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ANSWER

TO

PAYNE'S

AGE OF REASON.

WITH

A SHORT VIEW OF THE OBEDIENCE

WHICH CHRISTIANS ARE BOUND TO YIELD

TO THE POWERS THAT BE.

BY

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PITTENWEEM.

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M, DCC, XCVI.

## P R E F A C E.

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DURING the course of my ministry, it has been my principal study to entertain my hearers by explaining and enforcing these doctrines and duties, with regard to which, Christians of all denominations are agreed; so far as their public profession is founded on the Bible; without harping on the Shibboleth of any party.

To rail against such as profess revealed religion, is unmanly, anti-christian, and inconsistent with the genuine spirit of the gospel;—I wish to adopt the sentiments, and imitate the conduct of the Psalmist  
“I am a companion of all them who fear thee and of them that keep thy precepts.” I have on every occasion endeavoured to guard against adding fuel to the fire of angry controversy,—I consider most of the differences which obtain among Christians, as rather verbal than real; and if proper allowance was made for the imperfection of language, might soon terminate, and if in some lesser matters, men cannot exactly agree, mutual forbearance would be

highly becoming the gospel,—and in character, imitating the Lord Jesus, who always taught his followers as they were able to bear it. In proof of this we hear that on a certain occasion he said, “ I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

But when the most important truths are openly denied, it cannot be deemed improper for a minister of the gospel, boldly to stand forth in defence of these doctrines which he teaches. Were it only to correct a few misapplied terms, I would consider it as idle to bestow pen, ink, and paper, or what is far more valuable, *time*, on a subject so trifling; but when sentiments subversive of christianity obtain a currency, it is hoped this will be a sufficient apology for the present attempt, being no invasion of the peace of civil or religious society.

Among the many advocates for infidelity, none has discovered more zeal than Thomas Payne, in a work entitled, *Age of Reason, in Two Parts*. His professed design is the overthrow of all existing systems of religion, Popish and Protestant, whether established or dissenting. The regal and sacerdotal offices are represented as inimical to the rights of men. Rulers, laws, religion, and her ministers of every denomination must be destroyed. Revealed  
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religion is traduced as a vile cheat, and her ministers as base impostors, and both as the cause of all the evils that have befallen mankind since it was first acknowledged.

Treason, and infidelity, generally go hand in hand, "denying the Lord Jesus, despising dominions, and railing at dignities," is a natural association and exemplified in the character and conduct of Deists in the present day; almost with one breath they curse kings, and deride revealed religion with its author. Error is always talkative, and there is scarcely an absurdity, but these blasphemers will attempt to defend.

For sometime past, Payne's *Age of Reason* has been studiously circulated in this part of the country; and (if Fame lies not) has gained several converts to the cause of Deism. Payne's pamphlet may fall into the hands of some who are in a great measure unacquainted with the Deistical controversy, having neither money to purchase nor time to peruse such books as have been before the public for many years; for the sake of such, I have thought proper to lay the following before the public. I am not ashamed to avow, that I am indebted to men who were zealous for the truth upon the earth, who contended earnestly for the truth of divine revelation.

velation. Have judged it unnecessary to introduce new sentiments, as the scheme treated of by Payne is not new, it has been long ago discussed, weighed in the balance, and found wanting by apologists for the scriptures; and after all that Upstart's pretensions to novelty (Payne's), his pamphlet contains no new argument. In the Age of Reason it is admitted that the scheme is set forth in something of a new dress, all that is plausible is little more than a repetition with some new modes of expression long since replied to. Payne's ignorance of former times, or a presumption that he has only to do with people ignorant thereof, is the best apology that can be made for him; all that can be termed original or new is no new ornament to the infidel scheme, but new absurdities, deformities and blasphemies of that system.

It would be paying Payne too high a compliment, and raising littleness into importance to follow him through all his banter, jesting and ridicule, and had it not been, that some (if Fame tells truth) are already moved away from the hope of the gospel, his pitiful pamphlet should have been buried in perpetual oblivion with himself for me.

I have not the vanity to expect either general notice or approbation; the rapid progress of infidelity,

ty, and the inveterate prejudices of a party, who admire and adopt the political, and Deistical theories of Thomas Payne, will in all probability diminish the influence of my endeavours; for when the human mind is once fettered with party prejudices, it can find satisfaction only in what has a tendency to increase the disease.

It is a mournful consideration that men, who have high pretensions to patriotism, should swallow the anti-christian tenets of Payne. I have added a few considerations on subjection to civil rulers, with a view to put Christians on their guard. It is not likely that such will be the pillars of the state, who strain every nerve to destroy those of christianity. We can have very little dependence in a time of danger, on those who bend their tongues like a bow for slander and blasphemy,—they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth;—they know not God, being evil men and seducers, they grow worse and worse. Instead of entrusting our liberties, civil or sacred, in the hands of such; instead of putting confidence in these men, we must “take heed every one of his neighbour, and not trust in any brother, for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders; they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak  
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lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity! come out from among them, and be ye separated, &c.”

I am not anxious on my own account what reception the following pages meet with; I expect to hear the flanders of some, because I thus refuse to bury or betray the truth of divine revelation; but it is no small honor to be reproached by men given up to a spirit of railery and reviling;—railing against dignities and reviling the doctrines of divine revelation. I desire, through grace, to account the reproach of Christ greater riches than the approbation of such apostates from revealed religion; and at any rate it must be but a small thing to be judged of man's judgment: “The fashion of this world passeth away.” Ere long the voice both of censure and applause will be silenced in the dust. Deists afford, in the instance of themselves, a proof of the truth of revealed religion, it is foretold that scoffers shall arise in the last times, &c.

PITTENWEEM, }  
April 16, 1796. }

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## SECT. I.

### *Of Moral Evidence.*

WHEN one hears of revealed religion, it is natural to ask whether the first who acknowledged it submitted their tenets to a candid and free enquiry, or if they were anxious to repress investigation, and hide themselves in obscurity. If we form a proper estimate, the question must be determined in favour of religion; for, instead of discouraging the spirit of enquiry, it is clear they encouraged it both by precept and by example. Of one of the teachers of revealed religion it is written, "that he was himself learned in all the wisdom of Egypt." Another speaks of learning as a most valuable acquisition, and even quotes the sentiments of a heathen poet, with the highest approbation, when he deemed it to his purpose. Another is still more explicit, and exhorts those to whom he wrote, to study "to be able to assign a reason of the hope that was in them." Those persons who propagate tenets, and yet shrink from investigation; are always to be suspected. The author of christianity, so far from this, wishes men to "search the scriptures," which contained the proof of his mission and character. The men who first

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were instrumental in propagating revealed religion; while they encouraged free enquiry, proved their integrity and their firm belief of the doctrines which they delivered to others. Such a line of conduct is the very reverse of what the schemes of impostors would clearly suggest. On the supposition that these persons have deceived mankind, they have done it by means absolutely inconsistent with political practice.

The doctrines of Christianity are calculated to increase knowledge,—they ascertain with precision many things concerning which philosophers wrangled to no purpose. They make known truths which must have remained for ever secret. Ancient philosophers furnish a striking proof of the insufficiency of reason, unassisted by divine revelation, in their diversified and opposite theories. Let the world judge then if religion as revealed be calculated to promote ignorance.—The christian religion has tended very much to civilize, as well as instruct mankind. Its peaceable spirit and the conduct which it exemplifies,—uniformly recommends and enjoins; agree with its peculiar ordinances.

To demonstrate this, let us take a view of the world without revelation, and attend to indisputable facts. We need not here cross the Atlantic. In what condition were the inhabitants of our native country previous to their being favoured with di-  
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vine revelation? Do we find them in the pursuit of virtue and morality? No, we find them conducting themselves in a manner shocking; too shocking to relate. In the most polite and learned nations in Europe, the heavenly luminaries were deified, nay almost every creature worshipped as God. It has been found, that men, unassisted by revelation have paid homage to cats and monkeys, and the vilest of reptiles. In such circumstances, was there no need of divine revelation? In what condition are many nations still who are left to act according to the dictates of nature's light.

Payne (*Age of Reason*, Part II. p. 77.) asserts that "it is false to say that christianity was not established by the sword." With what truth this is asserted, let the world judge. Christianity, though the best cause, may be perverted by men of corrupt minds to the basest of purposes: it will not follow that this arises from the cause itself, in its native purity and simplicity. Let us turn our attention to those nations in Europe where the distinguishing doctrines of revelation are generally known, as these books are translated into the vernacular languages. From among them let us select Great Britain, as it is the land both of civil and religious liberty. At the same time, that we view it as a monarchy, of which the several parts are more closely joined than

any republic can be ; the effect of this liberty is most obvious.

The establishment of popery in any kingdom, and persecution have prevailed. The reformed churches, on the contrary, have pursued a line of conduct the very reverse ; and this in strict conformity to the spirit of the gospel. The facts in regard to this are so well known, as to render an enlargement altogether unnecessary. And Great Britain can afford in her history no instance of barbarity in this relation, since the reformation. Intolerant zeal is unknown to christianity. Men who have such high pretensions to *reason* as Payne, ought to distinguish betwixt the truth of divine revelation itself, and the vices to which men of corrupt principles may endeavour to make it subservient. To use Payne's own words in preface to *The age of Reason*, (Part II. p. 7.) "It is not because right principles have been violated that they are to be abandoned."

He complains in the same preface, "that all his opponents resort more or less, to what they call Scripture evidence and Bible authority, to help them out. They are so little masters of the subject, as to confound a dispute about authenticity, with a dispute about doctrines, &c."

Whether the charge be well or ill founded I cannot tell, having only seen Wakefield's Answer ; one thing however is clear, that he has led the way ;

in both parts of the Age of Reason he has led the dance. He has not only confounded authenticity with doctrines, but has jumbled doctrines, authenticity, and evidence together; I shall however put him right, that if he is disposed to write any more, he may know how to begin, and that by treating on the nature of evidence, of which he appears totally ignorant.

There are certain motives which do not fail to influence mankind, as opportunities present themselves. This is clear from fact and experience. Why these motives and principles are established as the springs of action, is to be resolved into the consummate wisdom of the Great Creator, who knew how to adapt the world and human nature to each other.

We are accustomed to infer the certainty of physical appearances from the stated laws of nature, by which they are to come to pass, and when such events do not take place, we conclude, that some laws of nature have been suspended or violated. Though the author of nature has fixed these laws, he can with the greatest facility suspend them; and though we cannot be mathematically certain that they shall regularly go on; yet we depend upon them with confidence. For example, when we see the sun set at night, we without geometrical proof conclude that he will rise again,—that the succession of summer and winter will go regularly on; and it

is upon this ground that the husbandman plows and sows, he does it in hope.

Testimony is involved in moral evidence, but we draw an erroneous inference when we make it the whole of that evidence. In some cases, where human testimony evinces the truth of things; the stated laws of nature above mentioned must be resorted unto, that we may have full proof of what otherwise has only human testimony to ascertain the truth. Recourse must especially be had to these principles and motives which generally influence the conduct of man, acting as a reasonable being. It is necessary in the instance of testimony to consider the known honour and veracity of the person who gives it—It is necessary to examine whether or not he could have any motive to influence him to commit a fraud; for every man is influenced in his conduct by some motive or other, and matters in regard to this may be so circumstanced, as we may be sure that it is impossible he can be deceitful in giving his testimony. How can we be sure? Because men are naturally averse to shame and contempt; and then we are determined to admit the testimony, otherwise we must forfeit all pretensions to reason and common sense.

There are some things, which, in their nature, only admit moral proof, which are as clear as other things that are capable of mathematical demonstration.

tion. Evidence is the obvious appearance of truth to the mind producing an assent to it *as* truth. In mathematical demonstration, propositions derive their force from some others already demonstrated; and these from others, till we come to axioms which have no demonstration. The like must hold with regard to moral propositions and the principles into which they may be resolved; for it is the evidence or plainness of a proposition, and not the subject matter of it, which renders the denial of it absurd.

The mind of man yields assent to some moral conclusions with as little hesitation in regard to their truth, as to mathematical inferences. There are innumerable *places, transactions, persons* and *facts*, of which we can have no personal knowledge, and yet we call them as little in question, as we do geometrical conclusions: this we do every day in the common affairs of life.

Every species of truth has its own peculiar manner of proof; it is the difference, of the nature of things which are the objects of our knowledge, that lays a foundation for the different methods of arriving at the certainty of them.

Proof differs in kind, according to the nature and properties of the things about which it is adduced. *Geometrical* truths admit of direct demonstration,—*Physical* truths are shewn by experiment,—*Moral* truths

truths by testimony, by the principles of human nature and stated laws.

Payne (*Age of Reason*, Part II. p. 75.) expresses himself in very strange terms with regard to testimony, when he says, "Whoever put faith in that account, (namely revelation) puts it in the man from whom the account comes, and that man may have been deceived; or may have dreamed it, or he may be an impostor, and may lie." But when we entertain suspicions respecting the truth of testimony, we ought to distinguish, betwixt a suspicion that is founded in pure physical possibility that a man may be an impostor; and a suspicion that is founded in the reputation or character of the man who gives his testimony, or a defect in the testimony itself. If the testimony be obscure, inconsistent, or be contradicted by higher authority,—if the person be of a doubtful character, if he is known to be credulous, partial and careless in his general conduct; in such circumstances, every wise man should suspend his judgment, till he obtain proof liable to none of these exceptions; on the other hand, if nothing of that can be alleged, there can remain only a pure physical possibility of deception.

It is physically possible, that a man who has a good character for integrity may be hypocritical, and may have a design to impose upon me—it is physically possible that a man just when going to tell

me truth, may be suddenly seized with madness and narrate an untruth; these cases must be admitted as physically possible, and these equally possible with regard to every man, one who has hitherto retained an untainted reputation *may* act a fraudulent and deceitful part.

There is no human testimony, but in this acceptance of possibility may be deceitful. While it is admitted in part that "it is not the antiquity of a tale, that is any evidence of its truth;" it will not follow, because asserted by Payne, "that it is a symptom of its being fabulous; for the more ancient any history pretends to be, the more it has the resemblance of a fable." (Age of Reason, Part II. p. 2.)

When we weigh the credibility of testimony, *oral* or *written*, we ought to distinguish between the decrease of credibility which has its rise in our own minds, and the decrease which may belong to the thing itself.

The credibility of a testimony is lessened, when deprived of these circumstances which at first gave it a sufficient degree of credit among men. That is, no testimony is really diminished, or rendered less credible by any cause, but the want of the conditions which laid a foundation for its credibility at first. It is to be considered here, that we ought carefully to distinguish between the nature of the

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thing, and the circumstances thereof; and the notions which men may entertain with regard to it. There can be no decrease of the credibility of testimony, delivered by faithful witnesses, though transmitted through a series of ages ever so long continued. We hinted just now that testimony remains equally unquestionable, when transmitted with all its essential circumstances; when the witnesses are well qualified, honest to represent them fairly, and diligent to make enquiry. A matter of fact, which once possessed evidence sufficient to recommend it as the object of belief, does not lose its credibility in succeeding ages, however distant.

It was admitted in part, that the antiquity of any thing was no proof of its being true, that is antiquity *as such*; still with time collateral evidence may increase, to assure men farther as to the truth of the testimony with regard to the thing narrated and transmitted. For though every one is bound to exercise his reason in forming an estimate, yet he must consider it as an important circumstance, that it has stood the trial of successive generations;—that men of candour, integrity, and learning, have given it the most cordial and unanimous suffrage. This is an advantage which men, who lived in a very early period, were deprived of. It is granted, that the thing itself is credited upon proper and direct moral proof, still, when they consider it in unison with the

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consent and approbation of many thousands, who have formed the very same judgment with themselves. This is a kind of superadded evidence, which affords additional confirmation, since multitudes, who lived in different ages and distant countries, have all agreed in their belief. So far then is it from truth, “that antiquity shews any thing fabulous,” that on the contrary, matters of fact may derive circumstantial evidence to increase their credibility from the lapse of time.

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## SECT. II.

### *On the Absurdity of rejecting Moral Evidence.*

HAVING made these remarks on the nature of moral evidence, let us examine the issue of rejecting proof founded on this species of evidence.

We all know that the preservation of order in civil society, by the administration of justice, entirely depends on this kind of evidence. Those who enact and ordain laws, cannot be personally present in all places, to witness the breach of them, or conformity to them: Accordingly, that public justice may be administered in detecting the guilty, and protecting the innocent, it is necessary that others be deputed to take cognisance of men's conduct.

What others have seen or heard, or can be inferred by rational circumstances, must be laid before them; and this, when done in a becoming manner, is reckoned by the wisdom of all nations, to be sufficient evidence; in cases of the highest importance, where the liberty, property, and life, of the subject, are involved. And if testimony was not considered as sufficient proof, we should soon see society disband. How arrogant would men of vicious principles grow in defiance of laws and lawgivers? All subordination and order, safety and protection, would end; our persons would be exposed to the most gross insults, and our property to open deprecation. If moral evidence be laid aside, if men's eyes and ears did not guard the public, there would not only be a check upon the execution and the administration of equal laws, but no means could be employed to prevent any mischief which might threaten an individual or the public at large. All industry and every attempt of individuals to render their circumstances more comfortable, would be vain; all things would be allowed to go on by chance, without any activity on our part; there could be no room for the exercise of these powers and faculties bestowed on us by God; by which we naturally consult what appears best. Reason would be no blessing to us in such circumstances, intercourse with men can be of no avail, if moral certainty, as founded upon evidence be inadmissible;

missible; we behave to be destitute of all motives and principles of action, and no better than the beasts that perish.

This is not all; society must instantly dissolve, if the above evidence is not admitted. Mutual confidence is one great bond of civil society, which, if taken away, perpetual jealousy and endless suspicion must occupy the place of trust and confidence. Men must be ever on their guard; they must consider every one as an enemy, waiting an opportunity to ruin them. They would consider themselves as safest when at the greatest distance from each other;—all concern about the public good would be superseded by private interest and personal safety. On this hypothesis, we would see every society disbanded and dispersed, all commerce and distinctions among men must instantly terminate. Such a state of matters would please Payne; princes and subjects would be on a level, rulers and ruled; friendship among the latter would not be realised, more than government among the former. Every man must try, (on this hypothesis) to seek shelter for himself.

All the social affections being extinguished, as occasions offered, open violence and hostility would be the necessary result.

Farther, Our civil liberty and property, or at least our enjoying them, depends upon moral evidence; Birthright privileges depend upon this sort  
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of evidence; or whatever we have by *will* and *testament*. In many cases, personal knowledge by our external senses is impossible, and in other cases no wise men have insisted on it, and our assent in such cases depends entirely upon moral evidence. This is so clear that it stands in need of no illustration.

Some matters of fact are so obvious by testimony as to give us the fullest assurance of their certainty; or in other words, matters may be so circumstanced as to leave no ground to entertain any suspicion of fraud or deceit; and to entertain dark suspicions, would hold us out in the most ridiculous point of light.

In believing history, it is not necessary that we ourselves saw the things performed which we are called to believe, for this is not crediting the report of another, but the testimony of our own senses; if we must see the things, then we could believe nothing unless we were personally present.

If what we have stated respecting evidence be not admitted; the issue is, that we cannot believe any writings unless we see the author write and subscribe his book; and if this be requisite, there are hardly any writings that we could believe. I have mentioned this, because it seems to lurk in Payne's pamphlet, though he does not verbally state it, viz. that he never saw Moses, Christ, Paul, &c. and how can it be known that ever there were such persons, and how

how can we be sure that they ever did or wrote such things. I ask Payne and his followers, Did they ever see Alexander the Great, Julius Cæsar, or King Henry VIII. of England? And yet do they not believe that there were such persons?—On the one hand, if they do not believe that there were such men, because they never saw them; they have in so far laid aside the nature of man, and are fitter for a dark room and a strait jacket, than to be reasoned with. On the other hand, if they believe that there were such men, though they never saw them; then why not believe that there were such persons as Jesus Christ, Moses, Paul, &c. and that they did and wrote the things said of them.

It is not a sufficient ground to reject evidence by testimony, &c. because there have been many false histories; or in other words, we are not to disbelieve, because there may be a physical possibility of deception; for though there have been cheats and impostors in the world, it will not thence follow that there are no faithful and honest men. If moral evidence be not admitted, mutual trust and confidence must be destroyed; civil society must disband and domestic felicity break up. Bad as the world is, there always have been, and still is, some integrity in it, and will be, while God continues the human race, and government over men. Justice and honesty is necessary to the being and order of society.

society. A physical possibility of being deceived, never influences mankind in their mutual intercourse one with another. Trade and commerce is carried on upon the principle of moral evidence, for it can admit of no other. The merchant believes that there are such places in the world as Madras, Bengal, China, Batavia, &c. in the East Indies; that there are such islands as Jamaica, St Kitts, Barbadoes, &c. though they never saw them; a man puts his life in the hand of his physician, yea in the hand of his barber. It becomes a reasonable being, not to believe a thing because it may possibly be true, so it is equally incumbent on him, not to reject testimony because there may be a physical possibility of its being false.

I would not have this to be viewed as a digression, for a great many cavillers lay stress upon this, mean as it is, they have little more to keep their infidelity in countenance. They have learned to flourish a little on some other topics of railery, but when pushed, this is their last strong hold—*The order of the day*, with them is, you have hearsay evidence, you cannot be sure.

I ask what they mean? Do they mean that we cannot be mathematically certain? If they do, whoever supposed or talked of mathematical certainty in cases of that kind; for in every case of this kind, we have a certainty that arises from moral proof,  
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equal to that which is founded upon geometrical demonstration, as was shewn formerly;—and in the nature of the thing can admit of no other kind of proof but what is founded upon moral evidence.

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### SECT. III.

#### *Of Moral Evidence, as affording security against Imposition.*

IT is simply impossible to impose facts upon mankind at the time they are said to take place, provided they be such facts as come within the reach of men's senses; for in this case they must be instantly detected. For example, let any man in the town of Pittenweem give out that he divided the Forth yesterday in presence of all the inhabitants, and that he carried them all to Dunbar on dry land; no such story could pass for a truth, for John and James, William and Janet, &c. nay the whole would give him the lie, and tell that no such thing took place; none of them having been at Dunbar that day; and far less that they travelled in such a manner. But says Payne, admitting all this, "it is evident the books were not written at the time, but hundreds of years after, (Part II. p. 4.) To this it is answered, that if the things said to have happened, were

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not only done openly, but that public monuments were erected, and certain rites performed, to perpetuate the remembrance of them; and these bearing a date as ancient as the facts, sufficiently guard against any imposition in after ages; for whenever such a thing was invented, and no such monuments remaining, and the experience of all who behoved to know that they never were engaged in the observation of such and such ceremonies, would detect the fraud. Let Thomas Payne invent some tale that such a thing took place 1000 years ago, he might perhaps get some credulous republican to believe it; but if, at same time, he should say, that in testimony of the truth of it, from that day to this, every person when *eight* years of age had one of his ears cut off, and that every man in the country wanted an ear, and this was in proof of the fact, which he said had taken place,—that it had been transmitted from age to age; and had been uniformly practised as a lasting monument of what he had asserted, took place; in these circumstances he would instantly be detected by the whole country, who must give him the lie with regard to the mark of wanting an ear; and as the fact of their wanting an ear was part of the original story, the whole would be viewed as an impudent fabrication.

With regard to Moses, he could not have persuaded so many persons that he brought them out  
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of Egypt,—through the red sea,—fed them miraculously in the wilderness; if these things had not been true, for the testimony of every man's senses among the chosen tribes must have given him the lie. He could not have imposed his writings upon them in any after period, seeing these writings said, that all the things mentioned were done publicly in their presence. Deut. xi. 2—8. And these books could not have been invented in any succeeding age, and published in his name; Why? Because they say that they were published in the days of Moses, and deposited in the ark. Deut. xxxi. 24—26. and there was also a copy to be left with the king. Deut. xvii. 18, 19. In these quotations, these books speak of themselves, not merely as history, but as the standing law of the Jewish nation, and obligatory both on king and subjects; and in any age after Moses, it would have been impossible to have made a whole nation believe, that they had acknowledged these from the days of Moses, to that period in which they are supposed to have been invented. How could they be persuaded that they had observed them before they had heard of them? I ask the ignorant quibbler, if ever there was a code of sham-laws palmed upon any nation, since the world began? If he cannot answer in the affirmative, how has he the effrontery to assert thus much of the laws of the Hebrews? Nay, the books of Moses have the

very highest degree of evidence, because they give the history of their laws being reduced to practice ever since the time they were enacted. The passover, to perpetuate the remembrance of Israel's safety, when death entered every house in Egypt, and many others. The Old Testament gave Israel other institutions as so many public recognitions of the mercies they had received from God.

In the 4th chapter of Joshua it is written, that twelve stones were set up, that when their children should ask the design of them, they should be informed, and also told particularly, of the fact they were intended to commemorate; and it was such a fact, and so circumstanced, as it could not be imposed on the people at the time when it is said to have taken place, nor afterwards; if the fact of their miraculous passage over Jordan be denied, and if it be said that the stones were erected by some designing person, and that that person invented the book of Joshua, and gave out that it had been composed by Joshua at that time, and alluded to the 12 stones in proof of it; every man in this case would reply, We know of the 12 stones at Gilgal, but we never heard this assigned as the reason of their erection, neither did we ever hear of this book of Joshua; where has it been? How came you by it after such a long time? Besides this book says that we were to  
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be taught, and that we were to teach our children concerning all this; but we never were informed of any such thing, nor have we ever told our children, for we could not, having never heard of it before. (See Short and Easy Method with the Deists.)

The same writings inform us, that a particular tribe was appointed by God as priests, by whom, and none else, all solemn institutions were to be celebrated. Now, in whatever age these writings may be supposed to be forged after the days of the writers, it is impossible that they could be received as true, unless the deceivers could first make the whole nation so credulous as believe that they had received these writings from their fathers,—had been instructed in them when they were young, and had taught them to their children;—moreover, that they had all been circumcised, and had circumcised their children in obedience to what was commanded in these writings. Now, was it possible to impose upon a whole nation, so far as make them believe they had received books that said they had done such and such things, while the whole was false.

I shall, for the sake of argument, suppose that these things were observed and practised before these writings were forged, and that these writings were imposed upon the Jews, in making them believe that they had observed such and such rites in memory of the things inserted in these forgeries. But  
here

here the very same absurdities present themselves; for it must be allowed, that the Jews observed these rites in commemoration of something, or that contrary to reason and fact; that they observed them they knew not for what: still it was impossible to persuade them that they had performed them in commemoration of things they had never so much as heard of before these writings which are supposed to have been forged. Thus we have the highest security against any imposition upon the Jews after, as well as at the time when the things are supposed to have taken place.

To say that the history we ascribe to Moses was not written at the time that Christians pretend, but might be the invention of later ages, is to say and assert without proof.

Moses was uniformly owned as the Jewish Lawgiver; the Jews universally believe it, and affirm it (here is affirmative proof,) they have in every age paid the highest regard to his memory. The most ancient heathen writers do not deny there was such a person as Moses, nor call in question the truth of his giving laws to the Jews. The ignorant blasphemer cannot give any account when, or by whom, this history, and the facts related in the five books ascribed to Moses, were forged. He cannot give a name to this imaginary historian, who personated Moses: he can neither tell us where he lived, nor  
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produce authentic vouchers of what he imagines, and then asserts.

The question with regard to the gospels and epistles is, Whether these writings contain a true account of what they at first declared to the world? or if they are spurious, and an imposture which we ought to reject?

It was impossible that the writings of these persons we call evangelists and apostles, could be imposed on the world, *as their's*, while they were alive, if they had not been their's. Such a glaring imposition must have been discovered by persons who paid such unremitting attention to the state and progress of Christianity;—mankind could not be imposed upon, while the first teachers of that system were alive; though it is admitted that the founders of a party may outlive the reputation of their own system, their tenets may be suppressed by external force, or argument. But that tenets, which they never published, should be invented, and uniformly pass as the true doctrines of such and such men, in the very age in which they lived, while there was sufficient opportunity to detect the fraud, is altogether incredible.

There could be no fraud as to the writings of these men while they were alive; and the same may be said of them while the original manuscripts were preserved in the Christian world. The case must  
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have been the same, while every one might search these original manuscripts; any attempt to impose must have been in vain, so long as they were extant. Tertullian signifies, that some of them were preserved to the age in which he lived, viz. till the end of the second century, and to preserve writings much longer is common at this day.

It is equally impossible, that any particular denomination of professed Christians could impose on the world afterwards, by adulterating these writings.

No particular party would have ventured to do this, for they would see that every opposite interest must have been conscious of the fraud. And thus the very disputes which have arisen in the Christian world have been subservient to the preservation of the truth; though animosities and divisions among such as profess Christianity be a mournful consideration, they have tended to its security; by this means one party has been a check on another; at same time it will not be pled, that the different sectaries could invent them by a general confederacy. While these writings could not be imposed on the world by the friends of the Christian religion, far less by its avowed enemies; this they could not do; such a cheat could not be imposed upon the world by its avowed enemies; in open disregard of all its zealous friends in all nations, who were deeply interested in the cause.

Let any man weigh the following things in an equal balance, and say, that mankind have been imposed upon, in receiving the *Books* of the New Testament for what they are generally believed to be.

These books were originally written in the most celebrated language then spoken in the world; were dispersed and translated into various languages different from that in which they were originally composed. They were not retained in private hands as mysteries, which ought not to be revealed; but in public libraries, where every individual had an opportunity to search and see; they have been openly quoted by such as have avowed themselves advocates for Christianity, and by enemies to that cause; a great part of them were addressed to large societies, and that in different parts of the world. They have been uniformly recited in public assemblies, and privately read, which made a deep impression of them on the minds of mankind; and all sectaries amid their angry controversies have made appeals to them as the test of orthodoxy.

Such as have been apostates from the cause, never hinted that they were an imposition on mankind, though they must have been privy (at least some of them) to the imposture, had there been any, and had every opportunity to have done it.

These things, if duly weighed, shew that there are no writings extant that have such evidence of



authenticity. Let Payne and his friends no more complain “that in the answers to the former part of the age of reason undertake to *say*, and they put some stress thereon, that the authenticity of the Bible is as well established, as that of any other ancient book, as if our belief of the one could become any rule for our belief of the other.” Part II. p. 3.

It is to no purpose to aver with Payne (Part II. p. 65.) “Those who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history may suppose that the book called the New Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ, as they suppose that the books ascribed to Moses, have existed ever since the time of Moses. But the fact is historically otherwise, there was no such book as the New Testament, till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived.

“At what time the books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, began to appear is altogether a matter of uncertainty. There is not the least shadow of evidence of who the persons were that wrote them, nor at what time they were written; and they might as well have been called by the names of any of the other supposed apostles, as by the names they are now called. The originals are not in the possession of any Christian church existing, any more than the two tables of stone written on, as they pretend, by the finger of God,  
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upon mount Sinai, and given to Moses, are in the possession of the Jews. And even if they were there is no possibility of proving the hand-writing in either case. At the time these were written there was no printing, and consequently there could be no publication, otherwise than by written copies, which any man might take or alter at pleasure, and call them originals. Can we suppose it is consistent with the wisdom of the Almighty, to commit himself and his will to man upon such precarious means as these: or that it is consistent that we should pen our faith upon such uncertainties? We cannot make nor alter, nor even imitate so much as one blade of grass that he has made, and yet we can alter words of God, as easily as words of man." &c.

All this jargon is to no purpose, Christians do not assert that the writings of the New Testament have undergone no alteration in things which are of little moment. It is not asserted that every letter, syllable, or word, is exactly the same as when the original writers signed them. If Thomas Payne did not know, he could be informed, that there are various ways by which an author may be abused, and that perhaps no book has altogether escaped this calamity. Christians knew before Payne was born, that any writing may be hurt by *time*, how easy it is for mistakes to arise by contractions in writing, the carelessness of librarians, the pride of critics, and

villany of impostors. What of all this? will these things lessen the credit of any writing? we do not think a book spurious on these accounts, for if this was the case, we must abandon every book to the flames; even Payne's Age of Reason itself, for he admits that an error has crept into the 1st Part; if this were sufficient to disprove any author, why do any credit the age of reason to be Thos. Payne's. But still it is maintained that these writings are the same which the authors left behind them, and that not only as to the substance of them, but every essential circumstance; so far are they from being invented by other persons, and imposed upon mankind in their stead. Even Julian, who was most solicitous to lessen the dignity of Jesus Christ, takes these books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Paul, &c. as authentic.

Though Payne asserts that "there was no such book as the New Testament till three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived;" yet, as I shall shew in the sequel, the fact is historically otherwise; and he himself (Payne) being judge, "it is uncertain at what time these books appeared," however, there is no end of his nonsense. From what has been already said, respecting moral evidence, it militates nothing against their authenticity that we did not see them write and subscribe them. However I shall not entirely overlook what he asserts

serts respecting the New Testament, “as these writings were not known till above three hundred years after the time in which Christ is said to have lived.” The fact, as already said is historically otherwise. Within a hundred years after the death of Christ, we find these writings cited by Justin, and Irenæus; not to mention the Epistles of Clements, Ignatius, and Polycarp; and from them downward, in a continued succession of writers; and these quotations were the same as we have them in the scriptures at this day. When we consider how near to that period the Apostle John lived, and that Irenæus was taught by Polycarp,—when we consider, that this Polycarp was ordained by John, and lived near him,—the stress that Irenæus lays upon these scriptures, in his opposition to *oral tradition*, and how positively he makes appeals to them;—if we consider that soon after, the Greek and Latin, the Roman and African churches, and those of Syria and Egypt, uniformly agree in quoting these writings all in the very same words; from these things it will appear what a malignant lie Payne tells. By the end of *one hundred* years they were general, and read in Christian churches. Nay, they were in the hands of the enemies of Christianity, *Trypho* in particular. Celsus had also read them. They were translated into the Latin and Syriac soon after. Having stated thus much, in what follows

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It may be allowed to quote their writings, not as divine, but as Payne does other writings.

Payne, in the *Age of Reason*, Part I. p. 7. and Part II. p. 58, 59, 60, &c. discovers the highest degree of *satire* and *invective*, concerning the resurrection of Christ, as narrated by the New Testament writers; but here he seems to be very sparing of argument and common sense. It is ungenerous to play upon an argument with wit, as it is often called, when the subject is of such importance. It discovers a mean, fordid, and contemptible temper, to stand at a great distance, pelting christianity with ridicule, when the person has a fair opportunity to come to close quarters and end the dispute in an honourable manner: it is no merit to ridicule. It is a very easy way to get the advantage of any author, to ridicule his writings,---a very little quantity of gross wit, or rather ill manners, will go a very great way. Deists, however, in every age, have adopted this plan, and they have been pretty successful with some. Persons who are otherwise grossly ignorant, feel a great degree of pleasure when religion is insulted: they take up a rude jest against the ministers of the christian religion, though in another case they are unable to distinguish satire from compliment. So great is the power of aversion, that with men who have high pretensions to *reason*  
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and *common sense*, sophistry is received in the room of demonstration.

It is but a pitiful triumph to gain men's assent by an appeal to their fancies, instead of informing their judgments. It must mortify a man of feeling to think that he is beholden to the vices, and not to the judgment of mankind, for reputation. Payne, in the manner in which he has traduced the resurrection, has only followed men of his views who have gone before him; he has tried to abuse the doctrine of Christ's resurrection with scoffs and laughter, instead of disproving its credibility; he has substituted a torrent of reproaches and virulent epithets, for argument. But reproach and bold assertion is the cheapest argument, either in opposing or in defending christianity.

Payne asserts, that the witnesses were incompetent as to their number, "a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say, they *saw* it, and all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it, &c." I presume, however, that when Payne fled from England to escape public justice, a smaller number of witnesses would have convicted him than eight or nine. To attack such a number as being incompetent, shews the grossest ignorance of moral proof; for the number of persons who testify concerning a matter of fact, independent of other

other circumstances, is not conclusive. In the present case, it shocks the feelings to think that a lie should be concealed, more especially among such a number of fraudulent individuals, and thus to delude the world, seems a miracle surpassing all the miracles recorded in the New Testament. Such a cabal could not fail to tell tales on each other sooner or later. There were others besides, who unanimously affirmed the truth of Christ's resurrection; and their number was not despicable. A Christian writer (Paul) declares that in his time there were the greater part of five hundred then alive, who all at one particular time saw him after he arose.

But says Payne, (Part II. p. 61.) "As to the account of Christ's being seen by more than five hundred at once, it is only Paul who says it, and not the five hundred who say it for themselves, it is therefore but the testimony of one man, &c." It is strange to hear a man discover such gross ignorance as to historical evidence. If Paul wrote a falsehood, why did not these persons detect him, as he wrote while they were alive. But even laying aside Paul's history, the testimony of the rest deserves the highest regard, as declaring something they had personal knowledge of. We all know, that in a case where a man pretends sensible demonstration for the truth of what he says, he at least deserves attention, as this will convince any man of *reason*, that the mat-  
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ter it at least deserves enquiry, unless he had given grounds to suspect his veracity otherwise. Now when a considerable number of men say they were eye-witnesses, their evidence must be valid unless there be a good reason for rejecting their testimony. These persons did not only see Christ once but repeatedly; and in such a manner as to leave no room to suspect that fancy had any thing to do in the matter.—They conversed familiarly with, and received instructions from him; he commanded them to tarry at Jerusalem till endued with power from on high; he upbraided them for their unbelief, in not believing the truth of his resurrection, on the testimony of such as had seen him—That they were blessed and comforted by him:—saw him actually ascend to heaven. And after this they returned to Jerusalem, in obedience to his command, and were endued with powers in exact accomplishment of his promise. Is it possible for imagination to deceive *so many*? Could they think they saw a person occasionally for about six weeks,—that they eat and drank in his presence,—that he expounded the scriptures to them, gave them promises and various rules for the government of the church. Could this, I say, be fancy? If this proof be inadmissible, they must have been the most notorious villains. It is therefore of the highest importance to examine the character of the witnesses, and the manner in which they gave

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their evidence respecting this event. The *manner* in which the witnesses gave their testimony deserves attention. This they gave in a manner the most solemn. They invoked the name of the Supreme Being as witnesses; they appealed to him as the judge of the sincerity of their hearts; and in proof of this, they declared that they were invested with the power of working miracles, to which they appealed, for the truth of their doctrine. Such appeals amounted to solemn oaths, which, by the common consent of men, are the last resource for evidence. It is true men have been so wicked as to deny the being of a God, but this is of no avail in the present case, unless it can be made evident that the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were possessed of such flagitious principles.

Again these persons did not narrate what happened far distant, either as to time or place. If persons were to tell of something that happened a number of years before, and at a great distance as to place, their evidence might be obnoxious to objections, for want of opportunity to make proper enquiry. Whereas, in the present instance, the case is quite otherwise. These witnesses avowed the fact on the spot where the thing took place; they affirmed that he arose at the very place where he was crucified, nor did they delay the publication of his resurrection till the matter might be in a great  
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measure out of mind, no, they did it while his death was in the mouths of all, and while persons might have been adduced to disprove the fact, had they declared a falsehood. They did not conceal the event, but openly declared it: it was not privately told to a few of their own party, they proclaimed it openly when Jerufalem was crowded with foreigners. They adopted no clandestine means to publish it; they went into the fynagogues and temple and published it. They did not choofe to inflame the mob or influence the vulgar, where it might have been impossible to detect them, but they appeared in the most august assemblies of the Jews, and testified before the rulers and priests concerning the fact. Peter delivered a very animated speech, in one of these assemblies: “Ye rulers of the people and elders of *Israel*, if we be this day examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, be it known to you all, and to all the people of *Israel*, that by the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole.” What intrepidity does Peter discover here? Sure no man can with justice charge Christ’s resurrection with secrecy, when thus avowed before his murderers. These grave senators behoved to be affected deeply, by such a charge and declaration from two illiterate

men. The author of that history informs us that they *marvelled*, and no wonder. All the compliment paid them was, that he whom they had lately murdered was raised from the dead. Had they had proof, now was the time effectually to have quashed them. Instead of this they ordain that the apostles withdraw, till they consulted together. Such however was their confusion, that they dismissed them, by charging them to speak no more in the name of Jesus; the very thing that men would have done in any age, conscious of guilt. The apostles however told them, they would not desist: upon which they thought of a most effectual method to silence them, "they took counsel to kill them." A pretty way of answering arguments!

These witnesses could not be instigated to give such a testimony from motives of worldly interest, but the very reverse. A few men, who made no great appearance either in the literary or political world; they tell the Jews that they must give over their modes of worship, as these were superceded by the appearance and work of him, whom they had lately hanged on a tree: this doctrine was not calculated to obtain the favour of the great; nay, they openly, in imitation of Christ, informed them, that if they espoused christianity, they must lay their account with persecution in its most hideous forms; so that it was vain for men to adopt their tenets, unless

less they were willing to part with liberty, property and life itself. Now, could they be influenced by worldly considerations to give such a testimony?—They could neither propose reputation, nor the enlargement of their fortunes; which, by the way, proves their sincerity. Payne (in his *Age of Reason*, Part II.) asserts, “that with respect to such books as compose the New Testament, all the inducements were on the side of forgery.” But the dangers they encountered,—the sufferings to which they were exposed, will be sufficient to shew, that the man who asserts this, must be obstinately inclined to think and write just the reverse of what the generality of men, possessed of *reason* and its exercise, will infer in a case of this kind. I would be glad to know what men could propose to themselves in defending a cause to such extremity, if bad.

It is granted, that men lost to all sense of virtue, may bid defiance to the dangers to which they may be exposed in maintaining a bad cause, provided reputation or profit, real or supposed, is to be obtained by such an obstinate adherence, and even on this hypothesis it is more likely that they would stop short. I defy Payne, or any Deist, to produce an instance of a person in his wits, who threw away reputation and fortune to propagate an imposture; which he confessed to be so. From this it will appear, that the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were

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not men of dissolute morals;—The only question that now remains then is, whether or not they were possessed of reason and its exercise.

To decide here, it is necessary to know, if their words and actions came up to the standard of sobriety, as commonly received among mankind. Did these men ever do or say any thing which betrayed a defect of intellectual powers? They express their sentiments with that gravity which became the importance of the subject; they conversed, taught, and argued with the most learned, as well as the vulgar. Why did not some of the learned Greeks and Romans discover some incoherence in their conversation?

When they argued, they either convinced their opponents; or else roused their indignation to such a pitch, as proved they were reduced to the greatest distress. And upon the whole, no man who is qualified as a judge of sober sense and capacity, could deny their qualifications to conduct themselves as *men* and as ministers of Jesus Christ. They behaved themselves with uniformity and consistency.

Had the resurrection of Christ been a fraud, why did not the Jews, who had it in their power, expose the imposture? Why did they sit with the heavy charge of bribing the soldiers? The writers of the New Testament openly declared the Jews did so, which, if true, militated greatly against them. This

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was representing them in the most odious point of view.

Matthew records the matter thus; the watch who were set to guard the sepulchre, being terrified by the earthquake and other circumstances, came into the city and told what had taken place. Upon this a council was called; circumstances were such as required that the soldiers should be silenced; and for this purpose, they resolved to try the influence of money. They gave them the money, and told them what to say; "Say ye his disciples stole him away while we slept." A very singular and contradictory direction; for if they were asleep, how could they know who carried away the body?—Payne, in the depth of his new-coined reason, tries to make this circumstance militate against the credibility of the history. This is such a poor tale, that it deserves no refutation; it is a very odd way of reasoning, to make *that* militate against the historian, which the historian tells to expose the inconsistency of others. I agree with Payne, when he says, (Page 59, 60, 61.) "Were a person to tender his evidence about something that he should say was done, and of the manner of doing it, and of the person who did it, while he was asleep, and could know nothing of the matter, such evidence could not be received;" but to turn the fabrication of the Jews against the historian is absurd in the extreme.

If the historians told a falsehood, why did not the Jews detect them? But, like Payne, they cast dirt instead of argument. They slandered and reproached. They raised mobs, and endeavoured to inflame the minds of the common people against them.

If Christ did not rise, what became of his body? If he did not rise, the body must have been removed, either by friends or enemies. That it would not be by his foes, is pretty obvious; then it must have been taken away by his friends, as the Jews affirmed. As to this, a bare assertion will not do; christians require proof. Let deists produce authentic records, or any moral evidence what became of the body; and any moral proof on this head will be of the highest advantage to the cause of infidelity; and Bible-believers will be satisfied, with moral or mathematical evidence, or any thing admissible. Christians are willing to have the matter tried by this; but if infidels have no evidence but mere assertion to keep themselves in countenance; the question is, on which side does fraud and cheat rest? Payne, on the resurrection, talks of impostures and cheat, as if he could prove his dogmas by lines and figures, and after all he has nothing to say but conjecture and random affirmations which a man of reason cannot hear without contempt and indignation. If this be slander, deists are called upon to vindicate their own scheme.

One would think, that the precaution of the Jews to prevent any imposition, might satisfy any man if he was not under the influence of the most inveterate prejudice. The great men of the nation went to the governor, and told him that Jesus had signified, while he was alive, that he would rise again, and it would be necessary to seal the tomb, and place a guard. Their words, as recorded by Matthew in history, shew that they not only had full warning of the event, but likewise that they were aware from what quarter any cheat was to be expected, and the consequences that would ensue, if any thing was left undone, which had a tendency to prevent it. They obtain a favourable answer from the governor; they are left to do every thing they thought necessary to prevent a fraud. "Pilate said unto them, ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." Here every thing was to their wishes. The governor did not frustrate their design,—they had a guard of soldiers at their command; they had money, and they had malice. These things leave no room to doubt the truth of Christ's resurrection, and that by the power of God.

While these considerations have a dead weight on the Jews, they strike against our Republican infidels with equal force. Could they have adopted any plan more effectual?



I have already shewn that if his body was stolen, it must have been by christians. And how did this cheat come to be known? Did the disciples tell it? Or the guard? Or were they conscious of what passed in their sleep? It is such a poor tale as will not bear a hearing.

If Christ did not rise, Thomas Payne must believe what is incredible by other men. He must believe that a few cheats overturned all the wisdom of philosophers, and craft of the politicians, in the age in which they lived, or he must conclude that this was effected by a few madmen. He must believe that a most astonishing event took place without means either human or divine. As for natural means, such as worldly policy, or influence, money, &c. these men were possessed of none to carry on such an imposture. As for divine power, this must be out of the question, for God could not countenance such villains. Will any man believe, that a company of rude uncultivated men, could lay a plan so deep as never to be found out, eluding the vigilance of their most implacable enemies? Can any man believe, that human nature was in them specifically different from what it is in other men,—without motives of honor or interest they should run such a risque? Can a man believe, that such vile impostors would teach such an excellent system of morality as they did? Thomas Payne, what shall be given thee, or what shall be done

done to thy false tongue! what shall be given thee for thine incredulity, abuse, slander, and reproach. If you believe the above, which is the inevitable consequence of infidelity, you believe what few men will. My soul, come not thou into his secrets.

But says Payne, (Part I. p. 7.) "The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to have taken place, admitted of public and ocular demonstration, like that of the ascension of a balloon, or the sun at noon-day, to all Jerusalem at least. A thing which every body is required to believe, requires that the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all and universal; and as the public visibility of this last related act was the only evidence that could give sanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground, because that evidence never was given, &c." Part II. p. 61. "It is directly repugnant to the supposed or pretended end, and that of convincing the world that Christ was risen; and on the other hand to have asserted the publicity of it, would have exposed the writers of those books to public detection, and therefore they have been under the necessity of making it a private affair, &c." And near the foot of p. 61. and in p. 62. he says, "I now come to the last scene; that of the ascension into heaven. Here all fear of the Jews and of every other thing else, must necessarily have been out of the question; it was that which, if true, was to seal  
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the whole, and upon which the reality of the future mission of the disciples was to rest for proof. Words, whether declarations, or promises that passed in private, either in the recesses of a mountain in Galilee, or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, even supposing them to have been spoken, could not be evidence in public; it was therefore necessary that this last scene should preclude the possibility of denial and dispute; and that it should be as I have stated in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, as public and as visible as the sun at noon-day; at least it ought to have been as public, as the crucifixion is reported to have been." Let us now shortly examine this silly tale twice told. The Jews proposed an experiment similar to this, when our Lord was on the cross; "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross." They said they would believe if he would publicly deliver himself. Well, Deists profess much the same thing; had Christ shewn himself publicly after his resurrection, this would have satisfied them,—they would have depended in this case, on the evidence of men, precarious as they affirm it is. But this at once shews the weakness of their scheme, or the insincerity of their hearts, or both; for the belief of this great article of christianity, must have been founded on the same moral evidence that it is at this day,—recourse must have been had to the same kind of proof, which they affect to despise as insufficient.

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If they run down and ridicule all evidence, except mathematical, how is it possible for them to consider it sufficient in this case? *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.* But says Payne, "such a public appearance was necessary, at his resurrection and ascension to all Jerusalem at least." Well said; but how could you have known (Thomas Payne) that he did thus appear? How could you be sure seventeen hundred years after this? How could you have satisfied yourself that it was so? You must have done the very same thing, that must be done in present circumstances, namely, try the evidence if it has the marks of rational belief; for evidence of the same kind, and communicated in the same manner, must ever produce the same effect; and of course all your talk is but a silly jest.

You affect to laugh to scorn the miracles of Christ, as tricks and forgeries, though they were performed in the most public manner, and stand upon evidence, far superior to that evidence upon which you profess to credit other facts that have taken place. "But to come to the point" with Payne. The case about which we argue here is a matter of fact;—a thing in its own nature incapable of mathematical demonstration, a kind of proof which will not be required in such circumstances, unless by fools and madmen, or persons grossly ignorant of the true nature of evidence.

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With respect to sensible proof, it is admitted, that a matter of fact may be thus proven, to such as lived at the time the fact happened; but it is the greatest nonsense and contradiction, for men who live ages after, to speak of sensible proof of such matter of fact, and of course sensible proof must be forever excluded in all similar cases. By what rule or means is a man convinced of the truth of things which do not admit of ocular or sensible proof? On the same evidence as to kind, though more forcible, Christians believe the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

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#### SECT. IV.

*The Mosaic account of the Creation, consistent with  
Natural Philosophy.*

PAYNE, like the monkey for want of posteriors cannot rest, flies from one thing to another. He must needs let the world know that he is a philosopher: his vanity is almost boundless. (Part I. p. 34. Age of Reason.) "I proceed in addition to the several observations already made in the former part of this work, to compare or rather to confront the evidence that the structure of the universe affords, with the Christian system of religion. But I cannot

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not begin this part better than by referring to the ideas that occurred to me at an early part of life, &c.”

The vain glorious creature would make his own ideas a standard to other men. Having given us an account of his philosophical creed, he roundly asserts that “the creation is the only word of God; and that to believe a plurality of worlds (*in effect*) renders the Christian system of faith, at once little and ridiculous, and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air.”

His design evidently is, to represent the Christian religion as inconsistent with the principles of philosophy. Yes, Thomas Payne *is the man, and true philosophy will die with him!* He wishes to represent Christian Clergy, as only engaged in the useless study of the dead languages,—that they, with the whole fraternity of Bible-believers know nothing but the A, B, C, or that two and three make five,—as ignorant of natural philosophy, &c. But why all this parade,—this pretended learning, as if Christian Priests did not know as much as Payne!

I am by no means inclined to intrude on the public with philosophical disquisitions, yet to wipe away the reproach from Christians, I shall give a summary view of the account of the creation of all things as revealed in the scriptures; by which the world will judge whether Bible believers credit anything as absurd, and whether the Scriptures be inconsistent

consistent with the principles of sound philosophy or not.

Creation denotes the production of all things out of nothing. Creation is two-fold, *primary* and *secondary*; or immediate and mediate. The one signifies the production of something out of nothing, the other the formation of a material being out of pre-existent matter, but that matter so indisposed, that he who produced the matter alone can form such a creature out of it. The first chapter of Genesis affords us an exemplification of this twofold creation. According to that history, God Almighty on the first of the six days, produced that vast mass of matter out of nothing, out of which he formed all the several species of material creatures on the subsequent days.

The introduction to the account given of creation in that history, divides it into two parts, the *heavens* and the *earth*. It admits of heavens in the plural number; these are commonly distributed into *aereal*, *ætherial*, and *empyrean*. There is *earth* as well the *heavens*. The earth is but a very inconsiderable part of the creation. It is commonly denominated the terraqueous globe; a *globe* on account of its oval form, and terraqueous, as consisting partly of earth and partly of water. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls this *worlds*. The universe consists of worlds heaped upon worlds, unnumbered.

ed and unknown. By creation in the book of Genesis is intended the vast universe, known and unknown. Passing the *hypotheses*, maintained by the Pagan Philosophers, Peripatetics, Epicureans, Cartesianians, Chinese, Chaldeans and others; I shall follow the historical account in the book of Genesis.

On the *first* day God made the *heavens*, and the *earth*, and the *light*.

1st. The *heavens*. As we noticed, this includes the aerial heavens. By this is meant, that collection or body of air, which to a considerable height encircles the earth, the chief qualities of which are *fluidity*, *gravity*, and *elasticity*. In it we breathe, alternately drawing it in and forcing it out by the action of the lungs. It is known to geographers by the name of the atmosphere. The real height of it is generally supposed to extend 50 miles from the surface of the earth.

There is the *athereal* or starry heavens, so denominated, as comprehending that vast region in which the heavenly luminaries are ranged, and perform their periodical revolutions. The *Empyrean* is used to point out the glorious residence of the Lord of the universe.

2. The *earth*. By this Christians intend that part of the vast universe, destined to be the temporary residence of man. It is an opaque body, deriving its light from the sun. It is of a round, or rather



oval form. Of its internal parts we are in a great measure unacquainted. Our earth is one of the primary planets, and moves round its axis, once in 24 hours, and round the sun in a year.

3. The *light*. According to the history in Genesis, what we call the heavenly luminaries were not created till the fourth day. Says Payne, (Part II. page 82.) “The knowledge of the heavenly bodies is from the Bible of the creation, and not from the stupid Bible of the church, which teaches man nothing. The Bible-makers have undertaken to give us, in the first chapter of Genesis, an account of the creation; and in doing this, they have demonstrated nothing but their ignorance. They make there to have been three days and three nights, evenings and mornings, before there was a sun, &c.” By light made on that day, is meant the vast numbers and variety of luminous particles, which, on the fourth day were collected, and formed these bodies of light which we call the heavenly luminaries. Though it is admitted that the sun measures time, yet that body is not time itself, as contradistinguished from eternity. Before the existence of creatures all was eternity, and time commenced whenever creatures existed; and before the sun there was a period of time equal to the days mentioned, had that period been measured by the sun.

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The works of the *second* day were two; the *firmament*, and the division of the waters under, from those above it.

1. The *firmament*, or *expanse*, as the word means. By this may be understood the aerial, or the aerial and æthereal heavens. Nor is this an unnecessary repetition. The heavens mentioned on the first day may mean the production of the materials, whereas on the second day they might be arranged as we now behold them. A

2d Work of this day was the *division* of the waters which were under the firmament, from the waters which were above it. By the waters under the firmament, is intended the waters contained in the seas, rivers, lakes, and bowels of the earth. With regard to the waters above the firmament, the historian intends either the great bodies of waters contained, or at least supposed to be contained, in the other planets. And all this on the *hypothesis*, that, antecedent to this division, all the waters of the several planets were jumbled together, and that on this day, the quantity of water belonging to each world was allotted to it. Or it means, that on this day the air was so attempered, as to distinguish between the waters in the seas, lakes, &c. and the aqueous particles carried about in the meteors and clouds which swim in the higher regions of the atmosphere.

The works of the third day were the *collection* of the waters under the firmament, and the *infusion* of a principle of vegetation into the earth.

1st, On this day the waters under the firmament were collected into receptacles that were prepared for them, and thus there was a separation between the sea and the dry land. Previous to this work, our earth was without hills or vallies; and on this day, the Great Creator, either immediately, or by something similar to subterraneous thunder, so agitated the earth, as to raise one part and sink another. Thus he separated the sea from the dry land.

2d, On this day he *infused* into the earth the power of vegetation, so as it might produce the different species of plants, trees, &c.

On the *fourth* day the heavenly bodies were formed; the *sun*, *moon*, and stars.

1st, The *sun*. This vast body, which is the source of light and heat to our part of the great universe, —and the fixed stars are understood to be immense collections of inflamed matter, the heat of which is preserved by their amazing magnitude, their mutual action and re-action, and the rays they emit. The sun remains, and is preserved from suming away by the fixity of the component parts, and by the vast weight and density of the atmosphere incumbent on these parts. The sun is of vast magnitude, and at an immense distance from the earth.

2d. The *moon*. This is one of the planets, which derives its heat from the sun.

3d. On this day the Glorious Creator made the stars. These have been called fixed or wandering. Each of the former is supposed to be a sun, enlightening and otherwise influencing planetary bodies. The wandering are so denominated, not only because they move round the star, which is the center of the system to which they belong; but because they change their position with regard to the fixed stars. Planets are primary and secondary. Comets are eccentric bodies, and in their motions are quite irregular.

On the fifth day, He made the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea.

On the sixth day, He made the beasts of the earth, and created man. In this account is there any thing absurd or unphilosophical?

But, says Payne, "these are the only Bible, the only word of God, they speak to us." That they speak to us, who ever denied. In a book which christians believe, speech is ascribed to God's works. "*The heavens declare the glory of God, their voice is gone into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.—The works of God are calculated to beget awe of him,—his eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen by the things that are made:* But that creation is the only word of God is a mere assertion, and he should

Should have first proven that it was unnecessary to have any other.

He palms upon Christians that they believe the world to be flat like a *Trencher*,—that they cannot believe there are any worlds but one. Why might not this slander have been uttered at first? The reason is obvious, he has been eager to let the world know that he has a little smatter of experimental philosophy. Says he, (Part I. Page 42.) “In the midst of these reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith, that forms itself upon the idea of only one world, &c. From whence could arise the solitary and strange conceit that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equally dependent on his protection, should quit the care of all the rest, and come to die in our world, because they say, one man and one woman had eaten an apple. And, on the other hand, are we to suppose that every world in the boundless creation, had an *Eve*, an apple, a serpent, and a Redeemer. In this case, the person who is irreverently called the Son of God, and sometimes God himself, would have nothing else to do than travel from world to world, in an endless succession of death, with scarcely a momentary interval of life.”

It is one thing to assert, and another to prove, that it is, and must be a part of the Christian faith, that there is only one world. Is it not written,  
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“the worlds were framed by the word of God.” He talks at random, when he speaks of the rest of the worlds having an Eve, a serpent, &c. Is he sure that these worlds are inhabited?—that they are inhabited by men, such as we are? Where is his proof? Is he sure of it? Has he had ocular demonstration? Where is the evidence? Was Payne in any of them? Has he visited them all? Has he a regular correspondence with all these worlds? Did he receive information from others? Who were they? What was their occupation? Were they fishers or stay-makers?—These questions must be answered before his clamour can affect Christianity on that head. To believe that there are a vast variety of worlds replenished with inhabitants, is quite harmless in itself. But from the possibility thereof, to defame any system of religion in such dogmatical terms, deserves the most pointed censure.

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## SECT. V.

### *Of Mystery, Miracle, and Prophecy.*

IN Part I. Page 35, 36. he narrates a part of his religious experience. “From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea, I either doubted the truth of the Christian system, or thought it to be a strange  
affair;

affair; I scarcely knew which it was; but I well remember when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation, who was a great devotee to the church, upon the subject of what is called *redemption by the death of the Son of God*. After the sermon was ended, I went into the garden; and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was like making God Almighty act like a passionate man, that killed his Son when he could not revenge himself any other way; and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing; I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons."

A childish story when told, and stuffed with self-conceit; a pretty story that he should pass a decision on religion at seven or eight years of age! It is likely he has never been freed from the trambles of puerile prejudice *until this day*. And he must speak for the whole world! All men must say amen to his sentiments, and these of a child too! Nothing can be true, except this pitiful *egotist* can comprehend it. It must be unjust in God to punish his own Son,—as if the divine conduct was to be measured by his standard. It would be unlawful, indeed, for one man to die for another; but if Jesus Christ be God, as Christians have proven, he was amenable to none  
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but himself, he had his life at his disposal, which no mere man has.

#### MYSTERY.

(Age of Reason, Part I. p. 43.) “ I proceed to speak of the means that have been employed in all ages, and perhaps in all countries, to impose upon mankind. Those three means are, Mystery, Miracle, and Prophecy. The two first are incompatible with true religion, and the third ought always to be suspected.

“ With respect to mystery, every thing we behold is, in one sense a mystery to us. Our own existence is a mystery, the whole vegetable world is a mystery, &c.” (Page 44.) “ The fact, however, as distinct from the operating cause, is not a mystery, because we see it, and we know the means we are to use, &c. But though every created thing is in this sense a mystery, the word mystery cannot be applied to moral truth, any more than obscurity can be applied to light. The god in whom we believe is a god of moral truth. Mystery is the antagonist of truth, &c.

“ When men, whether from policy or religious fraud, set up systems of religion, incompatible with the word or works of God in the creation, and not only above, but repugnant to human comprehension, they were under the necessity of inventing or

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adopting a word that should serve as a bar to all questions, enquiries and speculations, and thus it has happened, that religion, which in itself is without mystery, has been corrupted into a fog of mystery."

This legitimate offspring of emptiness and vanity, lays a heavy charge to the christian world for believing mystery; or believing tenets, to the full comprehension of which the human mind is confessedly inadequate. In answer to this, it is not necessary to enter into a minute investigation of principles. To repel the force of the accusation, it may be proper to advert to two observations. First respecting the meaning of the term mystery; second, with regard to the evidence by which doctrines are supported, which fall under the denomination of mystery. Mysterious is an appellation given with propriety to any doctrine or transaction, the nature and manner of which we cannot completely understand. But if we were to reject every hypothesis, as incredible, to which such objections may be made, namely; that we cannot fully understand their nature and manner of operation, the sphere of enquiry would be small indeed. Payne, it is true, admits that "in one sense every thing is a mystery," which is referred to certain established laws, of which the effect and stability are confirmed by experience; whereas, in mysteries of christianity, we

can form no idea of the means which could be employed to bring them about. But many examples might be adduced in which our confessed ignorance of means forms no objection against their end, though this end be not exposed to sensible cognifance. The argument at last must come to this, what proof is equal to an end, that does not come within the compass of experience; or sensible cognifance? The natural answer is, these mysterious tenets which Christians believe derive their authority from revelation. The proof, of course, by which the truth of these tenets is established, must be inferred from the character, actions, and other circumstances of the person by whom such mysteries are revealed, and particularly from the tendency of his other institutions. In the present instance we must recur to the prophecies which announced the birth and actions of Christ; to the miracles which he performed; to his moral conduct, in every circumstance irreproachable; and to the tenor of his institutions as calculated to promote the best interests of men. By the concurrence of these things, a possible circumstance becomes the object of rational belief, founded not upon impression, but on argument. Allowing christianity be out of the question, these there are the very things which every reasonable man wishes to concentrate in the author of a revelation from God, and if it can be proven, that these

centered in the author of christianity, brings an evidence of its divinity, adapted to the nature of the subject. That this is the case with respect to christianity, will appear from what has been observed on the nature of moral evidence, and as to miracles, we shall speak of them by and by; in the mean time, mystery and miracle are of the same nature, according to Payne's own concessions. To every accusation of this kind, where there is a determination by impression, the reply is, our faith is so far a rational principle as it is determined by evidence, and that after an impartial investigation. These doctrines of christianity which are not on a level with our understandings, (as some others are,) we are induced to consider as worthy of credibility; for this plain and obvious reason, namely, a doctrine which a person might reject as improbable, viewed by itself; viewed as a component part of the general system, may be received with gratitude and confidence, as the general system is calculated to promote the ends of general utility. It forms in the mind a part of a whole, of which he finds himself obliged to own the divine original. I have mentioned these things with a view to overthrow Payne's strongest allegations respecting mystery, viz. an invidious and ill-founded distinction between *Reason* and *Belief*. It may be said, there are certain moral precepts which we comprehend,

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and we are convinced of their fitness. But are we on that account to adopt maxims which we do not understand, into our system of principles? To this we answer, the proof which demonstrates christian tenets as calculated to promote the honour of the Supreme Being, and the interests of men; is as direct and strictly philosophical as any evidence can be. The belief and conviction of a christian in this case, is equal to a conviction and belief established by philosophical investigation.

#### MIRACLE.

Says Payne, "As Mystery answered all general purposes, *Miracle* followed as an occasional auxiliary. The former served to bewilder the mind, the latter to puzzle the senses. The one was the lingo, the other the legerdemain." He then goes on to describe mystery as the same with miracle, and yet he confesses, that "there is nothing in this description that conveys the idea that is affixed to the word miracle;" which, by the way, overthrows all he had said of mystery, for mystery and miracle are "the same;" and yet they are not the same according to his definition of miracle: and he adds, "it is unnecessary to carry the enquiry further." In as far then as mystery and miracle are the same, the answer to what he advances respecting mystery, must apply to miracle.

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He goes on to tell us that “ mankind have conceived to themselves certain laws, by which, what they call nature is supposed to act; and that a miracle is something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws.”

The truth of miracles, or a suspension of the laws of nature, and their credibility, will in so far appear from what has been stated concerning mystery. Those who set up in opposition to the miracles performed by Moses and Messiah, evidently allowed the *fact* of them, by their attempts to match them. To deny the truth of miracles, because they cannot be accounted for according to the principles of the laws of nature; is in effect to banish the Supreme Being from the moral and material world, as if the world was such as a clock. This is to make the works of the Supreme Being, in their operation independent of their great author; and is a denial of an all-wise and superintending providence.

The miracles performed by Moses and Jesus Christ were performed publicly; while friends and foes, natives and foreigners, the learned and the unlearned, beheld and were astonished.

Yes, says Payne, but all this was “ *legerdemain.*” There can be no security against assertion and surmise. When a man pretends to reason, he ought to consider himself under some laws and rules; but when he takes occasion to surmise, where there is

no ground, the reasonable part of mankind will consider him fitter for bedlam than to be argued with.

Will Thomas Payne believe,—that persons affected with burning fevers and corroding ulcers could be tricked into perfect health by mere *legerdemain*?—will he believe that blind men will see, lepers be cleansed, and the dead raised to life, by mere fancy? or that great multitudes could be so far imposed upon as to believe, that they saw, heard, ate and drank repeatedly, in different places, while no such things took place? If these things are possible, what are our external senses good for? Or can we ever depend upon them? No, we cannot believe a Deist when he talks about being convinced by sense, for according to this hypothesis we cannot believe our own senses.

It is true, in a case which required nice reasoning, there might be some pretext, but when it comes to eating and drinking, if men cannot make use of their eyes and taste, we had better want both.

A man must come to one of the following conclusions: either that the account we have of the miracles of Jesus Christ was false, and only reported by some who had a design to deceive,—or that he wrought no miracles; but merely deluded the senses of mankind,—or that the spectators knew that he wrought no miracles, and thus were not imposed upon; but that they all, *friends* and foes, united in

a confederacy, to make the world believe that he did perform miracles, while he did no such thing,—or that he performed the miracles which Christians say he did. It is presumed that he will find it a hard task to prove, either that the whole was a trick,—that multitudes in such circumstances were imposed upon,—or that such a confederacy could possibly take place.

With regard to mystery and miracle, I charge Payne with the most wretched bigotry; for “Man learns the theory of religion by reflection. It arises out of the action of his own mind, upon the things which he sees, or upon what he may happen to hear or to read; and the practice joins itself thereto.” (Part I. p. 44, 45.) “The whole vegetable world is a mystery.” (Ibid. p. 43.) This is the highest degree of obstinacy and credulity, to stand so obstinately by a thing about which he cannot solve the least difficulty.

No says he, for “the acorn, when put into the ground, is made to develope itself, and become an oak. We know not how it is that the seed we sow unfolds and multiplies itself, and returns to such an abundant interest for so small a capital.”

“The fact, however, as distinct from the operating cause; is not a mystery because we see it; and we know also the means we are to use, which is no other than putting the seed into the ground. We  
come

know therefore as much as is necessary for us to know, and which, if we did, we could not perform, the Great Creator takes upon himself, and performs it for us. We are therefore better off than if we had been let into the secret, and left to do it for ourselves." One would think at first sight this very conclusive. It seems to leave a man under the necessity of admitting, that though in things which are the objects of sense we overlook difficulties, which cannot be resolved; yet in other things insuperable difficulties may be sufficient ground to reject them; particularly, mysteries and miracles in question, and it would appear the greatest credulity to believe them upon the evidence offered for their support. If this be not the meaning, it can have none. But if insuperable difficulties be not sufficient for calling in question some things, for which we have all the evidence that the nature of these things admit of; then I was right in saying, that the difference of things in their own nature, necessarily infer a difference in the mode of proof, and by virtue of the constitution of things, we are bound to assent to things as true, upon mere moral proof, as well as assent to the testimony of our senses; unless we admit of what some have pled for, viz. a delusive sense, which is inconsistent with the infinite perfection of God. Moreover, such a delusive scheme is equally impossible in a case that admits of mo-



fal proof, as in any instance of mathematical demonstration. It must follow, that all Payne's talk about the inconsistency of miracle is merely great swelling words of vanity. The stress lies on evidence and not on intricacies.

It is further urged against miracle by Payne, (Age of Reason, Part I. p. 45.) "Mankind have conceived to themselves certain laws by which, what they call nature is supposed to act; and that a miracle is something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws. But unless we know the whole extent of those laws, and of what are commonly called the powers of nature, we are not able to judge whether any thing that may appear to us wonderful or miraculous, be within, or beyond, or be contrary to her natural power of acting." It will be necessary here carefully to attend to what has been said respecting the nature of evidence, and to what has been already stated on mystery and miracle.

In order to repel the objection, let it be observed, that though many have been imposed upon, and though a man may not, at all times and in all cases, know when he is so, it will not thence follow that he must always be deceived; nor will it follow, that in certain cases, he can never be sure that he is not imposed upon.

Let an example illustrate this. Though a man may not know the utmost extent of the power of  
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fire, yet he may know that it belongs to its nature to burn, and that, when fuel is cast into it if it does not consume the same, there must be a suspension of the laws of nature. If I saw a man apprehended publicly, and without any operation performed on him, but in his every day's clothes, thrown into a fiery furnace, the flames of which raged with awful fury, so as to kill the officers who threw him into the fire; and yet the person who had been apprehended and cast into it, walked at the bottom of the furnace without harm, or the smell of fire about his clothes; in these circumstances, I could not be deceived in drawing this conclusion, viz. that there had been a suspension of the laws of nature in relation to the power of fire on that man; and that it had operated in a natural way on the persons whom it had consumed when they threw the man into the fiery furnace. In like manner, though I do not know how "an acorn becomes an oak," neither can I tell how amazing an increase there may be of corn by a concurrence of natural causes, such as arise from climate, soil, &c yet I certainly know that there can be no natural efficacy in uttering a few words, to increase one small loaf of bread, so fast; in the breaking; *really* not in appearance only, but to satisfy the appetite of thousands of hungry persons; and that the fragments should be more than the bread was at first. \*

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\* See *Short and Easy Method, &c.*

With regard to the New Testament, the facts, as we have seen, were done openly, nor is it possible that legerdemain would remove fevers, &c. There are also memorials which have been observed from that day to this. The clergy (however odious to Payne) are a lasting proof of the truth of Christianity; for if the gospel be an invention of priests, there could have been no such order of men when first invented; which would have given the lie to the gospel, as it states that such an order of men obtained from its first erection, (as the history itself declares,) and the things said to be true, only as they obtained at the time; (whatever period the gospel is supposed to have been forged) can their reception be before their invention?

Thomas Payne requires superior proof; here it is; and I defy him and all the infidel tribe to condescend on any religion which is fabulous, that has such evidence as Christianity. I do not affirm that every thing is false that has not this evidence; but it is impossible that any thing can be false, that is so supported. If the Bible be the invention of men, they must have been either good or bad, either virtuous or vicious: now, it cannot be the invention of bad men; men of such a description would never have invented a system diametrically opposite to their own lusts and temporal interests, as might be shown at large: neither can it be an invention of  
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good men, seeing they must have been conscious of the fraud; and a fraud and perseverance in it is inconsistent with the character of such.

If it be, as he says, the invention of priests, this gives the world an idea of that order of men far superior to what they themselves ever thought; if this be the fact, instead of their knowing only *hic, hæc, hoc*; they must be the most artful and intelligent of the human race, if they could so far impose upon the senses of their fellow creatures, they must be possessed of power more than human:—This is more wonderful than all the miracles mentioned in the Bible. And seeing priests have been able to maintain such an imposture, Payne ought to yield to that very priesthood which he affects to despise; to avoid a mortification so gravelling as bow to priests, he ought candidly to confess his error and ignorance, —and submit to the truth of revealed religion. I am, however, afraid his neck is composed of an iron sinew, and his brow of brass; Solomon's proverb, I fear, will be verified in the instance of this malicious infidel, “bray a fool in a mortar with a pestle, yet will not his folly depart from him.”

Those who were first employed in preaching the Christian system, were inspired with courage to publish these doctrines to the world: they witnessed the facts which related to the life and doctrines of Christ, and therefore their evidence must have weight with

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all who will not fervilely prostitute their reason to the most scandalous incredulity, more especially as they were persons of truth and integrity; and as we have seen they witnessed facts which came within the reach of their external senses.

They declared these at the time when, and in the place where they were transacted, and that openly before their most inveterate enemies; who had every advantage, and a great inclination to detect the fraud, if there had been any. They had no worldly interests to promote by the publication of these things,—exposed themselves to the fury and rage of their enemies and persecutors. While men have a principle of self-preservation, they cannot be supposed to publish these doctrines at such a risque, if their minds had not been fortified by supernatural power. It is true, that pride and bigotry have prompted some men to die martyrs to atheism, but such generally ended their days fullen and mad, reviling such as put them to death; whereas such as died to seal the truth of Christianity, pitied and prayed for their enemies. I allow, that, merely to die in the defence of a cause is no proof of the truth of it; no more than Payne's believing that revealed religion was a mere imposition, when he had death, by the bloody hand of Robespierre, in near prospect, can prove the truth of deism. It will prove obstinacy, but not that his principles were just. Besides, he

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was not dying for infidelity ; whereas in the instance of Christian martyrs, all circumstances considered, had they not died to support the truth ; human nature must have been very different *then*, from what it is *now*.

They supported their tenets by miracles, which could not be *tricks*, for the jugglers at that time, at least some of them, owned, that the power of God attended them. Jugglers always aim at gain and reputation, whereas the apostles had only bonds and imprisonments in view.

The miracles which they performed might easily be known as to the fact of them. Persons who lived at the time when, and place where, they were performed, had access to know, whether or not some of their neighbours had been born blind, and had obtained their sight by these men ;—whether or not any of them had been deaf, dumb, and lame, and had obtained the use of the organs of speech, and of their limbs,—and whether any of their acquaintances had been dead, and had been raised to life again : these things, if true, must have been known ; and, if false, there were men very ready to detect the cheat.

It cannot be pretended, that our Saviour and his apostles knew some secrets in nature, with which the world are unacquainted ; for though things of this kind may amuse mankind, the miracles of our  
Saviour,

Saviour and his apostles, from their usefulness and variety, prove that they were not limited to a few secrets of the laws of nature, which work always one way; they were most beneficial to mankind. It cannot with truth be affirmed, that imagination, however powerfully it may work, would make them fancy that such things took place without being real; for though a hypochondriacal person may be deceived, yet numbers could not be imposed upon at one and the same time. They were of a nature too singular to be mistaken, such as making the blind to see by a word; changing the storm into a calm by a rebuke; and though, in some diseases, which ly in high fermentations of the blood, &c. fancy may operate to cure, yet chronical disorders and natural defects like blindness and lameness, cannot be carried off by the power of imagination.

Part I. p. 47. he says, "We have never seen, in our time, nature go out of her course, but we have reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time, &c." If this has an any meaning at all, it implies, that there ought to be a continuation of miracles. To this it is answered, that we have no right to censure the ways of the Supreme Being. Besides, if there was a continuation of them, it would defeat their end, men would daily become accustomed to this kind of evidence; and they would soon cease to impress us. A continu-

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ation of miracles would lead men to call the divine power into question. They would be ready to impute them to some natural though unknown cause. And if men will not believe what is written, they would not believe the most uncontested miracle that might be performed for their conviction, more than many who believed not though they witnessed miracles performed by Moses, Messiah and his Missionaries: Thus much for mystery and miracle.

#### PROPHECY.

“ Prophecy ought always to be suspected. - (Part I. p. 43.) As mystery and miracle took charge of the past and the present, prophecy took charge of the future, and rounded the tenses of faith. If there were,” (meaning prophets) “ it is consistent to believe, that the event so communicated, would be told in terms that could be understood; and not related in such a loose and obscure manner as to be out of the comprehension of those that heard it, and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen afterwards. It is conceiving very irreverently of the Almighty to suppose he would deal in this jesting manner with mankind: yet all the things called prophecies in the book called the Bible, come under this description.” (Part I. p. 48, 49.) “ It is upon the pretended prophecies,  
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that



that the theory of the church, calling itself the Christian Church, is founded." (Part II. p. 74.)

It is admitted that there are some dark prophecies, but they are not all of this complexion. Let us attend to the exact accomplishment of predictions concerning the most contingent events; they may be called contingent, because their accomplishment depends not on second causes, and of course cannot be accounted for by the laws of nature. The knowledge of the laws of nature, enables naturalists to describe and foretel events, that depend on these laws which are regular in their operations. For example, the transit of a planet passing by a fixed star,—an eclipse of the sun effected by the moon's intervening between the sun and our earth; or an eclipse of the moon by the intervention of our atmosphere between the sun and the moon,—the alternate ebbing and flowing of the sea, and similar events, which may be predicted for ages to come. But the scripture prophets foretel events of the most casual and fortuitous kind, and of which no man can have any previous knowledge from the established laws of nature, and that long ere they happened.

A very few references will illustrate this. Hundreds of years before Jofiah was born, it was foretold, that he by name, should burn the bones of the idolatrous priests, whom Jeroboam had employed, and that this should be done at Bethel. Could the  
fatal

fatal death of Ahab and Jezebel been more circumstantially described, by one who was to write the history, than prophecy foretold, with regard to dogs eating the flesh of the one, and licking the blood of the other. The return from the Babylonish captivity was not only predicted long before, but the person who was to be the instrument is expressly named. The circumstances of Christ's birth, life and miracles, sufferings and death, were clearly foretold in ancient prophecy; without any equivocation. These things considered, Payne must be viewed as a slanderer, asserting without proof.

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## SECT. VI.

### *The consistency of Scripture vindicated.*

THE enemies of divine revelation pretend to discover a great number of inconsistencies, and contradictions. And here Payne assumes a very formidable appearance, he comes forth brandishing (as he would make the world believe) a new piece of armour, such as was never heard of before, he boldly comes to the field, like the Goliath of his party, bidding defiance to all the friends of revelation.

(Part II. p. 4.) He says, "I proceed to examine the authenticity of the Bible; and I begin with what are called the five Books of Moses, *Genesis, Exodus,*

*Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.* My intention is to shew that those books are spurious, and that Moses is not the author of them; and still further, that they were not written in the time of Moses, nor till several hundred years afterwards; that they are no other than an attempted history of the life of Moses, and of the times in which he is said to have lived, and also of the times prior thereto, written by some very ignorant and stupid pretenders to authorship, several hundred years after the death of Moses, as men now write histories of things that happened, or are supposed to have happened, several hundred or several thousand years ago.”

“The evidence I shall produce in this case is from the books themselves; and I will confine myself to this evidence only, &c.”

“In the first place there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of these books, &c.” What can he intend by affirmative evidence? unless it be that none asserts Moses was the author of them. Such senseless stuff, one would think, could not have been vented by a man in his wits, for the Jews have uniformly affirmed that Moses was the writer of them. “They are written in the third person; The Lord said unto Moses—Moses said to the Lord—The people spake to Moses, &c.” But what is this to the purpose? Cæsar and Ossian wrote in the third person.

He asserts, (Part II. p. 5.) “That it cannot be admitted that Moses speaks, without rendering him truly ridiculous and absurd.” Why? “because in Numb. xii. 3. ‘Now the man Moses was very meek, &c.’ If Moses said this of himself, instead of being the meekest of men, he was one of the most vain and arrogant coxcombs, &c.” To quarrel at this, argues the grossest ignorance of the simplicity of ancient times.

Upon this argument I may deny that Payne wrote the Age of Reason, for discovering such consummate vanity and pride; when he says (Part II. p. 50.) “I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood, with an ax on his shoulder, and fell trees; here they lie, and the priests, if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow.” If Thomas Payne be the author of this, he is without credit, thus to boast.

He proceeds to quarrel with the book of Deuteronomy, because the last chapter gives an account of Moses’s death, and as Moses could not write the history of his own death and burial, he infers from this that Deuteronomy could not be written by Moses. As to this every body knows, that the last chapter of said book was written by Joshua, as an introduction to his history; but it will not thence follow that Moses did not write the rest. He next  
takes

takes notice of a variation in the fourth commandment, as mentioned in Ex. xx. and Deut. v. In the one passage, the reason annexed is taken from the creation; in the other from their deliverance out of Egypt. To this it is replied, that their deliverance from bondage was an additional motive to keep the sabbath and allow their servants to rest on that day, while the obligation to keep it in commemoration of God's finishing the work of creation was no way lessened.

Part II. p. 8.) "I come now to speak of the historical and chronological evidence. The chronology I shall use in the Bible chronology.—It is therefore proper that I inform the readers, (such an one, at least as may not have the opportunity of knowing it) that in the larger Bibles, and also in some smaller ones, there is a series of chronology printed in the margin of every page, for the purpose of shewing how long the historical matters stated in each page happened, or are supposed to have happened before Christ, and consequently the distance of time between one historical circumstance and another." The accuracy of the marginal chronology is not pled for by Bible-believers, they do not insist on its authenticity, or being inspired, and of course his reasoning on that hypothesis cannot affect the truth of the history.

“ In the xiv. chapter of Genesis, the writer gives an account of Lot being taken, &c.—that Abraham rescued him, and pursued the enemy to Dan. I come now to shew (says Payne) that there was no such place as Dan till many years after the death of Moses, and consequently that Moses could not be the writer of the book of Genesis, where this account of pursuing them to Dan is given.—To establish this in proof, it is necessary to refer from Genesis to the xviii. of the book called Judges. It is there said that they (the Danites) came unto Laish, &c. And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.”

The objection might stand thus; If *Laish* did not get the name of Dan, till the time of the Judges, the writer of Genesis must have lived after it was taken by the Danites, and consequently Moses could not be the writer of Genesis! To this it is answered, that in transcribing the scriptures, the transcribers frequently gave to persons and places, names that were modern, instead of the ancient ones. This difficulty, however, will disappear, if this *Dan* mentioned in Genesis was a river, and not a city or town; and I have more reason to conclude that it was a river, than Payne has to assert that it was a town. If he does not know, I beg leave to tell him, that Lot was settled near the river Jordan; and Jordan

is so called, from the conflux of the rivers *Jor* and *Dan*.

Part II. p. 10. he goes on to argue, or rather assert, that Moses could not be the writer of Genesis; because "in the 36th chapter of Genesis there is given a genealogy of the sons and descendants of Esau, who are called Edomites, and also a list, by name, of the kings of Edom, in enumerating of which, it is said, ver. 31. "And these are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." (Page 11.) "It was with consistency that the writer of the Chronicles could say as he said, 1 Chron. chap. i. ver. 43: "These are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel," because he was going to give, and has given, a list of the kings that had reigned in Israel; but as it is impossible that the same expression could have been used before that period, it is as certain as any thing can be proved from historical language, that this part of Genesis is taken from Chronicles, and that Genesis is not so old as Chronicles, &c."

The sum of all this seems to be, that Moses could not give such an account of Kings reigning over Israel, as there were none till Saul, long after Moses was dead. -I am very much afraid that the effects of a late fever has not left him (Payne). I would advise him to read the Bible over again. It is clear that

that he passes a decision, founded on most wilful and criminal ignorance. Was not the man Moses "King in Jeshurun."

From the history it appears, that the Edomites rooted out the Horites or Hittites—by degrees, obtained possession of the country, and had a government of their own; and their government was *kingly*. These kings reigned in Edom, "before there reigned over the children of Israel," that is before Moses's time, for he was *king* in Jeshurun. His other objections against Moses are of a piece, respecting the manna and the giant's bed; they are so frivolous as to deserve no serious refutation.

In page 14. he goes on to the book of Joshua, and tries to overturn its authenticity, by hinting, that it could not be written by Joshua, for it gives an account in the last chapter, "that Israel served the Lord all the days of the elders that outlived him; and infers that Joshua, though he might know what passed in his own day, could not write the history of Israel after he was dead." This, however, is equally frivolous with the objection against Moses; the last chapter of Joshua and the last chapter of Deuteronomy, were at least part of them, written by the continuators of the history. Payne fights with men of straw, when trifling with the terms *until this day, after it, &c.*



I can say with propriety that Thomas Payne published a book, entitled, *The Rights of Man*, which, instead of being burnt, is in the possession of many in Great Britain *until this day*. *The Rights of Man* was published within these few years, and in virtue of the interference of government, none dared to publish the like after it, *to this day*.

He goes on to contrast Joshua xv. ver. 63. with Judges i. ver. 8. and 2 Sam. v. ver. 4, &c. and avers “that Jerufalem was not taken till the time of David, and consequently, that the books of Joshua and Judges were not written till after the commencement of David’s reign, which was 370 years after the death of Joshua.” A more pitiful objection than this could not have been devised. Salem, where Melchisedec reigned, was celebrated in the days of Abraham; Joshua, in his day, found it a principal city, in the south of Canaan. Josh. x. 1, 3. It fell to Benjamin’s lot, Josh. xviii. and was adjoined to Judah’s, Josh. xv.—The children of Judah took possession of it; Judg. i. but it afterwards became a city of the Jebusites, Judg. xix. David, among his first expeditions, retook it from the Jebusites. Pray, how often have some of our West India islands been taken, lost, and retaken; and in narrating the history of the last time any of them was taken, could any infer that they were never in our possession before?

(Age of Reason, Part II. p. 18.) “ Having shewn that every book in the Bible, from Gen. to Judges, is without authenticity; I come to the book of Ruth, an idle bungling story, &c.”

It is a very easy way to get rid of any book, to burlesque and ridicule it; I think, however, he had better done so with every book that has come in his way, than exposed his ignorance.

I shall only remark, that if this book was to be taken from the canon of scripture, the genealogy of our Lord would be incomplete; the whole of the Old Testament, without this book, would be insufficient to shew his being the Messiah; of course it is of the utmost importance to Christianity; though, had it been wanting, I believe Payne knows so little, he would hardly have missed it.

With regard to what he argues respecting 1st and 2d Samuel, it is to be observed, that he is fighting with his own shadow, in proving from detached passages, that these books were not written by Samuel; for Bible-believers are of opinion, that these books bear the name of Samuel in the title, not because he was the writer of them, excepting such as fell within his own time, to the 25th chapter of the first book, in which we have an account of his death; but because the first book begins with an account of his birth, life, and actions; and the rest of these books include the history of Saul and David, who

were both anointed by him; hence they have been termed the 1st and 2d books of the Kings, and the two that follow, have been denominated the 3d and 4th, which the titles in our translation bear. It is likely that Nathan was the continuator of the history.

As to the books of Kings and Chronicles, he chiefly hints at some apparent opposition respecting the commencement and duration of the reign of some Kings. In relation to this, let it suffice to observe, that, though by comparing the years of several of the Kings of Judah and Israel, mentioned in the books of Kings and Chronicles, we find that some are said, in one of them, to have reigned a few years longer than the account of the years of their reign, mentioned by the other. The seeming contradiction may be reconciled by considering him as having begun to reign before his father's death, as Solomon before David died; or from the time of his being nominated as his father's successor, and acknowledged as such by the people; which was done at times, to prevent disputes afterwards; and sometimes, when a king was engaged in foreign wars, and the event uncertain, he named and appointed his son to reign in his absence, from which time he had the title of King though his father was alive: Or when a king was superannuated, or otherwise disqualified to reign, as Uzziah when leprous, he settled his son as viceroy in his life-time,

and

and on that account the son is said to reign with his father.

Before I proceed farther, I shall take notice of an objection stated in a foot note, p. 39. between the 16th and 17th chapters of 1st Samuel. In the 16th chapter it is said, that David came to Saul, and stood before him, and he loved him greatly; whereas in chap. xvii. we read that he enquired, Whose son is this youth? How could this be, when he had been in his service before?

There is, however, no inconsistency between these passages; for supposing Saul's memory failed him, and he did not know David, this is nothing strange. A master will soon forget a servant, if he has been but a short time with him; or if he appears in another dress, as David in the instance condescended on, for he was in the habit of a shepherd. Where then is the absurdity? Suppose a man's servant shall enlist into the army, and return with his regimentals, and in full uniform; the master, most likely, would not know him at first; where then is the alleged inconsistency?

As to his table of the prophets, and the silence of the books of Kings and Chronicles respecting them, he seems to have thrown it in to fill up a page, having had nothing else to say. And as for Jonah and the whale, we refer the reader to what is stated on *Miracle*.

He then takes notice of the variation, with regard to those who returned from the captivity, as stated by Ezra and Nehemiah, and of Ezra's seeming inconsistency with himself. This might arise from the conduct of some who gave in their names to return, but afterwards declined, and some who declined to return at first, afterwards went. Nehemiah says, *merely*, that he found a register, with such and such names and numbers. The one might ascertain their number when they set out from Babylon; the other, when they came to Jerusalem. Moreover, there is no doubt but a very considerable number of the heathen accompanied them, on their return. Or, there might be a mistake committed in the transcribing; the Hebrews calculated by letters, and if Thomas Payne knows any thing about that language, he must grant that a mistake might be very ready, when it is considered, that many of these characters are very like one another in form.

As to what he says, with regard to the book of Psalms, affirming that David could not be the writer of them, because the 137th Psalm, has a respect to the exercise of the Jews under captivity at Babylon, reminds one of Falstaff's men of Buckram, for Bible-believers know well that David did not write that Psalm.

Payne's

Payne's animadversions on the remainder of the Old Testament are so jejune and trifling as to deserve little notice. However, let us shortly attend to what he says, when charging Jeremiah with duplicity, and prophecying falsehood. (Part II. p. 41.)

“ It appears from the 38th chapter, that when Jeremiah was in prison, Zedekiah sent for him; and at this interview which was private, Jeremiah pressed it strongly on Zedekiah to surrender to the enemy, ‘ if,’ says he, ver. 17. ‘ thou wilt go forth unto the king of Babylon’s princes, then thy soul shall live, &c.’ Zedekiah was apprehensive that what passed at this conference should be known; and he said to Jeremiah, v. 25. ‘ If the princes, (meaning those of Judah) hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee and say unto thee, declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king; hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; and also, what the king said unto thee: then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king; that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan’s house to die there. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him; and he told them according to all the words the king had commanded.’ Thus this man of God, as he is called, could tell a lie, or very strongly prevaricate, when he supposed it would answer his purpose; for certainly he did not go to Zedekiah, to

make

make his supplication ; neither did he make it ; he went because he was sent for, and he employed that opportunity, to advise Zedekiah to surrender himself to Nebuchadnezzar.”

Thus he endeavours to support the charge of duplicity. It is most astonishing to see this vile blasphemer palming things thus on the scripture. The fact of the matter was, that Zedekiah sent for the prophet Jeremiah, and desired him to tell the fate of the city. The interview being over, and the king being solicitous to preserve the prophet's life, desired him to say to the princes thus and thus: The princes having come as the king suspected, he told the princes according to the words of the king ; where is the lie ? where is the prevarication ? he did not say, neither did the king desire him to say, that he *went to supplicate* the king, but that he presented it. We find in the history that a petition had been presented formerly on his behalf, and there is little doubt, but he here renewed his request, when closetted with the king ; so when he told the princes this, he sinned not, he told a truth to preserve his life, and he was under no obligation to inform them of *all* that passed. In every well governed realm a man must be convicted upon evidence, and no man ought to condemn himself ; though he be really guilty.

In support of his prophecyng falsely he says, ' In the 34th chapter is a prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah in these words, ver. 2. ' Thus saith the Lord, behold I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon; and he shall speak to thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah king of Judah, thus saith the Lord, thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings that were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee, and they will lament thee, saying, ah, Lord. For I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord.' Now instead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the king of Babylon, and speaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, and with the burning of odours, as at the funeral of his fathers, (as Jeremiah had declared, the Lord himself had pronounced) the reverse, according to the 52 chapter, was the case; it is there said, ver. 10. ' That the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.' What can we then say of these pro-



phets, but that they are impostors and liars?" What can Payne say, but what favours of malice, lying, and slander? for the prophecy was most exactly accomplished. The city was taken—the men of war fled, and Zedekiah went towards the plain,—the Chaldean soldiers took the king, and brought him to the king of Babylon;—he *then beheld* the king of Babylon with *his eyes*—the king of Babylon bound him and carried him to Babylon in chains, put him in prison till the day of his death; he died in peace, he was not hanged, or beheaded, or otherwise put to death; a man dies in peace who dies, not by the sword, or poison or otherwise in a violent way. The history is silent indeed respecting the funeral rites, but as the rest was fulfilled, we may presume so was this; when the passion of kings is over, they will reflect that human affairs are in a state of constant fluctuation, and have a respect to Royalty when fallen. And though his eyes were put out, he saw the king of Babylon with his eyes, before he was deprived of his sight.

He throws out a number of reflections against the Jews; imputing murder and assassination to them. However it may be observed, in relation to this, that several acts of cruelty ascribed to them, appear on a more accurate examination, to be grounded on an incorrect translation of some passages in the Old Testament. As a specimen of this, we read 2 Sam.

xii. 31. that ‘when Rabbah was taken, David brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws and harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kilns;’ hence it has been inferred, that he put them to death with the most exquisite torments. But it has been shewn by several learned critics, that our version would have been more conformable to the original, if the passage had been rendered thus: ‘He put them *to* saws, and harrows, and *to* axes of iron, and made them pass *to* to the brick kilns:’ i. e. he put them to hard labour with these tools, and at the brick-kilns. (See Omerod’s Remarks on Dr Priestley’s Disquisitions, 2d edit. p. 72.) With regard to the alleged injustice of Israel to the Canaanites; the necessity of their being extirpated, or at least the destruction of their national polity,—the propriety of this being effected by the Jews, and the advantages which other nations derived from it. See clearly stated in Bishop Law’s considerations on the Theory of Religion. See also Butler’s Analogy.

This vile calumniator (Payne) asserts, that “the Jews never prayed but when in distress,” and that “only for victory, vengeance, and riches;” for shame! a more barefaced lie could not have been told. Go read the Bible and see; did not king Solomon pray at the dedication of the temple?

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Before we leave the Old Testament, we shall consider the qualifications of Moses as a historian, in relating what passed before his day, respecting the flood and other events. As to inspiration, let it be, for the sake of argument, out of the question.

In relation to Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, he himself was an actor in all, and had the chief management of public affairs; as the lawgiver, every thing was under his cognisance, so that this part of the history, excepting the last chap. of Deut. which gives an account of his death, may be denominated Moses's history of his own time. As for the book of Genesis, he might learn the contents of it from tradition. The longevity of the Patriarchs enabled them to transmit the facts; they passed through very few hands, and could not well be misinterpreted or mistaken. We cannot, for instance, imagine that the grand-children of Jacob could be ignorant of the affairs of their family;—of their pedigree, and the place from whence they came into Egypt;—Can we suppose, that an event so very remarkable, attended with such circumstances, as the selling of Joseph was, could be forgotten in so short a time? Could Jacob be ignorant of the country whence Abraham came; more especially, when he was so long there, living in Laban's family? Could Abraham, who lived in the same age with Shem, be ignorant of the flood, when Shem, from  
whom

whom he descended, was one of the persons saved by the ark? And can we suppose that Shem was ignorant of the transactions before the flood, when he was born long before the death of Methuselah, who lived before the death of Adam? The knowledge of these things therefore could easily be transmitted to Moses; for Adam might transmit it to Methuselah, and Methuselah to Shem; Shem to Abraham, &c. Thus laying inspiration aside, the tradition was easy.—Moses was a man of great judgment and experience, capable of distinguishing between fable and reality,—eminent in natural and political knowledge;—brought up in Pharaoh's court, and was skilled in all the wisdom of Egypt.

The author of the *Age of Reason*, after a torrent of blasphemy, respecting the conception of Jesus Christ, the great mystery of the gospel; says, p. 52. “The first chapter of Matthew begins with giving a genealogy of Jesus Christ; and in the third chapter of Luke, there is also given a genealogy of Jesus Christ. Did these two agree, it would not prove the genealogy to be true, because it might nevertheless be a fabrication, but as they contradict each other in every particular, it proves falsehood absolutely, &c. Besides which, there is only the two names of David and Joseph that are alike in the two lists.”

To

To settle the genealogy of Jesus Christ, it will be necessary to attend to the following things, viz. That Matthew descends downwards from father to son; Luke ascends upwards from son to father.—Matthew reckons only from Abraham, Luke traces back to Adam.—That the names cannot be the same seeing Matthew reckons the genealogy of Joseph, the supposed father of Christ; Luke reckons the genealogy of Mary. If it be said, Luke only mentions Joseph, not Mary, chap. iii. 23. therefore both Matthew and Luke reckon the genealogy of Joseph. To this it is answered, that Matthew speaks of Jacob as the natural father of Joseph, ver. 16. Luke of Heli as his father-in-law, as he was espoused to Mary the daughter of Heli; and he does this because it was not the custom of the Jews to reckon genealogies by women, but by men; accordingly we find Naomi calls Orpah and Ruth daughters, while they were only her daughters-in-law. Besides, Joseph and Mary were both of the house of David, for it is to be noticed, that Matthew reckons the descent of Joseph from Solomon the Son of David, and Luke shews Mary's descent from Nathan, another of David's son's, so that Matthew proves the thesis, that Jesus Christ is the Son of David, the son of Abraham.

Moreover, it would appear that they took the names as they found them registered with the Jews;  
and

and the word which is rendered (*as was supposed*) in Luke iii. 23. has a respect to the registration of the names; and may be rendered (*as found in the public records*) and if they had copied them unfairly, the Jews had opportunity to detect the fraud and forgery. I am the rather of this opinion, because when we compare the Chronicles with these genealogies in Matthew and Luke, we find that in Matthew *three* kings are entirely passed by, between Joram and Ozias, who, had they been mentioned, would have made seventeen generations. Their names have, perhaps, been neglected in the record, on account of their connection with the impious family of Ahab, against which the judgments of heaven were denounced; and Ahaziah, the first of these three, was Ahab's son-in-law. 2 Kings viii. 26, 27. And if we number the names, we find there is one wanting to make up the three fourteens. To obviate this difficulty it is reckoned, that the Jechoniah mentioned, ver. 11. and Jechoniah mentioned, ver. 12. were two different persons, the one the father, and the other the son; the Jechoniah mentioned, ver. 11. being the same with Jehoiakim the father of Jechoniah, as in 2 Chron. iii. 15, 16. for often the same person had different names, and that both under the Old and New Testament; e. g. Azariah is denominated Uzziah, and in Matthew Ozias. Peter was sometimes called Peter, and some-

times



times Cephas. Sometimes the mediate, and at other times the immediate father is mentioned, Matth. i. 21. The son of David, the son of Abraham, ver. 2. Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob.

In tracing Joseph's descent from Solomon in the first of Matthew, and in tracing Mary's descent from Nathan, Solomon's brother, we find Zorobabel and Salathiel mentioned, though both their progenitors and successors, their fathers and their children, are very different names in Matthew from what they are in Luke. Now, though the names of Zorobabel and Salathiel be the same, the persons were different, that is, there was a Zorobabel and Salathiel that descended from David by Solomon, and another Zorobabel and Salathiel that descended from David by Nathan's line. These considerations serve to shew, that the evangelists copied the names from the public records, and put them down just as they found them. I beg leave to add, that from Payne's own lists, he proves how superficially he has attended to this subject; for he says, (Part II. p. 52.) "There are only the two names of David and Joseph that are alike in the two lists. His own lists, however, clearly condemn him; for Zorobabel and Salathiel are mentioned by himself in the lists he has set down: "The legs of the lamb are not equal."

(Page 55.) Payne tries to disprove the truth of the gospel-history, by snarling at the writers of the

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New Testament, for not writing word for word the same, such as the inscription that was put over our Saviour, &c. I ask, if they were originally written in one and the same language? was not one inscription written in Greek, one in Hebrew, and another in Latin. Here was a difference at first, and in translating a passage from one language into another by different persons, a *verbal* difference might happen. The difference here between the evangelists is purely *verbal*, no way affecting the sense.

From this verbal difference in the inscription, as mentioned by the evangelists, he draws an inference (Part II. p. 56.) “ We may infer, these circumstances trivial as they are, that those writers, whoever they were, and in whatever time they lived, were not present at the scene. The only one of the men called Apostles, who appears to have been near the spot, was Peter,” &c. Whether this inference be justly or unjustly drawn from the gospel history; or whether Payne has read with attention the books which he has the temerity to condemn; may be learned from John xix. ver. 26, 27. ‘ When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved.—and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.’ And the same chapter, ver. 34, 35. we are told that John saw the soldier pierce his side with a spear, and witnessed the issuing out of blood and water; ‘ But one of the

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soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, &c.' Whether such an inconsiderate quibbler be fit to publish a commentary on the Bible, the above will shew.

As to how John could escape, when Herod sent forth and slew the young children; he should have first shewn that John was in that part of the country, at the time; and whether or not John and Jesus were of the same tribe, &c.

He hints that our Lord could not write. Does he prove this by the history itself? Is it any where said that he could not write? Is it any where said in the gospel history, that Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground? Had I any personal acquaintance of Payne, I would seriously advise him to study Deism and Christianity:—Had he been properly versant in either, he never would have ventured to expose Deism as he has done; and had he carefully read the scriptures, he never would have cut such a pitiful figure as a commentator.

As to what he throws out respecting the time of our Lord's being crucified, from Mark's saying "he was crucified at the third hour (nine in the morning); and John saying, it was the sixth hour (twelve at noon)." And (in a foot note, same page) "According to John, the sentence was not passed till about the sixth hour (noon), and consequently, the  
execution

execution could not be till the afternoon ; but Mark says exprefsly, that he was crucified at the third hour (nine in the morning).”——I reply, it may be noticed, that the *third* hour mentioned by Matthew is to be underftood according to the Jewish computation, for our nine o’clock, and fo on to twelve : Whereas the *fixth* hour, at which John fays our Lord was condemned, is to be taken, according to the Roman computation, (for our fix o’clock in the morning,) that evangelift having wrote his history after the deftruction of Jerufalem. Thus the accounts exactly agree, refpecting his condemnation and crucifixion.

He has a filly cavil about our Lord’s refurrection, ---about there being but one angel at the fepulchre, according to one evangelift, and two angels ftated by another. It is fufficient to obferve, that frequently one evangelift tells a particular fact with fome few circumftances, and another writer tells the fame fact, but tells more or fewer circumftances. It feems, that either only one of the two angels appeared without the fepulchre, and then went into it, and was feen with the other angel, one at the head, and another at the feet of the place where the body lay : Or rather, there is a reference made to different appearances, at different places, and at different times.

As to what he says of the disciples being represented as in Galilee, and closetted in Jerusalem at one and the same time; it is not founded in fact; the gospels say no such thing; but what will not this bigotted slanderer say?

There is no doubt he has read the New Testament, but not with that attention that he ought, or he would have known who were apostles. He reckons Luke one of the Eleven; he ought, before he wrote his commentary, to have known, that Luke was not an apostle. In the preface to his history, he tells us that he wrote from the testimony of others. This must either proceed from ignorance or from malice; if from the former, his qualifications for commenting on scripture will be obvious; if from the latter, it must open the eyes of mankind to see his daring impudence.

He closes with the time our Lord was in the grave, “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, but it happens awkwardly enough that Christ, according to their own account, was but one day and two nights in the grave; about 36 hours, instead of 72; that is, the Friday night, the Saturday, and the Saturday night, for they say he was up on the Sunday morning by sun-rise or before, &c.”

This has been obviated, by a Tertian or third day ague, which is so denominated though there is only one day's intermission betwixt the paroxysms,

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and so the first and third day are included in the computation. Besides, the scripture often speaks of a number of days, inclusive of the first and last, as when it is said, when eight days were accomplished, our Saviour was circumcised, including the days of his birth and his circumcision, between which six days intervened; thus our Saviour continued three days in the state of the dead inclusive of the first and last, or, he arose again the third day according to the scriptures.

On Paul's Epistles, he says very little, and nothing to the purpose; he deals reproach very liberally, and is sparing of common sense; he tries to ape Voltaire, and affects to attack Paul as chargeable with a philosophical absurdity, when he says, 'that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.' He wishes to triumph in this supposed absurdity, see *Voltaire, Questions sur l'Encyclopedie*. But Mr Bonet of Geneva, a superior physiologist to either Voltaire or Payne, justifies the position as philosophically true. The exterior *integument* of the grain, undoubtedly corrupts and dies, while the *germ*, remains and lives.

SECT.

## S E C T. VII.

*The authenticity of Scripture History, confirmed by contemporary, or at least by very ancient writers, who had opportunity to know the facts published, and who could not be biassed in favour of such as published them.*

AS to the history of Moses, there may seem to be a want of Vouchers, and it must be admitted, we cannot find cotemporary writers to confirm Moses's history, for a very obvious reason, Moses being the most ancient historian in the world. Moses's history is strictly the history of the church, and contains the narration of facts that more especially belonged to the Jews. The circumstances of the rest of the world were such, that no very authentic memoirs of this people could be expected from them. They were without the pale of the Jewish church, and had very little access to know what was transacted within it. It is to be considered that the rest of mankind were involved in ignorance and superstition. Upon the confusion of tongues at *Babel*, the knowledge of religion began to decline. The sons of *Noah* after their dispersions and plantations gradually degenerated. In such circumstances, it is not likely they could improve in knowledge. It behoved

believed to take some time to settle their form of government, and till this was effected, they had no opportunities to improve in arts and sciences. That this was the case is beyond a doubt. They wanted the necessary means to preserve the memory of things, and of course could ill write history. The Grecians, who greatly boast on this head, had not the use of letters till *Cadmus* taught them these, who was but cotemporary with *Joshua* or, as others have thought with *Samuel*. They had not learning to record things relating to themselves, far less inclination to interest themselves in the affairs of others. It has indeed been said by some learned men, that the Greeks were taught before *Cadmus*, by *Cecrops*, the first king of *Athens*, who led a colony out of *Egypt*, fixed in *Greece*, and built that city. But it appears, that if *Cecrops* did introduce letters, there are no monuments of his characters remaining. The most ancient seem to be those taught by *Cadmus*. The great events recorded in scripture, took place among a people little known to these Barbarians; it is no wonder that these were not historians of the church. The most ancient celebrated historian among the *Pagans*, *Sanchoniatho* has many allusions to scripture history related by *Moses*,—concerning the creation, the progress of arts, the calling of *Abraham*, &c. and *Porphyry* an ancient philosopher and an enemy to christianity, tries to establish his history,



history, from its agreement with Moses's writings on these subjects. That Moses was owned among them is evident from the writings of *Longinus*. *Strabo* speaks of him in the most honourable terms, and *Trogus Pompeius* takes notice of his beauty and wisdom. Besides, there were a great variety of religious rites, which they learned from the Jews, such as circumcision,—the day of rest, new-moons, and especially the practice of sacrifices. These things were notorious among the heathen nations. These must be looked on as so many vestiges of the laws of Moses, and attestations to the sacred history; for these things can never be accounted for, but on supposition that the Bible history is genuine and authentic.

The truth of the facts narrated in the New Testament, is confirmed by friends, avowed enemies, and by heathen writers. The testimony of *Josephus* is well known; no doubt, this has been considered by some as an interpolation; but the passage is quoted by *Eusebius*, *Callestus*, *Sozoman* *Suidas*, &c.

We have a striking attestation of the innocence of our Lord in *Judas*,—and it is not a mere arbitrary circumstance that his conduct is related by the evangelists,—who when he saw Christ capitally condemned, an event he did not expect, rushed into the temple like a madman, threw down the wages of unrighteousness before the priest and rulers, and with  
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great emotion *publicly* told them, he had betrayed innocent blood. This is the testimony of an *enemy*, and merits attention. *Suetonius* mentions Christ by name\*, and says that *Claudius* expelled those from Rome who adhered to his cause. *Tacitus* mentions the progress of Christianity, the violent death that Christ died; that he flourished under *Tiberius*; that *Pilate* was then procurator in Judea, and that the original author of this sect was Christ †.

*Pliny*, who lived in *Trajan's* reign, and attained high honor in the state, in a letter written to the emperor within 40 years after the death of Paul, draws an amiable picture of the deportment of Christians, and the purity of their manners, when he says, “*Essent soliti stuato die ante lucem convenire, carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere secum invicem: seque sacramentó non in scelus aliquod obstringere, sed ne furta, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent, ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent: quibus peractis morem sibi discidendi fuisse, rursusque coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen et innoxium.*” *Plinii. Epist. Lib. X. Epist. 97. p. 724.* In our language it may run thus;

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\* *Judeos impulsore Christo assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit. Suetonius, p. 544.*

† *Auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat. Tacit. Annal. Lib. XV.*

“It was their custom to assemble before light, on a stated day, and mutually to recite an hymn to Christ as God, binding themselves by oath, not for a wicked purpose, but on the contrary, never to commit a fraud, not to steal or debauch, never to falsify their word &c.” Celsus a celebrated Deist, who lived in the 2d century, speaks of the author of Christianity as having lived but a little before his time, and mentions the principal facts in the gospel history relating to the birth, life, doctrine, and miracles, death, and resurrection of *Christ*—declaring that he had copied the account from the writings of the evangelists. He quotes these books and makes extracts from them, as being composed by the disciples and companions of Jesus, and under the names they presently bear; he acknowledges the miracles performed by Christ, that they were *really* performed, he never calls in question; he attributes them to our Lord’s superior skill in magic. And what testimony can be more credible than that of an enemy.

Julian, who flourished in the 4th century, produces no counter evidence in refutation of the gospel history, though he mentions the name of all the four Evangelists,—never attempts to disprove the authenticity of their writings, or to deny the truth of Christ’s miracles.

Lucian bears his testimony to the truth and influence of gospel principles, and that Christ was the au-  
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thor of this new *religion*. The testimony of friends to Christianity is well known, Eusebius, Origen, St Jerom &c. ; And the public records have been quoted, for its truth, as Pilate behoved to record the trial, condemnation, and execution of Jesus Christ.

So much in reply to Payne's *Age of Reason*, the arguments which I have used, are such as have been fully stated and illustrated by various writers on the subject ; and have been successfully employed in defending revealed religion in times past. Though what has been advanced is only a compend of the sentiments of writers against infidelity, it ought not to be disregarded, being designed for such as are in a great measure unacquainted with the controversy, into whose hands Payne's *Age of Reason* may come, and not for the learned world. It is one of the Lord's righteous judgments on the nations, that he has permitted this man to shew a brow of brass, under the delusive mask of friendship to liberty, for seducing men from their duty to God and civil rulers.

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## A P P E N D I X.

IF the Scriptures be true, as we have endeavoured to prove, they are the only rule of the faith and practice of Christians: and if they act in character, they will never adopt the wild theories of some modern reformers; there is a civil constitution to preserve, as well as reform; and however friendly they may be to reform in church and state; while religion is to be preserved as well as purified, they ought to guard against putting confidence in men who are avowed enemies to revealed religion. No doubt we ought to distinguish between a cause and the management of it; but if men avowedly wound the feelings of Christians, by adopting the writings of Payne in the gross, Christians ought to guard against encouraging reformers of such a description. I said we have a constitution to preserve, and it is the excellence of the British constitution, to realize the conveniencies of society, without materially infringing our natural rights. The few at least which may be forfeited, bear no proportion to such as are substituted in their place. Personal security, liberty, and private property, are confirmed to all by law. It assigns to every one the right of applying to courts of justice, for redress or damages, and these courts are open to all. It would be easy to prove by an obvi-

ous comparison, the vast superiority of our political institutions; and that of course to contribute for the purity and safety of the constitution ought to be an exclusive object of interest and attention, to all who love their native land. Our constitution originates in nothing accidental; but is the result of long experience and sound observation. And though corruptions may have crept in, yet one peculiar excellence of that constitution is, it *contains within itself the means of reformation, without having recourse to revolt.* Christians should guard against strengthening that party in the state, who would overthrow the constitution. Many are the devices of Satan, he adopts every method to compass the ruin of mankind, and such as he cannot detain in profanity, he tries to ensnare by specious pretences to purity. He who runs may read this, in the political disputes which have taken place, and the infidelity which seems to succeed.

It is not my design here, either to justify or condemn the present measures of government. Of two evils, which is to be chosen? Whether a civil or a foreign war has the most horrid aspect? Whether the professed friends of reform have conducted themselves as good subjects or not? Whether or not it is natural for government to lessen our liberties, in proportion to our licentiousness? Whether, admitting Robert Watt to have been a government spy, this

this lessened the evidence of the then existing conspiracy, or not? Whether in a nation, where excessive dissipation obtains, it is likely a republic can be established which will survive a severe shock? Whether it is better for France to have 500 despots, or only one? Whether the division of sentiment that prevails among American states, prognosticates stability and permanency to their form of government? These and similar questions, I leave to the discussion of those who ought to be better versed in politics.

The institution of the magistrate's office is not founded in revealed, but in the principles of natural religion, and though the magistrate, in the discharge of his office to his subjects in *common*, ought to conduct himself according to natural principles; yet in things that are *optional*, with regard to the subjects, he is to conduct himself according to the principles of revealed religion; in this point of view, magistrates are to encourage virtue and discountenance vice; and they may do this without invading our natural rights as subjects. For example, I have no right to complain of any encroachment on my natural privileges and rights, because I am not a minister of state.

Though the reason of obedience is also founded in that original institution, yet a natural desire of liberty is to be directed by the holy scriptures, and if christian subjects act in character, instead of stir-  
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ring up *sedition* and *tumult*, they are bound to be exemplary in obedience, and study to lead quiet and peaceable lives, praying for the *internal* peace and prosperity of their country, for in the peace thereof we shall have peace. Paul writing to Titus, chap. iii. 1. Exhorts him to remind his hearers of that subjection which was due to principalities and powers.

When we recur to sacred history we find it was the uniform practice of the saints, to obey, whatever rulers were recognized as such, by the body politic of which they were members, in their lawful commands. Under the Old Testament dispensation this was their general practice toward their own kings,—in Egypt, and at Babylon, they were never charged with a crime on that account. It is true, that Israel sinned in the circumstances with which their government was changed,—it is also true that they set up kings but not by him, yet it is the grossest blasphemy from thence to infer that *kingly* government is unlawful in its nature and operations, for we find God gave special direction and encouragement in the choice they made. Deut. xvii. 14--20. Though he disapproved of the manner of it, yet he commissioned Samuel to comply with their request; he signified his approbation of *kingly government*, by extraordinary interpositions in their favour in their choice of some kings, and gave them some  
special



special promises in relation to *monarchy*, and threatened them with the want of it as a severe judgment. Hof. iii. 4.

When David was persecuted by Saul, he repeatedly owned his authority,—the succeeding prophets uniformly conducted themselves, in a manner that was calculated to recommend obedience, hence Elijah honoured Ahab as king, before the people; nay Daniel and others accepted of commissions from the kings of Babylon and Persia, and were never criminated for so doing.

The conduct of the saints under the New Testament ought to be equally *loyal*, this is strikingly exemplified by Paul, who, sensible of the advantages that attend regular government, answered gladly before *Felix* as a judge,---vindicated his innocence before *Festus*,---considered it as a singular favour to have access to answer for himself before king *Agrippa*, and actually appealed to Cæsar, which was a plain homologation of Cæsar's authority and right to rule. These considerations ought to impress the minds of all who believe the Bible.

1st. Our duty toward kings is to be expressed by fearing them; this is not a slavish fear, nor does it merely respect the inward frame of heart, but external loyalty, the truth of this is obvious, seeing this fear in scripture is connected with the fear of the Lord, which implies external homage and in-

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ward regard, "My son fear thou the Lord and the king." Christians are not bound to obey habitual tyrants; but are bound to obey lawful commands. They are to submit to such as are owned by the body politic. "Fear thou the king" was an injunction laid upon the Jews, and binding on every succeeding age, in regard it never was repealed or suspended; and must be obligatory so long as the *Primores regni*, acknowledge any particular person for their king, or supreme ruler; so long as they consent to his authority, the regal office remains vested in him. Civil authority having its rise in the *Primores regni*, according to the law of nature, obedience from the subjects cannot be dispensed with, (whatever defects be in the government) so long as these *Primores regni* homologate his rule.

2d. By contributing toward their support. The conduct of our blessed Lord is a proper model of imitation here; "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Cæsar was by consent of the nation in the actual exercise of government, as was clear from their current coin, for though its having his image and superscription, was no evidence that all the money in the country was his, yet it was an undeniable proof of his authority, and that they were bound to obey, and support him in the exercise of his government.

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Christians

Christians do well if they take heed to Rom. xiii. 1.—3. the duty enjoined is subjection, which they were to evidence by rendering *tribute, custom, fear*, not from apprehensions of danger, but from a sense of duty, “not for wrath but for conscience sake.” The duty was incumbent on all to whom the apostle wrote, and on every christian still, called “every soul.” The professors of religion were reproached with being inimical to the state, and disaffected to regular government; to wipe off this foul reproach, the apostle shews that obedience to the powers that were, was a law of Christ, whose religion has a tendency to lead quiet and peaceable lives, and obey every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake. Magistrates are called *God’s ministers*, and *powers that be*. The reason of this obedience is founded in the institution, “there is no power but of God, the powers that be are of God;” this does not say that habitual tyrants, or mere usurpers as such, are to be obeyed; for they are not ordained of God in a moral sense, and subjection can only be binding toward these who are in present possession and exercise of government, by the consent of civil society; it follows, that he who resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God; and such as resist regular government, reflect on God’s ordinance, such as cannot endure regular government are stigmatized in scripture with this epithet, *Sons of Belial*.

3d. By honouring them. "Give honour to whom honour is due;" and that amid grievances, "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place;" that is, though the civil magistrate take up a groundless offence, yet subjects are not to go out of their place, but conduct themselves towards the Ruler as subjects, "for yielding pacieth great offences:" whereas if they leave their place the offence may be encreased and perpetuated. See Gib's Display.

4th. By keeping at a distance from men of restless tempers, "Meddle not with them who are given to change." Where a spirit of innovation prevails, in men's conduct toward civil rulers, innovation as to religious principles and practice, may be expected; innovation in the one case, will be accompanied with innovation in the other, which is awfully verified in the present day, by some servile imitators of Thomas Payne, "My soul come not thou into their secrets, into their assemblies; mine honour be not thou united."

F I N I S.