and burn their bank notes, because some men forge false ones? False revelations would never have obtained credit, if men had not generally thought a true revelation from God possible, nay desirable, and probable, or actually vouchsafed.

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CHAP. II.

Miracles.

A miracle, in the scriptural meaning of the word, is a deviation from the ordinary course of nature, or second causes, effected for wise and holy purposes, by the Omnipotence of the Creator, the First Great Cause of all.

Mr. P. endeavours to confound miracles with monsters, absurdities, impossibilities, or natural uncommon events. 'No one thing,' says he, 'is a greater miracle than another; an elephant not a greater miracle than a mite.' Whoever before this writer supposed either of these creatures to be miracles?

The ascension of a balloon, electricity, magnetism, and the recovery of a drowned person, he says, 'have every thing in them which constitutes the idea of a miracle.' Will any really scientific man admit of this; when he can satisfactorily account for all these phenomena, by natural knowledge? But could he have thus accounted for the miracles of Moses? What natural efficacy could fill Egy
with frogs, flies, lice, or locusts, exactly at the time, when Moses foretold, and when he gave the signal? Or have removed them at his word? Or turn the waters into blood? Or cause thick darkness for three days, throughout Egypt, while in Goshen there was light? Or at once slay all the first-born in Egypt? We may firmly believe all that is reported concerning balloons, and the other things here mentioned, and reasonably deny that there is any miracle in them: but can we do this, as to the events recorded by Moses? If actually done, it must have been by 'the finger of God.'

By what natural principles, can our Lord's miracles of giving sight to the blind, yea to one born blind; curing inveterate leprosies, in a moment, and at a word; rebuking and removing fevers; raising the dead, and calming the raging winds and waves on a sudden, by his rebuke and command, be accounted for? If these and numerous other facts recorded of him, actually took place, omnipotence must have effected them; and it is absurd to admit the fact, and deny the conclusion.

If the Jews had not been convinced, that "notable miracles" had been done by Jesus and his apostles, (John iii, 2; xi, 47: Acts iv, 16.) would they not have attempted to disprove them? Or to account for them, from natural causes? Would they and their posterity, even to this day, have ascribed them to magick or enchantment; if they could have denied them, or otherwise accounted for them? Did not these miracles challenge investigation from the most informed, and inimical, and powerful persons? Were not time, and place, and circumstances particularly mentioned; and the appeal made to very great multitudes? Let any person who has seen or aided in the recovery of a drowned person, now go forth to one who has been "four days dead," and in the presence of assembled multitudes, say, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise!" "Lazarus, come forth!" and see what will be the result.

Mr. P. speaks of the lameness of the doctrine, which needs a miracle to prove it. Every doctrine, then, is lame, which we could not have known without Revelation, or which does not accord to our preconceived notions, or dispositions. If so, Revelation is needless, or useless; mi-
racles are needful only in support of Revelation; these miracles are imposture, and cannot authenticate any doctrine." Thus our reasoner argues completely in a circle.

True miracles answer far other purposes, than to 'make people stare and wonder;' they give a divine attestation to the revealed truth and will of God. They do not stand on the veracity of a single reporter, as if Mr. P. 'should tell us, that he wrought a miracle in his study,' but on the combined testimony, or constrained silence, of thousands, or ten thousands of eye witnesses. Had Lunardi told the Europeans, that he had mounted into the air, in the deserts of Arabia, it might have been said, 'It is more probable that a man should lie than that people should mount into the air:' but when he ascended in a balloon, repeatedly, in the presence of ten thousands of spectators, this retort is fully excluded. Thus the dilemma concerning miracles is not, whether it be more probable that nature should go out of her course, or a man tell a lie: but whether it be more probable that the Omnipotent Creator should, for wise and holy reasons, suspend or alter the course of nature; or that tens of thousands of eye-witnesses should be deceived by their senses, as to the most evident facts: or combine and succeed, in attempting to deceive mankind, with the grossest falsehoods. It was necessary to Mr. P.'s plan to assert that miracles are impossible: and if a miracle be an impossibility attested by a single witness; his reasoning would be conclusive: but it is wholly absurd, as the case really stands.

He seems to adopt Mr. Hume's famous sophism; 'that miracles are contrary to universal experience,' and therefore 'naturally incredible.' That is, they are contrary to the experience of all who never saw them; however well attested by eye-witnesses. The African prince, when without hesitation he called the Europeans liars, who told him, that they had seen rivers congealed by frost, and rendered possible for the heaviest carriages, was of the same reasonable disposition. This was contrary to the universal experience of those who inhabited the torrid zone; and therefore naturally incredible: for it was 'more probable that men should lie, than that nature should go out of her course.' But miracles must go contrary to the ordi-
nary course of nature; and be uncommon, in order to answer the purpose.

Mr. P. says 'the most extraordinary of all the things called miracles, is that of the Devil flying away with Jesus Christ.' But the Evangelists record no such event; and in whatever way 'the Devil took Jesus into the holy city, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple; or took him into an exceeding high mountain,' (Matt. iv, 5, 8; Luke iv, 5, 9.) the transaction is not one 'of the things called miracles;' it is not mentioned as effected by supernatural means, or without our Lord's free consent: nothing is spoken of his being carried through the air, nor was that at all necessary: and no miracles except lying miracles are ascribed to the Devil in the word of God: so that Mr. P.'s most profane ridicule falls on his own absurd interpretation of Scripture.

The God of goodness and mercy purposed, as we suppose, to make known to mankind his perfections, truth, and will; and to shew them, in what manner he was pleased to be approached and worshipped. He communicated these things to an individual by immediate revelation, and commissioned him to inform other men concerning them; but the prophet might say, 'How shall I convince those to whom I go that God hath sent me? The things to be attested are contrary to men's notions, and practices; the world is full of impositions: how shall I be distinguished from a deceiver?' Now, what reasonable man can deny, that indisputable miracles, wrought in the presence of great multitudes, especially of powerful enemies, and frequently repeated, after having been previously foretold, would effectually distinguish the true prophet from all impostors, who either wrought no miracles, or such only as were ambiguous, or reported to be performed privately and among a few friends, and which shrunk from investigation, instead of challenging it? Can it be impossible, or even improper for God to set his seal in this manner to the instructions of his messengers? To raise the dead is as easy to Omnipotence, as to create and preserve the living. The glory of God, and the highest good to mankind, are the ends proposed. Miracles, when adequately attested, are, in such a case, equally credible, with other events; and the miracu-
ous part of the sacred history cannot be separated from those parts, which record undoubted facts, producing, even to this very day, most extensive and important consequences. The ambiguous and **useless** miracles, ascribed on very precarious evidence to some celebrated pagans, as Alexander the Great and Vespasian; which Mr. P. says, 'are as well authenticated as the Bible miracles,' only serve as foils to illustrate their certainty, and excellent effects.

If the miracles, ascribed to Moses, or to Jesus and the apostles, had not been actually performed; how could they have obtained credit among contemporaries? If the contemporaries had known or believed nothing of them; how could the next generation have been persuaded, that their fathers had told them these things from their infancy? And at what time could the belief, 'that these miracles had always been credited among them,' have been received? The attempt to convince whole nations, and many nations, that from time immemorial such things have been generally known and assuredly believed among them; and that they have from age to age, observed days and ordinances and institutions in commemoration of them, which were appointed at the time and by the persons, with whom these things originated; if the whole had been a palpable forgery, must have been spurned at, as an insult on the common sense of mankind.

The fables, which have obtained credit in different nations, had generally, if not always, some foundation in truth, however distorted. They never specify time, place, and manner: they do not appeal to living witnesses, and demand investigation. Had Homer, and Hesiod, and Ovid published their fabulous traditions in the same circumstantial manner, and with an attempt at attestations from those who lived at the time, and on the spot, and were eye-witnesses; and with such appeals to witnesses, as Moses and the Evangelists use: they would have completely defeated their own object. Should a fabulous history of this nation, in ancient times, be fabricated, and published with such appeals to its inhabitants, that the recorded events had always been known and believed among them; and were inseparably interwoven with their...
civil and religious institutions, from times immemorial: what credit would it ever acquire?

To illustrate and conclude this part of the subject, let us consider the miracle of our Lord’s resurrection. The prophecies of the Old Testament foretold the sufferings, death, resurrection, and glorious kingdom of the Messiah. He repeatedly foretold his crucifixion, and resurrection, on the third day; insomuch that the priests and elders knew of it, (Matt. xxvii, 63.) and took their measures accordingly. On the third day, however, the body was gone: and they could give no rational account what was become of it. Eleven men, (to whom a twelfth was immediately added,) of sober understanding, and unimpeached moral character, unexceptionable witnesses in any court of justice, constantly and with one voice attested, that they saw Jesus alive, examined his hands, and feet, and side; that they had long known him, and were sure that it was he; and that at length they saw him ascend towards heaven. In support of this testimony, they renounced every worldly interest, and faced all imaginable dangers and sufferings: they, without one exception, persisted in it till death; and most of them sealed it with their blood. They were evidently and eminently exemplary in their conduct; and their doctrine was, that a forgery of this kind, however well intended, if not repented of, will ensure a man’s damnation.

Numerous other witnesses confirmed their testimony; and the silence of their deeply-interested opponents, establishes it. The only original history of the first promulgation of Christianity, confirmed by various other histories, records, that they wrought divers and most stupendous miracles, in support of their testimony, and communicated the power of working miracles to others also: "God himself bearing them witness, with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will." (Comp. Mark xvi, 17--20, with Heb. ii, 4.) In the epistles written to the churches, they speak of these miraculous powers, as well known; even when firmly opposing the false teachers, and reproving their followers. Their success, beyond all probability, confirms these claims: and the existence and ex-
tensive prevalence of Christianity after nearly 1800 years, combines to demonstrate the resurrection of its crucified Founder, and can in no other way be accounted for.

The testimony of the Jews confirms the antiquity of the Old Testament, and the reverence with which it was regarded by their nation many ages before the birth of Jesus. They admit all the facts recorded in the gospels, and in the Acts of the Apostles; except such as relate to our Lord's resurrection; and their present condition fulfils in a most striking manner, the predictions of the whole sacred volume: but it would be absurd to expect them to be direct voluntary witnesses, and to say 'the Jews are the best evidence concerning the truth of the gospel:' as if none but avowed enemies should be admitted as witnesses; and as if, when any of them was convinced of the truth of the gospel, and became a Christian, his testimony should be deemed on that sole account inadmissible!

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CHAP. III.

Prophecy.

Mr. P. would persuade his readers, that the prophets were merely poets or musicians, who made no pretensions to inspiration, or prediction; and that Christian Theologists have advanced them to their present rank. 'There is not a word,' says he, 'in the Bible which signifies a poet.' (See Acts xvii, 28.) 'The poets wrote in verse.' 'They played also on musical instruments.' What then? Did none but prophets write poetry, or play on musical instruments? Did all of them do these things? Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are expressly called prophets; (Gen. xx, 7; Ps. cv, 9--15;) though Mr. P. denies it; and says, 'It does not appear, that they could either sing, play musick, or make poetry.' He however allows, 'that the profession of a Seer; the art of seeing, a visionary insight into things concealed, became incorporated into the word prophet, at the time when Saul banished the wizards.' (Comp. 1 Sam. ix, 9, with xxviii, 3.)
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The pagans indeed, ascribing poetick raptures to inspiration, exalted the poet into a prophet; but who, before our author, ever thought of degrading the prophet into a mere poet, or musician? The sober student of the Bible, and doubtless all candid enquirers, must find in every page almost, the confutation of such rash assertions.

A prophet, in scripture, does not always denote one who predicts future events: but the title almost always marks out a man supernaturally, and immediately, directed and instructed by God himself; except when false prophets, the counterfeits of the true, are meant. The argument, however, does not depend on the word. Did not the ancient prophets foretell a variety of circumstances concerning the Messiah? Did not the ancient Jews expect a Messiah, on the ground of these predictions? Did they not mark out the line from which he should descend, the place of his birth, his miracles, doctrine, and character; and the several particulars of his life, death, burial, resurrection, and kingdom? And were not all these exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth? How absurd then, how foolish, to pretend, that moderns have dignified Jewish poets and musicians with the title of prophets!

Were not the predictions equally precise and exact concerning Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, Nineveh, and even Jerusalem, and the nation of Israel; and most undeniably and literally fulfilled by the event; as is evident at this day? Does not the New Testament contain predictions of “Jerusalem trodden under foot of the Gentiles,” and of “the Jews being scattered among all nations?” And of the corruptions, which would take place in the nominal Church of Christ; “Forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meats; worshipping demons, and angels; drunken with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus?”

Have these predictions, (none of which were delivered in poetry,) proved unmeaning words, spoken at random? From a slight acquaintance with the writings of the prophets of Israel, even the Gentiles concluded, that some extraordinary person was about to arise in the east; in that very age when Jesus appeared. Virgil’s eclogue,
called Pollion, and the famed Sybelline books prove this; as do many passages in the Roman historians.

There is not a single instance in Scripture, in which any intimation is given, that "it repented the Lord," when a remote prophecy was concerned. The expression always relates to threatening messages, when averted by reformation, or in answer to the prayers of the prophet; or to promises, implying a condition, which was not performed. (Jer. xviii, 7–10.) So that 'the Bible makes no fool of any man,' but tells him plainly what he is to expect in all possible cases, "whether he will hear or whether he will forbear." If indeed 'Revelation were impossible, or could not be communicated; or if it were needless, or useless; prophecy must be useless also, and prophecies impostures and lies.' But the contrary to these rash, presumptuous, and profane positions has been proved. For the sake of brevity, I shall only add, that among other uses, it shews us that the scoffs, and calumnies of modern infidels were predicted by the sacred writers. (2 Pet. iii, 3, 4; Jude 18.) "Thus it was written, and thus it must be: and in this respect, as in many others, prophecy enables us, as it were, to cut off Goliath's head with his own sword.

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**CHAP. IV.**

**The Canon of the Scripture.**

Mr. P. says, 'they decided by vote, which of the books—should be the word of God. Those books which had the 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.' 'Who the people were that did all this, we know nothing of: they called, themselves—the church; and this is all we know of the matter.' Surely a man ought to know something more of the time, place, and manner, of this extraordinary transaction; before he venture on such rash, an
bogous, and pernicious assertions as these. Some proof is requisite to convince thinking men, that all Christians, in every age hitherto, have taken their faith upon trust, from they know not whom! And even those who think but slightly, would most likely feel a want of some shadow of proof, or some further information on the subject.

It is well known, and admitted by all competent judges, that the canon of the Old Testament stood, very nearly as we have it, a considerable time before the birth of Christ: and indeed the New Testament fully proves it. The internal evidence proves, that the books called The Apocrypha, were not entitled to a place in the canon; and indeed most of them are of a later date: but the same internal evidence shews on what good grounds, the books now called the Old Testament, were received into it; most probably by inspired men, as Ezra.

Mr. P. says, 'Those, who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history, may suppose that the book called the New Testament, has existed eversince the time of Jesus Christ, but the fact is historically otherwise: there was no such book as the New Testament, till more than 300 years after the time that Christ is said to have lived.' At the first glance this appears to the well-informed reader, one of the most daring falsehoods, that ever was published: but on further examination it proves to be a mere quibble; though most evidently and artfully devised, to impose upon the uninformed reader. Were it proved beyond doubt, that every book contained in the New Testament, separately existed, and was received as "The Word of God" in the first, second, or third centuries, still the New Testament, as a volume in exactly its present form, did not exist. In this way alone can Mr. P.'s friends exculpate him from the charge of direct and gross falsehood: and this is not a very creditable way of opposing priests and prophets, whom he calls liars and impostors.

It is certainly known, that most of the books constituting the New Testament, were quoted by the most ancient Christian writers, as of divine authority: and as such quoted exclusively. A large proportion of these books might be recovered from the remaining writings of those who lived in the two first centuries. They wrote comments
on them, and formed catalogues of them. Both the orthodox, and the heretics appealed to them: nay, the opposers of Christianity, mention them as the authentick books of Christians. There is the fullest proof, that past transactions can admit of, that all the twenty-seven books which now constitute the New Testament, were received, and read in the assemblies of Christians in the second century; except the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the second Epistle of Peter, the second and third of John, the Epistle of Jude, and the Revelation of John: and that most of these, if not all, were extant and well known, though not generally received as divinely inspired. These, however, after the fullest investigation, were received into the sacred canon; while other books, making a similar claim, were, for substantial reasons, rejected.

The Christians, who lived in the primitive times, must have had many and great advantages above all in subsequent ages for determining this important concern: yet learned men are capable of judging on the grounds on which they decided: and Christians, learned and unlearned, however discordant in other things, have generally and justly acquiesced in this decision. Brevity forbids, or this might easily be shewn from ecclesiastical historians, ancient and modern, protestant and popish.

Had the books bearing the name of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, or Peter, been published long after their death; having never before been heard of; they must have been treated as forgeries. The claim would have been absurd and self-refuted.

The hesitation concerning the books, which were not fully received, till a later period, arose from circumstances, in some small degree similar; and from the scrupulous caution of Christian pastors; till internal evidence fully convinced the most accurate judges, that these scruples were ungrounded.

At what time, and in what manner could it have been possible to fabricate the apostolical epistles, and obtain credit to them, as well known and received from the days, in which the supposed writers lived? And how could histories and letters be forged, to coincide so exactly and minutely with
each other, without the least appearance of design? If ever
books had internal marks of being genuine, the Acts of
the Apostles, and Paul's Epistles, have those imposts on earth, so manifestly open, frank, artless, and obvious
of letters, so manifestly open, frank, artless, and obvious
and yet make the one so perfectly to confirm the other. Let the disciples of Mr. P. or of Voltaire, or
more learned revivers of Christianity, attempt to fabricate
some epistles, ascribing them to Luther, Calvin, Beza,
the impious advantage of saying, that they were never
before published; they will soon learn, that it is much
easier to write than to establish a literary forgery; accord-
ing to our author's words, the church could write,
and they the church; and even allowing
members should learn heresy from the New Testament,
the church could write, and

was established in the New Testament,

The Jews indeed adhere to the Old Testament;
rendered triumphant by unarm'd unlettered man, because
attested with a divine power; giving success to their zeal
preaching, holy example, and patient sufferings, even unto
death—The Jews indeed adhere to the Old Testament;
but this dearly foretold, and was terminated in the New
Christianity, as is perfectly singular; and nothing in the
least like it, occurs in the history of any other religion on
earth at this day.
Mr. P. allows, 'in one sense, that every thing is a mystery to us: ... that we, however, know as much as is necessary for us: ... and that it is better, that the Creator should perform all for us, than that we should be let into the secret.'—Yet, with his usual consistency, he calls mystery the antagonist of truth: ... a fog of human invention, that obscures truth, and represents it in distortion.'—To believe there is a God may be easy, and necessary. (Atheists, however, would dispute this point with him:) but to know the nature and perfections of God is another matter. The pagan philosopher, who averred, that 'the more he thought of the Deity, the less he seemed to know concerning him,' spake far more reasonably, than scoffing Deists do, in this 'Age of Reason.' That religion, which stands in relation to an infinite and incomprehensible God, and a boundless eternity, must be in many respects mysterious, except a finite mind can comprehend infinity.

Mr. P. however, calls ethicks religion; and says that 'religious duties' consist in 'doing justice and loving mercy,' and endeavouring 'to make our fellow creatures happy. He refers to the words of the prophet, (Mic. vi. 8.) but he prefers an unmeaning repetition, to the subsequent clause, 'Walk humbly with thy God.'

Mystery, in scripture, generally implies somewhat relating to God, and his truth and will concerning us, which could not have been known, except as revealed: which can be received only by crediting that Revelation; and which stands connected with things yet unrevealed, and incomprehensible; so that we know the mystery only 'in part,' and must wait for further light, till we arrive at heaven; indeed, much must even there, remain mysterious, because a creature cannot comprehend what is infinite. All revealed mysteries, however, as far as made known, are intended and suited to answer most important practical purposes.
The scriptures ascribe divine perfections, and operations, to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, and use the strongest language of personality, respecting each, even in explicit commands and promises. Hence we infer that, as there is only 'One living and true God,' he is revealed as subsisting in three persons; being Three in one respect, and One in another, even as a man consists of a material body, an animal life, and a rational soul.—Every illustration indeed must be inadequate: but this may shew, that the mystery is not contradiction, and they, who make godliness any part of their religion, know that it involves "the great mystery of Godliness." A Trinity of persons, however, is not a Trinity of Gods: and no Trinitarian ever allowed it to be so.

Mr. P.'s testimony to the Deity of Christ, as contained in the New Testament is of some importance.—Even Voltaire would scarcely honour with his hatred such professed Christians as denied it.

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CHAP. VI.

Redemption.

Mr. P.'s objections to 'Redemption by the blood of Christ,' constitute a plain proof, that no man can help seeing this doctrine as contained in the scriptures, without some bias in his mind or heart against the conclusion that it is so. Where a distinct knowledge from the sacred word concerning the perfections, law, and moral government of God; and of the real character, and situation of fallen man in this world, and as related to the eternal state, has been acquired; and the heart has been duly humbled, and is rightly disposed: the scriptural doctrine of redemption, appears to be a plan, formed by infinite wisdom, to display the glory and honour of the divine law, justice, and holiness, in shewing mercy to those, who most deeply deserved wrath and vengeance. While the Lord, in this way pardons, and saves sinners, he most emphatically shews how he hates sin, and of what punishment he judges it deserving. He encourages repentance, but aw-
fully warns the impenitent. He makes way for man's deep humiliation, and dread and hatred of sin; connected with a cheering hope, and admiring adoring love and gratitude, and the obedience of faith, and hope, and love. At the same time, all holy intelligent beings in the universe, if it pleases the great Creator to make it known to them, will to eternal ages learn from it, the glorious and harmonious perfections of God, in a manner suited to prove a very large accession to their felicity, as well as to redound to his glory.

With this view of the subject, to what do all Mr. P.'s objections amount? And what one end, to be answered by Redemption would 'Satan's exhibiting himself on a 'cross, in the shape of a serpent,' have answered? And what will the triumphs of that great enemy, in the grand and final result of the glorious plan? The shocking charge of suicide, brought against the holy Jesus, as willingly dying for our sins, would fall, at least, with equal justice on every man, who determined to die, rather than deny the truth, betray a good cause, or desert his friends, relatives, and country.

Whatever cause we have for thankfulness on account of providential benefits; it is fact, that ingratitude to God is the universal, and inexcusable sin of man, except when deeply convinced of his unworthiness: and if so convinced, it is not likely that cheerful gratitude should be excited, without hope, or abound, without confidence of forgiveness and salvation.

Did any think themselves so good, as to deserve that the Son of God should come and die for them, they might indeed be chargeable with gloomy pride: but the character exists only in imagination: all who truly believe Redemption by the death of the incarnate Son of God, are deeply convinced, that they are unworthy of the least favour from the Almighty; nor could they otherwise need such a Redemption.

To suffer, though sinless, and in the vigour of manhood, as a condemned malefactor, a torturing and ignominious death, was far more suited to the idea of an atoning sacrifice, than any kind of natural death could have been: but the whole extent, nature, and intenseness of our Lord's
sufferings, as viewed by the true believer, imply more awful effects of divine wrath against the sins of men, as endured by our divine surety, than can here be properly enlarged on.

To suppose, that one sinner can merit for another, which constitutes the perversion of the doctrine into 'a corrupt theory of human merits;' is at once anti-scriptural and absurd: but that One of perfect holiness, and the incarnate and well-beloved Son of God, should thus merit for men, (his brethren) in order that God might honourably shew them mercy for his sake, and through his incercession, is totally different. Did no prince ever shew favour to a criminal, for the sake of some near relation, of eminently honourable character, who had performed most important services; and who craved the pardon of that criminal, as a recompence of those services?

Pecuniary retribution, is indeed a scriptural illustration of Redemption; and an illustration may be pressed too far. But distributive justice among men, takes the innocent instead of the guilty, whenever the bondman is arrested, and made answerable for the debt of the principal. But without his previous voluntary engagement, to take even the amount of a shilling from him, on this account, would be injustice, 'or indiscriminate revenge;' as really, though not to so great a degree, as if he were put to death. No man's life is at his own disposal; in all mere men life is forfeited by sin; and it is generally thought inexpedient, in human laws, on any voluntary engagement, 'to deprive the innocent of life, instead of the guilty. He has no right to make the engagement; but the divine and sinless surety had that right and power. John x, 18; Heb. ii, 14.

Mr. P's objections to this doctrine arise, (as other men's do) from its 'representing man as an outlaw, an outcast, 'a beggar, a mumper, &c.' He might have said in a word, 'a sinner deserving the wrath of God, and wholly unable 'to save himself.' (Rom. v, 6-10.) No one cordially acquiesces in the doctrine, till he recognizes this, as his own character and condition. Then, 'receiving the reconciliation, his life will neither be spent in grief, nor the affection of it.' That doctrine which appears to vobe-
lievers so gloomy, will brighten every prospect, and in proportion to the strength of his faith, fill his heart with joy and hope, and his lips with thankful adoring praise. That 'opaque cloud' which Mr. P. says 'the person of Christ places between the understanding and the Deity,' appears to believers a most glorious display of the divine perfections in perfect harmony. He exclaims, "How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty!" (Zech. ix, 17.) and, " beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii, 17, 18; iv, 6.

Others of us, as well as Mr. P. have had childish thoughts of Redemption; but "when we became men, we put away childish things:" he retains and retails them to decorate 'The Age of Reason!'

'The Christian mythology,' (says he) 'has five deities, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; the god. Providence, and the goddess Nature.' Is this careless ignorance, or wilful misrepresentation? The One Deity of "the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," has been considered. Providence, is the One living and true God, superintending all his creatures. Nature is the Infidel's Goddess; and so is Fortune, which he might have added to his list.

If men called Christians teach their children only morals, and not the principles of the Gospel, they neglect their duty, and, in this respect, forfeit the claim to that title. But I dare say Mr. P. knew very little, what real and scriptural Christians taught their children.

Mr. P.'s astronomy, as to 'a plurality of worlds,' and the conjecture, that they are inhabited by intelligent agents; (for it can at last amount to no more than conjecture, however highly probable;) may be admitted. But the inhabitants of these worlds, as intelligent agents, are either sinners, or not sinners: if not sinners, they do not need a Saviour or a Redemption; and if sinners, who can tell whether God has been pleased to provide Salvation, or Redemption for any of them? The whole obedient rational creation and kingdom of God, may derive immense advantage from what was exhibited in this our compara-
tively little globe; and in that case it does not signify, how small and mean the stage. God is glorified and his subjects are benefited; without their directly sharing the redemption, concerning which the scripture gives no intimation. All reasoning from such data as man possesses, on these subjects, is "intruding into things not seen," by men "vainly "puffed up'with a fleshly mind." But for a philosopher, in this 'Age of Reason,' to suppose, that the infinite God must have left the care of all worlds, when he came to save one, implies such gross absurdities, as scarcely ever enter a Christian's mind, except by diabolical suggestion, to be at once detected and abhorred.

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CHAP. VII.

The Insufficiency of Deism.

'CREATION,' says Mr. P. 'is the only word of God, and 'natural philosophy the only preaching.' It is, however, certain that this 'word of God,' and this 'preaching,' are very far from being universally intelligible or convincing, "The invisible things of God, are" indeed "clearly seen, "being understood by the things that are made, even his "eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without "excuse," (Rom. x, 20 :) yet how few, how very few, of the human race have ever learned so much as Deism from it! Almost all men where the Scriptures have been unknown, in every age, have been gross idolaters: the few exceptions have in general been a sort of Atheistical scepticks: the Deists, properly so called, are chiefly found in Christian countries; in the later ages, since Christianity extensively prevailed over idolatry, and in the countries where gross pagan idolatry could no longer be practised, with credit and security. In these circumstances Deists acquire, as it were at second hand, the glimmering light, from the book to which they oppose it. Nay, the Mohammedans, who may justly claim them relations, owe the Deism of their imposture, to the knowledge of the tenets of the sacred word acquired by it.
founder. To determine what man would have been without the Bible, or any revelation from God, written or traditional, we must not judge, by the skillfully delineated Deism of men who have access to the Bible, and live amidst those who maintain scriptural sentiments and principles: but from the original inhabitants of New South Wales, or New Zealand, where no such aids, and guides were known; and men, so to speak, never breathed in a Christian atmosphere.

But even in Europe, or in Britain, does practical Deism take the place of scriptural instruction, in the case of the infidels, which such books as ‘The Age of Reason’ are suited and intended to multiply? The book of creation needs translators, expositors, and preachers, as well as the Bible: but the bulk of men have neither time, money, nor heart, to attend on astronomers when become preachers: they renounce the gospel, and substitute in its place, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.”

But, if it were possible to define and explain moral truths and duties, by deistical instruction, men would want far more powerful motives to urge them forward, in a course of immense exertion and self-denial; than any, which the uncertainty of Deism could urge upon them; and far other and higher encouragement also.

After all the boasted demonstrations of reason, the immortality of the soul so entirely depends on the Creator’s will; that reason can arrive at no certainty on the subject. This Mr. P. allows, and thinks it best it should be so; though elsewhere he calls doubtfulness the opposite of belief. No knowledge or general belief on this subject, answering reasonable and practically good purposes, ever has been found in heathen nations: and it does not appear, that Deists have advanced a step beyond; except a few corruptions borrowed from Scripture, a little to illuminate their dark and dreary pages.

The probability or possibility of a future state, is, however, as Mr. P. thinks, all we ought to know. Yet without also knowing or believing much concerning that future state, and the happiness, or misery, awaiting man in it; and how the misery may be shunned, and the happiness secured, would avail us little or nothing.
are still in the dark, and it is best we should be so: so say modern infidels; so say mercenary popish priests; thus far they agree: "they love darkness rather than light, "because their deeds are evil." Such is Deism, all-sufficient Deism!

What can creation, or philosophy teach a sinner, as to finding relief from bitter remorse of conscience? Obtaining forgiveness of numerous and heinous crimes? Recovering the favour of his offended Creator, and the enjoyment of happiness in his presence and love? What can it teach him, as to the conquest of his domineering lusts, and inveterate evil habits, and temptations hitherto invincible? or, escaping the pollutions of the world, and the renewal of the soul to holiness? Cold indeed are the consolations philosophy suggests in deep scenes of distress; and in the inevitably approaching and dreaded hour of death: how far below the believer's hope, triumphant hope, of eternal felicity!

A poor wretch, having, heedlessly or when intoxicated, fallen into a pit, and broken his bones, lies languishing in torture, expecting and dreading death; and a passenger, instead of adequate relief, gravely teaches him how men ought to walk, and look to their steps; and unfeelingly concludes by saying, 'This is sufficient, all else is unnecessary!' And what is the difference, if when a man trembling and expecting the wrath of God; even the wrath to come, cries out, "What must I do to be saved?" you inform him that there is a God; that he should study creation, and practise morality; that possibly there may be a future state, possibly he may be happy in it. This is all he ought to know? Will this satisfy the anxious trembling enquirer; or at all meet his case and wants? How different from the apostle's answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved!"

"Life and immortality are brought to light by the "Gospel;" and every needful instruction, direction, and encouragement given, by which the most deeply criminal may escape the wrath of God, and obtain eternal happiness. Let common sense decide, whether these things are unnecessary and useless, or the contrary. Is a pardon needless and useless to a justly condemned malefactor? A
physician and healing medicine, to the sick? food, to the
starving? liberty, to the captive? or light and sight to the
blind? “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs’ is the
“kingdom of heaven.” The Bible proposes a suitable
and adequate remedy to the miseries and wants of fallen
man: and the state of the world demonstrates that it is
indeed grievously wanted; while numbers experience with
joy and gratitude, and prove, by their holy and useful
lives, that it is efficient, and fully to be depended on. “If
“thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquity, O LORD, who
“shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that
“thou mayest be feared.” (Ps. cxxx, 4, 5.) But what
clear proof can creation and philosophy adduce, that
“there is forgiveness with God?”

CHAP. VIII.

The Nature and Tendency of Christianity.

Mr. P. has, studiously and disingenuously, as far as man
can judge, confounded Christianity, with the Antichristian
corruptions; and charged it with all the crimes, which
masked infidels or atheists, have perpetrated, by occasion
of it. Let, however, the abettors of popery reply, if they
choose, to what he advances on this ground: but let not
the pure religion of Scripture, be accused of those evils,
which are there both expressly predicted, and most awfully
condemned.

The religion of Jesus Christ must be distinguished, not
only from evident perversions of it, but from all append-
dages; however expedient and salutary we may think
them: and the vindication must be made of that alone,
which is taught in the holy Scripture.

In those sacred writings, the one living and true God
makes himself known to us, “in his eternal power and
“Godhead;” and also in the holy perfections of his char-
acter, and in some measure, in the mysteries of his incom-
prehensible nature. He reveals himself to us, as our
Creator, Benefactor, Governor, and Judge: as altogether
glorious, adorable, and lovely: as a Lawgiver, he commands
us, who have received our all from him, and live, move
and breathe in him; to “love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love our neighbour as our selves.” These comprehensive precepts extend to all our motives, affections, thoughts, words, and actions, and to every duty towards God and our fellow creatures. The religious and moral precepts, grounded on them, and explained in both the Old and New Testament, form a perfect and complete rule of conduct, in every case imaginable, enforced by the most awful sanctions, or from the most powerful and endearing motives, insomuch, that having often read the best systems of Ethicks, ancient and modern, I never could find anything, that was not contained in Scripture; except what was evidently erroneous, or questionable, and ambiguous: but numerous omissions, especially in those not grounded on the Scriptures, which could no where else be supplied; and mistakes, which could not elsewhere be rectified.

“The law is holy, just, and good:” and universal order, peace, and felicity, must be the effect of perfect and universal obedience to it: but, facts as well as Scripture, prove that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

The Bible also reveals a future world, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body. “It is appointed to men once to die, and after death the judgment,” and the eternal state of righteous retributions. Now, it is certain, that we are unable to save ourselves, or each other, from death; and we have sufficient proof, that we are at least equally unable to stand in judgment with God, or to escape final condemnation. But the Scriptures, while they give some information, on the entrance of sin and death; information confirmed by facts, in every age and nation, of which no other reasonable account can be given; inform us far more fully, how we may be recovered from our ruined state, restored to the full favour of God, renewed to perfect holiness, and made heirs of everlasting glory and felicity.

The particulars of this salvation which centres in Emmanuel, his redemption and mediation, as far as it suits the design of this tract, have been already considered. As received by man, it begins with his being “quickened from the death of sin,” convinced, humbled, rendered submissive and penitent, and led to a believing reliance on
the righteousness, atonement, and mediation of the Son of God, and on the free mercy and grace of God in him, for all things pertaining to life and godliness, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus."

"This grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teaches us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." (Tit. ii, 11-14.) This "faith worketh by love," love of Christ and Christians, love of God and man. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour," but all good. (Rom. xiii, 10; 1 Cor. xiii, 5-7; Gal. v, 22, 23.) Love constraineth to devoted obedience to Christ: Love renders the possessor willing to "lay down his life for the brethren." Humility, meekness, gentleness, mutual forbearance and forgiveness, courteous, universal active self-denying benevolence and beneficence, equity, fidelity, temperance and purity, are the genuine effect of Christian principle implanted in the mind and heart. Were all men true and consistent Christians, wars would be impossible, oppressions, frauds, cruelty, vehement contentions, and all licentiousness and intemperance would be annihilated; the stormy ocean of this distracted world would subside into a delightful calm; and earth, which now seems like hell, would greatly resemble heaven.

Could all the genuine consistent believers, who are scattered abroad in the world, be collected together into one land, and occupy the whole of it, being perfectly secured from interruptions from without; a state of things would be attained, far beyond what has ever yet been known; except among a few persons comparatively, just after the day of pentecost: yet even this company would be very imperfect, not only compared with their perfect rule and example, and the holiness of heaven, but even with the expected state of the church on earth, during the predicted Millennium. And let those, who have lived in or near the families of zealous Christians, or in neighbourhoods, where they are numerous, decide, whether all kind of upright, beneficent and moral conduct is not more observ
ble among them, than among our deists and scoffers of Christianity. Let those, who have witnessed the peace and joyful death of consistent Christians, determine, whether they have not some support and consolation, far more efficient, than the most philosophical deist ever discovered.

Every thing, which is contrary to this statement, militates against the very end and design of Scriptural Christianity: all short of it, is a lamented defect. Religious wars, massacres, and persecutions, are Antichristian: while love to persecutors, and prayers for them are inculcated by precept and by example. Scriptural excommunication is no more than seclusion from some religious ordinances and societies, to preserve them pure, to shame and humble the offender, and, if it may be, to bring him to repentance: "Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a "brother." All civil penalties and punishments are unscriptural: though, in the age of miracles, supernatural judgments sometimes were inflicted "for the destruction of the "flesh; and that the spirit might be saved in the "day of the Lord Jesus;" or that others might receive a salutary warning.

The effects of Christianity have been beneficent and extensive beyond calculation, even on the mass of society in Christian countries. What terminated the horrid gladiatorial massacres and murders, among the renowned Romans? Christianity. What founded hospitals, and infirmaries, and societies for every beneficent purpose? Christianity. In vain you search for them in heathen nations, ancient or modern, or in pagan moralists. Not a word is found in Cicero's Offices, of active liberal love to the poor, to slaves, to criminals, to any except friends and relations, or for mere worldly and selfish purposes. And if modern moralists do better, Christianity may justly claim the praise. What made and persisted in the protest against the detestable slave-trade? Christianity. What has generally abolished the practice of selling prisoners of war for slaves, and in other ways mitigated the horrors of war; and greatly abated the glory given to successful conquerors, however iniquitous, ambitious, or inhuman? Christianity. And the circumstances attending the late bloody scenes in France and elsewhere, when the actors were bent on crushing Christi-
anity, prove in what their success would have terminated. That more, immensely more, has not been done, is owing, not to Christianity, but to the corruption of it by numbers, the rejection of it by others, and the neglect of it by the greatest part of the inhabitants of the earth.

Yet even corrupted Christianity may be slandered: and it by no means appears, that the declension in science, which took place after the times of Christ, and settled into the most barbarous ignorance, was owing even to that source. Learning had greatly declined, before Christianity had produced any great effects on the mass of mankind; especially on the Greek and Roman writers: and its subsequent declension may be sufficiently accounted for, from other causes. Superstition indeed was mimical to science; yet churchmen, even in the corrupted church, alone preserved some remains of it, with the materials used in its revival, about the time of the Reformation. Vigilius and Galileo, who were endangered by popish superstition, for their philosophical discoveries, were professed Christians, and one of them a churchman.

"The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein." Christianity throws no impediment to such investigations, or to improvement in any kind of useful science: but it discourages speculative speculations; and exposes the folly of self wisdom, vain curiosity, and proud reasonings about matters too deep for us. "Unto man he said, The fear of the Lord, "that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job xxviii, 28.)

True Christianity was never propagated by the sword. When the disciples requested that they might call for fire from heaven on the Samaritans, they were sharply reproved. The primitive Christians prevailed by other weapons, "not carnal, but mighty through God:" and Christianity triumphed before such weapons were at all resorted to. Mohammed and his successors propagated his imposture by war and rapine, and they acted according to the principles laid down in the Koran: but when Christians so called acted in the same manner, they violated every principle of the New Testament.

Mr. P. calls the precepts of scripture, "fragments of
morality; ... irreglarly and thinly scattered through these books, and make no part of revealed religion."—But our Lord says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind: This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Mat. xxiii, 37-40.) Surely then, these form a very important part of revealed religion, on which all the rest depends—"Sin is the transgression of the law:" sin deserves punishment, and needs forgiveness, and a propitiation: it needs repentance, and conversion, and the sinner needs a new creation unto holiness. Are not these the grand peculiarities of revealed religion? Did not Christ come to establish and magnify the law? Is it not written in the heart of every one, whose sins are forgiven, and with whom the new covenant is made? Are not the fruits of the Spirit coincident with the requirements of the law, as expounded in the moral precepts throughout the scripture? And "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. viii, 9; Gal. v, 22, 23.)

The comprehensive requirements of the law, as unfolded in the precepts of scripture, especially in our Lord's sermon on the mount, and the exhortations in the apostolical epistles, have before been noted. Let the disciples of Mr. P. shew what moral duty is omitted in these sacred records. Though not systematical, they are complete: yet the diligent student alone can know this. Nothing is indeed directly spoken of friendship, and patriotism, and other virtues extolled in heathen moralists: but will these virtues bear even a philosophical investigation? Was not their friendship, exclusive of enlarged philanthropy? Was not their patriotism, the desire of national aggrandizement, and glory, at the expense of the welfare of all the rest of the world?—Were they not selfish passions, partial affections? The omission is an honour to the Bible—To love our country, as far as universal love to mankind allows; to love our friends and benefactors, so as not to exclude others, from that love and those expressions of it, which are due to them, constitute a part of the Christian character and duty.
Mr. P. says, 'The New Testament teaches nothing new on the subject.' It is allowed, that the Old Testament taught the same, though not with equal clearness. But what pagan ever taught "love to God with all the heart," as the first and great requirement of his morality? Yet is it not our highest obligation? Neither Greeks nor Romans had a word, to denote what the Scriptures mean by humility. Forgiveness of injuries was no part of their moral system; nor expenditure of property, and self-denying labour, in relieving the poor, the sick, the aged, the slave, or the captive.—Even the poor Roman plebeian is overlooked in Cicero's Ethicks. Even he never protested against the gladiatorial shews, the enslaving, or the slaughtering, prisoners of war; or against suicide and revenge; nay, not even against unnatural lusts.—Are not all these parts of morality and many others new, as far as books, in any age or nation, not taken from the Bible are concerned? Have they nothing to do with rational morality? Even Mr. P.'s definition of religious duties, 'doing justice, loving mercy, and doing good to mankind,' goes immensely beyond Cicero, Seneca, or any of the mere heathen moralists.

The law of Moses did not warrant personal retaliation or revenge; though magistrates, as God's vicegerents, were instructed on some occasions to retaliate. Mr. P. objects to the precept, "If any man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also:" though it evidently means, 'Bear injuries and affronts meekly and patiently, though that should expose thee to further insults. Avoid contention, if it can be done, consistent with other duties.' Proverbial maxims are not to be interpreted like mathematical definitions; and men are ready enough to find out exceptions to general precepts.—He has however mentioned with approbation, the proverb of Solomon, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: &c." (Prov. xxv, 21, 22:) aiming to give the credit of it to the Gentiles. But no such maxim can be found in the book of any pagan; and St. Paul has quoted the passage, as the substance of the Christian's duty, in loving his enemies, (Rom. xii, 20, 21.) of which probably Mr. P. was not aware.

No man, I suppose, before him, supposed, that we
commanded to 'love our enemies better than our friends; and to reward their injuries.' Neither the Christian rule, nor the Christian pattern require or admit of this. God does not love his enemies better than his friends, nor reward their injuries; nor does he require his servants to do it. (Mat. v, 44-48; Luke vi, 27, 28, 35, 36; Gal. vi, 10.) He sends common benefits on the unthankful and evil: but reserves special blessings for his obedient friends and children.

Mr. P. most vehemently and unjustly calumniates Christianity as a persecution religion. Let us hear a specimen of his own spirit and language. In a paroxysm of indignant zeal, he exclaims, 'It is better, far better, that we admitted, if it were possible, a thousand devils, to preach publicly the doctrine of devils... than that we should permit such an impostor, or monster as Moses... and the Bible-prophets to come with the pretended word of God in his mouth, and have credit among us.' Would a man of this spirit tolerate the faithful and zealous ministers of the gospel; if the government were in his hands? Does not the principle, which suggested this language, ultimately lead to the exterminating persecution of all, who adhere to the Bible; under the stale pretence, that they disturb the peace of the community? And does not this zealous infidel, in this, as well as some other things, inculcate the very essence of popish persecution?

I have indeed long avowed the expectation of extensive and fierce persecution, by men, who now talk greatly of candour, and liberality, and against the bigotry and intolerance of zealous Christians: for they know nothing of candour towards those, who decidedly profess and preach, the peculiar doctrines of Christianity.—Frederick king of Prussia declared, that he found much difficulty in retaining Voltaire and other infidels within the bounds, which he prescribed: and the conduct of the infidels in France, during the late revolution, especially towards priests and religious characters of every kind, with the writings of some of their atheistical or deistical philosophers: and the strong passage quoted from Mr. P. shew how dangerous it would be to intrust power into their hands, whatever specious professions they may previously make.
But persecution, in every degree; and whatever abridges any man in his civil rights, on account of his religious tenets; provided he be a peaceable member of the community, and can give proper ground of confidence, that his principles require or allow him to continue so; appears to me wholly contrary to the spirit of the gospel: nay, all acrimony, reviling, contempt, or misrepresentation, even in religious controversy.

To conclude, I cannot but judge, that all the things, which have been stated in this brief tract, when carefully laid together, amount to as full a demonstration, as the subject can admit of, that the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the authenticated and authoritative WORD OF GOD. But a serious mind is the grand requisite for obtaining satisfaction in so momentous an enquiry; a serious mind leading to diligent and impartial investigation: and every degree and kind of levity and jocularity are essentially inconsistent with it. Let a man act conscientiously without reserve, according to his present knowledge, and in proportion as it increases, while he waits for clearer light and convictions.—Let him exercise his understanding, and watch against the influence of his passions. Let him ask himself whether he is willing to be convinced that the scriptures are the word of God? If he be conscious of reluctance, let him anxiously enquire into the ground of this prejudice: for if pride, or love of the world in any form, biasses his mind, an impartial verdict cannot be expected. Let him peremptorily demand argument; and reject declamation, wit, ridicule, and whatever amuses and gratifies the carnal mind. And as the existence of God is admitted, even by the most determined Deists; and all allow God must in every sense be the Fountain of wisdom and knowledge: let every enquirer earnestly beseech Him to assist and strengthen his mind and judgment, and to preserve him so unbiased, as to enable him to distinguish truth from the most specious delusion; to embrace and obey it, to whatever it may expose him; and to guide him in the path of everlasting felicity.

FINIS.

J. Seeley, Printer, Buckingham.
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