

Rev. D. Noyes.

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THE

AGE OF CREDULITY.

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1796

THE
AGE OF CREDULITY:
A
LETTER

TO

Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, Esq. M. P.

IN ANSWER TO HIS

TESTIMONY

IN FAVOUR OF

RICHARD BROTHERS.

WITH

AN APPENDIX,

IN VINDICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE PROPHECIES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE AGE OF INFIDELITY"—AND OTHER TRACTS.

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. DANIEL.

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P R E F A C E.

BOTH our LORD and his Apostles admonish us to “beware of false Prophets,” whom they describe as “wolves in sheep’s cloathing;” a very proper character of that man who while he impiously pretends to be the LAMB of GOD, ridiculously vaunts of his palace and his throne, and attempts to delude his followers with promises of earthly grandeur; and at the same time thunders out the most terrible anathemas against all who disbelieve him—Such is Richard Brothers, as the following pages will sufficiently demonstrate.

As to the concurring Testimonies of other contemporary Prophets like himself, they are as much beneath observation as they are above correction: but Mr. Halhed is a different character: not only his rank and connections in life, but his learning and literary abilities make it justly a matter of astonishment to see him throw the gauntlet in defence

PREFACE.

of Mr. B. even though his own account will not suffer us to think very highly either of his judgment or integrity. The following remarks are submitted to his consideration; and should they fail of their desired end with him, it is hoped however, they may not be without their use to some of the more humble and well meaning subjects of this delusion.



T H E

Age of Credulity.

To N. B. HALHED, Esq. M. P.

S I R,

I HAVE long observed with regret the proneness of mankind to believe any thing but sacred truth ; and that many persons who are the most reluctant to admit the *Solar light* of divine revelation, are the first to be led away by every *ignis fatuus* that offers to attract them. Thus the nation who rejected the well-authenticated mission of Jesus Christ, had no sooner crucified him, than they were deceived by a succession of various impostors, to their own destruction. And in the present “ Age of Infidelity,” when it is become so fashionable to reject and even ridicule the scriptures, it is lamentable to see how many are deluded by every idle pretence to prophecy and inspiration ; insomuch that the present age seems likely to prove as credulous as it is unbelieving ; and to bear the impression of two characters, *apparently* inconsistent—credulity and unbelief.

Among the pretenders of the present day, Mr. BROTHERS certainly merits the conspicuous rank you have given him, if in no other respect, at least for the *boldness* of his language and predictions. I should not, however, have thought this sufficient to entitle Mr. B. to public animadversion; nor have attempted to argue with a man who disdains the use of reason, under the pretence of being inspired by the prophetic spirit. But since you, sir, have thought proper to throw the weight of your learning and abilities into the same scale with his pretensions, it seems time to suspend the beam, and try them “by the balances of the sanctuary.” But before I enter on this controversy, I think it necessary to premise, that my design has no immediate connexion with politics. Far be it from me to be an advocate for war. Nor is it my design to dispute the probability of ALL Mr. B’s predictions, considered as conjectures formed, either upon the scripture prophecies, or from the present state of circumstances in Europe. Our Lord directed his disciples to observe “the signs of the times;” and it requires no spirit of prophecy to see that they are dark and threatening; or to foretel that when a nation has filled up “the measure of its iniquity,” (as I fear ours has nearly done) that God will fill up the measure of its punishment.

Waving then all extraneous matters of enquiry, the simple question between us is—Whether Mr. Brothers be a true prophet, and his predictions inspired by God?—You take the affirmative, and I the negative of this query; in examining which, I propose, first, to consider the arguments you advance in favour of his mission, and secondly, state my objections against it.

I. You properly observe, that “Richard Brothers pretends to an immediate and direct inspiration from God” and add, “I take upon myself to prove, by the *ordinary exertion of HUMAN SAGACITY*, that he is really inspired.”* Here then we join issue, and I am happy to meet with you in the disposition to rest the matter on “the ordinary exertion of *human sagacity*,” because my pretensions rise no higher. You proceed to prove your point in this manner: “He tells us (you truly observe) in a dry, concise, unqualified assertion, that such a thing is so and so—as he has it from God; but he gives us no reason why it should be so; and we see at once that he repeats his lesson by hearsay.”† I confess I am not used to consider the want of reason as an evidence of inspiration; nor does it strike me that an assertion must be true because it is dogmatical, unqualified, or founded upon hearsay. However, you pro-

* Testimony. 2d. Edit. p. 13. † Ib.

ceed—“ I will take *his* clue, and lead you on, step by step, through the different degrees of analysis, till you come to the very conclusion with which he sets out ;—shewing you by scientific process, and almost ocular demonstration, all the predicaments which he has totally omitted ;—and so correct my arguments with his affirmations, that they shall mutually support, corroborate, and confirm each other. The analysis, on my part shall give evidence to the authenticity of his inspiration ; and the assertion on his part shall *è converso* bear witness to the fidelity of my exposition.*”

My design, sir, is to follow you step by step in this investigation, and to examine first the evidence you produce, and then the conclusion you infer from it.—But previous to either, I think it necessary to advert a little to the hypothesis on which you attempt to explain the scriptures, and decypher the prophetic images.

“ *All* prophecies,” you think, are “ neither more nor less than true genuine ænigmas.”† This is much too general—some prophecies are clear and express without obscurity and without figure ; such were some of those respecting the Messiah, and several others referred to below,‡

* Testimony, p. 13. † Ibid. p. 9.

‡ See 1 Kings, xxii. 28. 2 Kings vii. 1. viii. 10, 13. xx. 32. &c. &c.

and such I think are most of the predictions of Mr. Brothers. Many prophecies however, are enigmatical, and require a clue or key to open them; but that “among several sentences, or distinct members of one sentence, the *meaning is all contained in a single phrase only,*” *is a position I can by no means admit; much less that any passages are inserted for the sole purpose of misguiding, and putting to fault”† our conjectures. A sentiment this, highly unworthy of God, and a canon of criticism, the most arbitrary that can be conceived, as we shall have further occasion to observe hereafter.

I now come to your evidence. The first is the prophet Daniel, who (chap. vii.) saw a vision of four beasts, which, it is agreed signify four potent kings, or rather monarchies: the first, a lion, with eagle’s wings, you and Mr. B. explain of our present beloved Sovereign: the second a bear, you are confident means the present Empress of Russia; the third a leopard with wings you interpret of the late Lewis XVI. of France, and the last, a monster with various heads and horns, you explain of the present Emperor of Germany and his Electors.

You doubtless are aware that commentators give a very different account of this vision; but

* Testimony, p. 9.

† Ibid. p. 12.

perhaps my readers may not be displeas'd at contrasting the usual interpretation with Mr. B's, and I shall give as I proceed my reasons for preferring the former.

It equally suits both hypotheses to observe that these beasts arose out of the *sea*, which you properly explain, in the language of St. John, of "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues;"* whose continual commotions, and revolutions are properly typified by the restlessness and perpetual motion of the waves.

The first beast was like a LION and had eagle's wings: a double emblem as I conceive of royalty, since the lion and eagle are monarchs of the beasts and birds. A lion is also the natural emblem of strength, and the eagle of swiftness, rapacity, and ambition. All these properties agreed in the Babylonian monarchy, which was eminently great and its conquests rapid: and to it both these images are elsewhere applied.†

The following words, "I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, WHEREWITH‡ it was

* Testimony, p. 25. † Jer. iv. 7, 13. xlviii. 40.

‡ WHEREWITH; so the English margin, and that this is the genuine sense appears from the connexion; for it is very unnatural to suppose the body lifted from the earth, after the wings were plucked of their feathers.

lified up from the earth, and (it was) made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it"—these words are supposed to refer to the humiliati n and conversion of Nebuchadnezzar, who after elevating himself as more than mortal, had his wings plucked, and was reduced even below humanity.

You chuse to make "wings" enigmatical of sails or shipping, and I acknowledge the resemblance; but I much doubt whether you can give any clear instance of this use of the emblem in the prophets, especially as you have not attempted it; and till you can do this, or set aside the above equally natural exposition of the image, I cannot think you are to be commended for resting the whole of your claim to penetration on this circumstance.

The second beast was "like to a BEAR," which, I suppose because bear skins come from Russia, you are persuaded can mean no other than Catherine, the present Empress of the Russias: but without pretending to disprove your similitude, there is sufficient reason for the application of this image to the Medo-Perfians.—Cruelty and voraciousness are the indisputable characteristics of this animal, and these kindred properties are universally ascribed to them by antient historians, both sacred and profane. *Isaiab* speaks of them as

cruel in the extreme;* and *Jeremiah* calls them emphatically, “the spoilers;”† *Ammianus Marcellinus* describes them as guilty of the most horrid cruelties even in their acts of justice. Father *Calmet* says, “they exercised a dominion the most severe and cruel that we read of.”‡ There is another property of this animal, no less applicable to this people who were exceeding *bearish* and unfociable in their manners, infomuch that one of their princes (*Dejoces*) issued a decree which was afterwards perpetuated, forbidding any of the *courtiers* to smile in the royal presence, and wholly excluding others from approaching it.

The prophet adds, “It [the bear] raised itself up on one side;” i. e. the Persian side; for after the short reign of the first *Darius* or *Cyaxares*, all the succeeding kings were Persians. This bear had also something monstrous in its formation. “It had three ribs in the mouth of it, between the teeth of it.” These Sir *I. Newton* explains of the kingdoms of *Babylon*, *Lydia* and *Egypt*, which fell between the teeth of the bear; i. e. were conquered and oppressed by the Persians, and afforded strength to their monarchy, but were not original or essential parts of it. If, however, you choose to adhere to the idea of their

* *Isaiah* xiii. 18. † *Jer.* li. 48, 56.

‡ See *Bp. Newton* on the Prophecies. *Dis.* xiv. To whom I have had recourse in the whole of these interpretations.

being the three appetites of lust, ambition, and cruelty, they will apply as well to the Persian as the Russian government: so will the order to “arise and devour much flesh.”

The third beast was a LEOPARD, and this is commonly applied to the Grecian monarchy under Alexander and his successors, whose conquests were even more rapid than those of the Babylonian; accordingly this beast had four wings instead of two. The skin of this animal hath been a fine subject for fanciful remarks, both to you and the commentators; and I confess there is as little solidity in some of their observations, as in your remarks upon the royal robes of Louis XVI. They have, however, I think much the advantage of you in explaining the four heads of this beast of Alexander's four successors, who divided his empire into just so many parts; whereas it is, I think by a wonderful stretch of imagination, you make our K. Charles I. one of the heads of the French monarchy, while you explain the other three of the princes of the present age.

If I were to compare this monarchy to the preceding, I might remark, that as the leopard possesses the same savage disposition with the bear, so the Grecians, particularly *Alexander*, copied part of the vices of the Persians; and yet as the leopard (or *panther*, the species here probably

intended) greatly exceeds the other in exterior form and the beauty of its skin ; so that illustrious conqueror, as he has been called, possessed a kind of magnanimity and generosity mingled with his crimes, which disguised his true character, and dazzled many of his historians.

The fourth beast was a MONSTER without a name ; but I conceive a striking image of the Roman power which was “ diverse from all that were before it.” The ten horns were the ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was at length divided ; the little horn being the Pope or anti-christ, to which all that is said of it wonderfully agrees : and this is not only the sentiment of the best critics and commentators, but is to be found even in *Machiavel’s* History of Florence.”*

There is no dispute but the destruction of these powers is to introduce a glorious display of the Messiah’s kingdom, and a state of peace, happiness, and moral purity hitherto unexampled in the history of the world.

Beside the reasons above hinted, there are some others of considerable weight which induce me to prefer the common interpretation to yours. They are,

* See Bishop Newton, Dis. xiv.

1st. That this vision of Daniel seems evidently related to some others in the same book. Thus the same monarchies were represented to Nebuchadnezzar as the different parts of a magnificent Colossal image. The similitude of the first and last parts is particularly striking; the Babylonish empire, which in one is compared to a golden head, is in the other a winged lion, where is the same pre-eminence in both. The last, or Roman empire is in the image, a strange admixture of clay and iron; and the feet divided into ten toes, in Daniel's vision is a monster with ten horns.

Again, there seems no doubt but the vision of the *Ram* and *Goat* in the next chapter, refers to the Persian and Grecian monarchies, and yet herein seems a very evident reference to the third beast or leopard, the four horns here answering to the four heads there.

2dly. The common interpretation is more consistent with itself, with prophetic imagery and with the interpretation of the angel. In all the other visions of the same nature the beasts or kingdoms are successive, not contemporary; this was particularly the case of the four monarchies intended by the metal image in chap. ii. and in the present vision, though the ten horns are contemporary, the little horn was to arise after them,

which agrees much better with the pope, than with the king of Prussia.

3dly. There is a particular circumstance relative to the little horn of the fourth beast, which puts it out of all doubt that it must refer to anti-christ; for this is said to arise after the others to exercise a more cruel persecuting power, and to last “until a time, times, and the dividing of time,” which agrees with the period of anti-christ’s reign in all other places, viz. three mystical years and an half, or 1260 natural ones.* But none of these can with any appearance be ascribed to the king of Prussia, of whose dominion even Mr. B. says nothing like universal monarchy, and as to the time of his reign, he tells us it will be but short.†

Your next evidence is taken from the 2d book of the apocryphal ESDRAS, chap. xi. “Now this 2d. book of Efdras (you observe) has hitherto been esteemed an apocryphal composition of the lowest order, and so it is termed in our church bibles, where it is said to have been written about the time of Domitian by some learned Hebrew, to be extant only in the Latin, and to be stuffed full of Jewish fables and Rabbinical rhapsodies.”‡

* Comp. Dan. vii. 25. xii. 7. with Rev. xii. 14.

† Rev. Know. b. 2. ‡ Testimony, p. 23.

To this I subscribe, except that I suppose it a forgery of a more ancient date; but that it is a forgery I think no reasonable man can doubt, who examines either its internal* or external evidence; which indeed appears so weak that even the council of Trent, who admitted Tobit and his dog into their canon, rejected Esdras.

It is not therefore worth while to enquire into the import of this vision. Such prophets as the Pseudo-Esdras and Mr. Brothers may give testimony to each other; and I doubt not but many other predictions equally clear and authentic will be found in the works of the conjurors and fanatics of all ages. “But what is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord of Hosts?”

If we were, however, to admit both the vision and your interpretation in the main, there is a striking inconsistency in your explanation. The eagle, you observe justly, is the type of Rome; the eagle, therefore in Esdras is the Roman empire: and yet when you come to explain a subsequent verse (the 36th.) you admit this eagle is “the very same with that fourth beast which Daniel saw, but did not delineate.”† By consequence, then, if the eagle in Esdras means the

* See ch. v. 4, &c. vii. 28. xiii. 40. &c.

† Testimony, p. 29.

Roman empire, so must the fourth beast in Daniel, and not the emperor of Germany as first explained.

We now come to the book of the REVELATION where we read of the fall of Babylon. That by Babylon is meant *Rome*, is a case so clear that, not only the Commentators, but even yourself and Mr. Brothers, admit it: yet to serve a purpose you inform us, that, contrary to the harmony of the prophecies, and all sober rules of interpretation, in *one* particular place, Babylon intends LONDON. Your method of proving this is indeed very curious, and founded upon the extraordinary rule you lay down for expounding prophecies. After quoting *Rev. xviii. 11—13.* you say—“Here we have an instance of the prophetic art I formerly mentioned, by which the prominent features of the representation or vision are such as are put *on purpose to mislead* the observer; and the key to the mystery lies quite in the shade and obscurity of the back ground. For all this long and tedious enumeration of wares and commodities is really *nothing at all to the business* of the prophecy, whose real explication lies wholly in the last five words—SLAVES AND SOULS OF MEN.”* A bold charge this against an inspired writer, to say that out of three long verses, there are but “five words,” which are “at all to the

* Testimony, p. 32.

business of the prophecy!" bolder still to assert that the rest are added "on purpose to mislead the observer!"

But suppose some other Commentator was to assert on the same principle, that the first article of this inventory, "the merchandize of gold and silver" was the only article of consequence; or a third fix upon the "odours, ointments, and frankincense" as the essential part of the prophecy; how should we decide on these different explications? I can think of no method but by a *new* revelation, and that, *ad infinitum*, subject to the same uncertainty.

However Mr. Brothers and the Avignon Society may prophecy on this principle of not saying one word in ten to the purpose, the scriptures are "a more sure word of prophecy," and I scruple not to assert that every article in this list forms a part of the merchandize of Rome, the true mystic Babylon. Let us enumerate them. Are not then "gold and silver and precious stones, and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet and all thyine (or fragrant) wood, and all vessels of ivory and most precious wood, and of brass, iron and marble" used in the pompous and ceremonial worship of the Romish church? Do they not burn the most costly incense, cinnamon, and odours and ointments (or perfumery) and

frankincense?"—Do they not in their worship use
 "wine and oil, fine flour and wheat?"—Are not
 all these then articles of Rome's merchandise?

The remaining particulars are the "beasts
 (cattle) and sheep," consumed by their ecclesiastical
 drones, and the tribes of useless monks,
 nuns, &c.—"The horses and chariots" by which
 they are enabled to loll at their ease and at the ex-
 pence of the poor. And lastly "slaves," or rather
 "BODIES, and souls of men." These are the em-
 phatic articles, and what you insist on to prove
 that London, and not Rome, is the market intend-
 ed; and your reasons are most curious. "What
 nation (you say) is notorious for its extensive and
 abominable traffic in slaves? Surely no part of
 Italy." That London may have rivalled Rome in
 some articles of criminal traffic, may be too true;
 and God forbid I should attempt to palliate the
 horrors of the slave trade! but did Mr. Halked
 never read of a slave-market at Rome? Did he
 never in particular hear of our ancestors being
 sold there publicly like cattle? The fact is suffi-
 ciently notorious,* and the history of Rome, chris-

* *Bede* relates that some British youths being exposed for
 sale at Rome, Gregory (afterwards pope) greatly admiring
 their countenances, enquired of what country they were; and
 being told that they were *Angles* [i. e. Anglo Saxons.]
 "Right (replied he) for they have angelic countenances, and
 are fit to be co-heirs with the *angels*." After a few more

rian as well as heathen, is full of such disgraceful facts. But it is in England only you think that souls are put up to sale: and the house of commons is (alas!) the market!!—That you, sir, and too many others may have sold both your own souls and your country, is perhaps too true, and equally lamentable; and, though you may not have the reward you expected, I think you will not deny you have had—as much as you *deserved!*

But why can men only sell their souls in England? Because in arbitrary countries you say no man “can truly and properly call his soul his own.”—How so? undoubtedly because the multitudes in such countries are slaves to their despotic rulers. On the contrary, in England freedom is our birth-right, and even a slave purchased abroad is free the moment he sets foot on English ground. So far then from England being the only country which deals in slaves, it is almost the only one in which slavery is prohibited.

But there is another sense still more emphatical, and which I conceive to be the true import of the prophecy. The church of Rome is the only market for pardons and indulgences and other articles of spiritual merchandize: and as, in my views he

puns of the same kind, a mission was set on foot to convert our Saxon ancestors to popery. Bede's Eccl. Hist. lib. i. c. 25.

that buys a pardon sells his own soul, it is for this reason the inspired writer, considers Rome as the great emporium of souls.

The other characters of *Sodom*, *Egypt* and *Jerusalem*, in a mystic sense, are certainly at least as applicable to Rome as London: and the objection of Rome being an inland country, and therefore not adapted for trade, is answered by your own rule of preserving the allegory throughout*—the whole is figurative.

Having now examined the premises on which you reason, and endeavoured to invalidate your arguments and refute your expositions, I will go so far back as to suppose the truth of both; that is, to suppose you have given the true meaning of the scriptures adduced, and that your arguments are conclusive in favour of those interpretations:—I come now to investigate the validity of your CONCLUSIONS. You remember, sir, your design was to prove that Mr. Brothers “is really inspired,” and to prove it thus; “He tells us . . . that such a thing is so and so—as he has it from God.” You “take his clue, and lead us on from one step to another till you come at the conclusion with which he sets out;” and endeavour to shew that the predictions he has given are *virtually* and

* Testimony, p. 24.

really contained in the scriptures you have produced; and in such manner to connect your “arguments with his affirmations that they shall mutually support, corroborate and confirm each other;” that so your analysis shall give evidence to the authenticity of his inspiration?

But, sir, if *you*, by the “ordinary exertion of human sagacity,” have discovered the same things that he predicted, how can you prove that *he* did not discover those things by the exertion of the same sagacity?—If *you* have found these things without inspiration, why might not Mr. B. do the same?

Indeed it appears to me that all the famous predictions on which you found the proof of his inspiration, are nothing more than forced and arbitrary applications of certain texts which have really no relation to the times and circumstances to which they are applied.

Again, not only is your analysis to “give evidence to the authenticity of his inspiration;” but you also propose that “the assertion on his part shall *à converso* bear witness to the fidelity of your interpretations.” But is not this reasoning in a circle? If his inspiration *rests* on your analysis surely it cannot *support* it: or if your interpretations rest on his authority, neither can *they*

support *that*. The same thing cannot at once be both foundation and superstructure. On the contrary I rather conclude, that your interpretations having no better support than his authority, and his authority no better support than your interpretations, both must fall together. If neither can support itself, neither can support the other.

II. I now come, sir, after considering your arguments in favour of the mission of Mr. Brothers, to state my objections against it; and the charges I have to exhibit are—*presumption, ignorance, artifice and falsehood.*

I. PRESUMPTION. I do not intend merely the presumption of pretending to inspiration, because I would hope that even Brothers believes himself to be inspired: But the instances I refer to are such as must strike every serious mind with horror. I mean—assuming the peculiar characters of the Messiah, and applying to himself some of the most illustrious prophecies respecting him. I will name but one.—Deut. xviii. 15. Moses says, “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet, from the midst of thee of thy brethren, LIKE UNTO ME, unto him shall ye hearken.”—Not only Brothers applies this to himself,* but even you, sir, endeavour to support by a very

* Revealed Knowledge, B. 2. p. 65.

curious comparison between Moses and this new prophet; “for as Moses ascended from the ark of bul-rushes, so did Mr. Brothers arise from a ship, having been bred to the navy!”* Admirable comparison between a new born infant and a lieutenant in the navy! between an ark of bul-rushes and a man of war! St. Peter, however, says, that in this passage Moses referred to the times of the Messiah, and prophecied of him;† and I hope I need not inform the reader how much more striking is the parallel between Moses and Jesus, than between Moses and Mr. Brothers. St. Paul hath pointed out some particulars;‡ and several others must suggest themselves to readers of the least attention; such as the wonderful preservation of both in infancy—coming out of Egypt—fasting forty days—instituting a new dispensation, and working miracles to support it.

Not to mention the ridiculous character of “God Almighty’s Nephew,” which you endeavour to explain away—He is “the Man whose name is the BRANCH,” in Isaiah; MICHAEL the Prince, in Daniel; the SIGNET OF PEACE, in Haggai; ELIJAH the Prophet, in Malachi, &c. &c. In a word, he stiles himself in his letter to you, “The man that will be revealed to the *Hebrews* as their PRINCE, and to *all nations* as

* Test. p. 36.

† Acts ii.

‡ Heb. iii.

their GOVERNOR.” But in the new Edition of his second book,* as if he could not sufficiently outrage decency and common sense, he calls himself “the LAMB upon Mount Sion,” and his few deluded followers, the “hundred and forty and four thousand redeemed ones” that attend him.—Insolent blasphemer! wert thou crucified for us?

Another instance of horrid presumption, is in attempting to alter the Scriptures to suit his purpose, and his blasphemous pretension to a commission for this purpose. Thus he represents the Lord as saying to him—“There is no other man under the whole heaven, that I reveal the *errors* of the Bible to, and reveal a knowledge how to correct them.”† But if any one presume to dispute his oracles, he pronounces them guilty of the sin against the Holy Spirit, and fulminates his curses liberally against them.‡

The last (but not least) instance I shall give of his arrogance and presumption, is in pretending to a power, by virtue of his prayers, to accelerate or delay the divine decrees; and to suspend, postpone, or hasten the destruction of nations at his pleasure. It is true, that the prayers of a righ-

* P. 98. † Rev. Knowledge. B. 2. Preface.

‡ Ibid. p. 56.

teous man avail much, and that the Lord sometimes suspends, or delays, his judgments at the intercession of his people. But to assume a power of doing this, is, I am sure, what no true Prophet ever pretended to, and to boast that he has with God “a pre-eminence of favour to all men that ever were upon earth” is, I am certain, far from the character of Moses.

2d. IGNORANCE is my second charge. But by this I do not merely intend the want of human science and literature, which is, however, sufficiently evident, his works being, as you confess, “replete with grammatical faults; destitute alike of harmony, of arrangement, and elegance of diction.” Nor do I mean the Ignorance of languages, though it seems highly requisite that a man who is to collect the Jews out of all Nations and lead them into their own land, should at least understand Hebrew. But I mean, Ignorance of divinity and the Scriptures. The latter is sufficiently obvious in all Mr. B’s citations and expositions; and of the former I think we have a particular instance (if it be not something worse) in his citing a number of texts referring to the divinity of Christ;* apparently to prove that Jesus could not be the MAN whose name is the *Branch*, or the PROPHET like unto *Moses*; whereas all

* Rev. Know. B. ii. p. 66, 67

these ideas are, by the generality of Christians, thought perfectly consistent, and Mr. B. has not attempted to shew the contrary.*

3d. I accuse Mr. B. of ARTIFICE. You have given a decided opinion, that “uprightness of intention and candour of soul breathe through every line of his composition :” and that, “*if it were possible*, he should deceive others—he is himself the first victim of the deception.”† On the other hand, both his conduct and his writings, such as they are, seem to me full of artifice and disingenuousness. By fixing on the present times, and most interesting objects, he successfully excites the public attention; yet he is very cautious in fixing *dates*, and when he does by pretending to the power above-mentioned, of protracting the divine judgments, he artfully provides against disappointment; or, if that should fail to satisfy some of his followers, by pretending a mission to Jerusalem, he contrives a retreat to a sufficient distance, though from some present circumstances

* Pardon me, Sir, in remarking that you have discovered an Ignorance of the state of religious opinions in this country, which I should not have expected from a man of your reading. You say, (p. 37.) “I sincerely hope there is no man in this country who will openly deny, that Jesus Christ is God Almighty.” There are thousands, many of whom are continually and openly preaching and writing against that proposition; and I am astonished you should not know it.

† Testimony, p. 8.

it seems doubtful, whether he will be able to avail himself of this last expedient.

There appears, likewise, a studied *ambiguity* in many of his expressions: I shall give an instance from his letter to Mr. Pitt,* which he considers as a prediction of the late acquittals; but it is, in reality, no such thing: it only asserts that the accused persons, were INNOCENT, which he might have persisted in asserting, even if they had been cast and hanged.

Before I leave this head, I cannot help smiling at one or two more of Mr. B's artifices, which are too thinly disguised to pass with the most credulous.

When our Prophet first set up, it seems, he attempted to imitate the beautiful simplicity of the Scripture style; but finding this too difficult for his slender abilities, he presently contrived a revelation from God to sanction his neglect of it, and inform him that it was not necessary. †

Once more, when the Printer, finding his Manuscript full of treasonable matter, very properly refused to print it, and he was therefore obliged to suppress some passages, he tells us, very

* Rev. Know. B. 2. Append.

† Ib. Pref.

gravely, “for which the Lord God commands me to keep back the additional information that otherwise would be given ;”* as if it required an Oracle from Heaven, to make him withhold what he *could not* publish !

4. My last charge against your Prophets is, that of FALSHOOD. Among the great variety of predictions he has delivered, it would be wonderful, indeed, if none of them proved true, especially as the same things (the defeat of the allies, &c.) were foretold by others, on principles, purely political, and in much clearer terms. But the following have, I think, failed ; and therefore, in a greater or less degree, confront Mr. B’s pretensions to infallibility.

In the second part of Revealed Knowledge, published April, 1794, he says, The orders of the Emperor in the Netherlands are, if the Austrian army should be defeated, to acknowledge the French Republic, and make an immediate peace on the best terms that can be obtained.”† . That the Emperor has made some efforts is, perhaps, true ; but he has neither acknowledged the French Republic, nor made a peace ; much less is it probable, that he gave any such Orders before his army was defeated.

* Rev. Know. B. 2. p. 63. † P. 12, 13.

In another part of the same publication he proceeds, “ The Dutch will acknowledge the French Republic, and also make a hasty peace with it.”* On the contrary, they made no peace with France, but the country was taken by Conquest, before they acknowledged the French Republic.

Again, speaking of the British Army on the Continent, he predicts, that they should be disarmed and sent home by the Emperor ; and their General, which was the Duke of York, detained ; † whereas, on the contrary, the Army are yet behind, although their General hath long since returned.

These, Sir, are my accusations against Mr. Brothers ; and, if I am not mistaken, even yourself, whose ingenuity is, on all hands, confessed, will not find it easy to refute them, or vindicate him ; and I begin to suspect that you will hardly wish to do either ; for, however you may have been imposed upon by his former publications, I hope his last will cure most of his admirers : for no Christian ears, I think, can bear the blasphemy of his pretending to be the LAMB of GOD ; nor any good subject endure his arrogant treason, in demanding of his lawful Prince, the surrender of the crown and sceptre into his hands. ‡

* Rev. Know. b. 2. p. 19. † Ibid. p. 13.

‡ Append. to Rev. Know. b. 2. p. 100.

Here, sir, I might conclude in your own very emphatic words—"If I have not triumphantly proved" this prophet to be a false one, then I think "there is neither meaning in language, nor conclusion in logic." However, sir, as I have taken the liberty of thus publicly addressing you, I hope to be indulged in adding a few other remarks by way of forming a pertinent conclusion.

And first, I shall repeat an observation of your own, "that times of calamity are peculiarly fertile in visions and prognostications, predictions and prophecies. When the minds of men are softened by the pressure or apprehension of accumulating evils, then is the moment for the salutary warnings of the internal monitor, and the cautionary voice of the spiritual guide. The great mass of the people, too sore with their sufferings not to grasp at any offer of consolation, and *too credulous to form accurate notions of the divinity of its origin* is easily worked upon by every species of oracular pretension: and we all know that when men are once steadily persuaded of the authenticity of a prophecy, they are almost involuntarily led to *perform their part towards its completion*. The present moment teems with these anticipations of futurity, beyond the example of every former period. Unfortunately, whatever be the designs or merits of the various disseminators of these

oracles, they are at least uniform in the melancholy strain of their predictions, and it behoves every well regulated government to attend minutely to the irritation these forebodings may produce in the public mind. For if their doctrines be well-founded, we have not an instant to lose in adopting a complete reversion of both our moral and political system ; if they be fallacious, no pains should be spared to undeceive the victims of their imposition, and *no punishment can be too severe* for the atrocious criminality of their propagators.”*

I cordially acquiesce in the whole of this paragraph except the last sentence. I conceive *some* punishments might be too severe, even for an impostor ; but I do not think that it could be thought so, to forward Mr. Brothers out of the country in his passage toward Jerusalem, whither he proposes to lead the Jews.

With respect to the question, If Mr. B. be not a prophet what is he? I do not think it incumbent on me to decide. Whether he be a lunatic or an impostor is of little consequence, except to himself; but I am rather inclined to a third supposition, that he is an enthusiast, properly so, and that, as you say, he is himself the first victim of his own delusion. One remark, however, I would add;

* Testimony, p. 5.

that many a one who has begun an enthusiast has ended an impostor. At first deluded by the warmth of his own imagination, when he has found the consequences flattering to his interest or ambition, he has continued to deceive others, after that delusion has subsided as to himself.—Whether this be the case with Brothers I determine not ; but I have observed an unhappy progression of turpitude and blasphemy in his successive publications, and that the last has been uniformly the worst.

Since false predictions are of that dangerous tendency which you have observed, it is certainly of consequence to be guarded against them ; and I know of nothing so likely to preserve us from such impositions as an accurate acquaintance with the genuine prophecies of scripture. Had you been prepared for the examination of Brothers with this study, instead of your *Hindoo* researches, I persuade myself you would not have been so easily deluded, nor exposed to so much ridicule. Mr. B. might perhaps pass for a wonderful sage among the poor heathen natives of Hindostan, and his works bear to be enrolled among *their* scriptures ; but they look very contemptible and ridiculous in company with the venerable prophets of the Hebrews, whose stile is as much superior to his as the great Messiah of

whom they speak, is to his *humble* prophet—
Richard Brothers.

If it be said, that some *key* or *guide* is necessary to unlock their mystic import, and unfold their sacred allegories, permit me to recommend for this purpose the admirable dissertations of bishop *Newton*, a man well “disciplined” in these studies, and whose explications, generally speaking, are to those of prophet Brothers, as the clearness of prophetic vision to the confused dreams of lunacy.

I will trouble you with but one other observation, and I am sorry to say, it must *accuse* you—accuse you of an *injury* to the scriptures—an injury for which I am persuaded you will be sorry, if you come duly to consider it; but which I fear it will not be in your power to repair. By becoming the advocate of Brothers and his Mission, you have ranked him with the genuine prophets of the scriptures, and subjected them to that ridicule and contempt in common with him, which he alone merits; and given much occasion to the enemies of revelation to blaspheme it. It is therefore a material part of my intention to distinguish these, and to shew that the objections by which these false prophecies are detected, have no force against those that are genuine; but rather on the contrary confirm them, inasmuch as counterfeit

coin always implies the existence of that which is sterling.

But as these considerations cannot with any particular propriety be addressed to you, who discover no symptoms of infidelity ; I rather chuse to throw them into an *appendix* ; and shall conclude this letter with cautioning you not to be deluded by your *prophetic* as you have been by your *political* master ; since I fear there is no more hope of your being either “ governor of India, or president of the board of controul in England,”* than there was of your being paid for voting against the peace and liberties of your country.

I am, sir, with much respect,

For your learning and abilities,

Yours, &c.

* The Lord God commands me to say to you, *Nathaniel Brassey Halhed*, that as you are reviled and considered by your former acquaintance as ruined and lost, for speaking the truth as he hath manifested it unto you, for publishing your Testimony of *me*, his servant, you shall by the expiration of *three months* from this day [Feb. 20, 1795] have your choice of being either *Governor general of India, or President of the Board of Controul in England*.

Appendix to Rev. Know. b. 2. p. 102,

A P P E N D I X.

MR. HUME says, very justly, that “all prophecies are real *miracles*; and as such only, can be admitted as proofs of any revelation. If it did not exceed the capacity of human nature to foretel future events, it would be absurd to employ any prophecy as an argument for a divine mission or authority from Heaven; so that upon the whole we may conclude, that the *christian religion* not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one.”

Mr. Hume was the great apostle of Infidelity, and his *Essay on Miracles* above cited, is certainly the master piece of all deistical writings. The design of the above passage is evidently to subject prophecy to the same laws and objections as miracles, and to call for this evidence in the present day.

The evidence of scripture prophecy does *not* rest on a *few single predictions* scattered through

the Bible, but on a *regular chain* or series of *prophecies* intimately connected, and extending nearly from the beginning to the end of time. These prophecies comprehend the following objects.

(1.) The WORLD at large. They point out the different nations by which the world was peopled, and their various successive revolutions. *Noah*, for instance, foretold the pre-eminence of Shem's posterity, and the subjection of Ham's, which was wonderfully fulfilled in the rise and prosperity, both civil and religious, of the Jews, and the destruction of the Canaanites and Egyptians; also the prodigious extent of Japhet's territory, from whom sprung the Greeks, Romans, most of the Europeans, great part of the inhabitants of Asia, and the "northern hive." Several of the prophets foretold in terms of wonderful exactness, the fates of Babylon, Tyre, and other ancient cities. Daniel has, both in the visions of the golden image and the four beasts, depicted the fate of the four grand monarchies, all which have given, or shall give place to the glorious and peaceable kingdom of the Messiah.

(2.) They particularly foretel the history of the JEWS. Even to Abraham, above 400 years before the event, God revealed the sojourning and oppression of his posterity, with their deliverance therefrom. Jacob pointed out the different situations and fortunes of the twelve tribes. Moses foretold the consequent miseries and dispersion of the Jews, in the most circumstantial manner. Both the old and new testament abound with assurances of the Jews being once more gathered together,

of their being humbled and converted, and afterwards restored to their own land again.

(3.) The MESSIAH is another grand object of these predictions: “to him give all the prophets witness.” They describe his character, mission and miracles, with the most material circumstances attendant on his birth, life, ministry, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascent to glory. They foretel the success of his doctrine, the sufferings of his followers, and his final triumph in the subjection of the whole world to his spiritual dominion. They add such limitations of time to these predictions, as confine the events to the period in which they were fulfilled.

(4.) Finally we have very express discoveries of the rise, growth and overthrow of **POPERY**, and that system of ecclesiastical tyranny by which it was supported. These accounts are chiefly contained in the prophet Daniel, some of St. Paul’s epistles, and the Revelation of St. John; which last is the most particular, and contains in itself a regular and compact series of prophecies from the close of the first century, about which time it was written, to the end of the world.

In the small compass of these few pages, the Reader will not expect me to adduce proofs of so many particulars; nor is it necessary, as the Reader may find abundant evidence of them all in the excellent dissertations of **Bp. Newton** above repeatedly referred to.

Let us now see what can be opposed to this mass of evidence. Mr. Hume insults “that no

human testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its fallhood would be *more miraculous* than the fact which it endeavours to establish." A most unreasonable demand, which sets down all human testimony for nothing! And at the same time an egregious sophism; for no fallhood can be miraculous, nor can one miracle be *more* miraculous than another. To form the argument fairly, the word "miraculous" should be exchanged for *incredible*, and on this ground we are ready to meet it, in reference to that species of miracles before us——*Prophecy*.

That the Deity has a *foreknowledge* of human events, and is therefore *able* to reveal them to mankind, are propositions I shall venture to take for granted; and that such a revelation implies nothing absolutely inconsistent, either with itself or with the moral perfections of the Deity, is what I apprehend few readers will be disposed to litigate. Let me then ask, is the doctrine of prophetic revelation *equally* inconsistent and absurd with supposing that human foresight could predict so many thousand circumstances——many of them minute——many very unlikely——many apparently inconsistent——many at very remote distance, and yet all verified in fact? Or is it not still *more* ridiculous and absurd to imagine such an infinite number of strange coincidences happened by accident. What! does chance produce systematic regularity, harmony, and uniformity? Surely it is going but one step farther to attribute to it the beautiful universe around us,

But is there no way of evading this evidence? It has been attempted, and I fear Mr. Haller's pamphlet will induce many to attempt it. The strange and arbitrary manner in which he has applied the prophecies, may lead many to conclude them ambiguous, vague, and indeterminate. This objection can apply only to such as are symbolical; and those are far from that degree of uncertainty charged upon them. It is remarkable, that while critics and commentators are divided into innumerable opinions on some historic passages, they are almost unanimous on the visions of Daniel respecting the four monarchies. Nay, so clear and express were they thought by *Porphyry* in the third century, and his disciple *Collins* in the present, that they have agreed to suppose them forged after the events.

Happily, however, this pretence is as indefensible as the other. There is the fullest historical evidence that they were extant before the time of Alexander the Great,* and what puts the idea of a subsequent forgery quite out of countenance is, that part of these prophecies have been fulfilled since the time of *Porphyry*; namely, that part which relates to the division of the Roman Empire into ten parts, answerable to the ten horns of the beast; and the rise and reign of *Antichrist*, the little horn.

Nor is this the only instance of prophecy fulfilled in modern times. So far from it, every age witnesses the fidelity of the scriptures. Not to insist on the *present* state of the *Jerusalem*, which Mr.

* See Bp. Newton's Introduction to Dissertation i. & 15.

Addison considered as one of the strongest evidences of christianity, our own times have witnessed an event full and directly to our purpose.

In the Revelation of John, chap. xi. v. 13. we read, “and the same hour [of the resurrection of the witnesses, who represent all the Lord’s people, both of the clergy and laity; the same hour] there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men [*Græc*, names of men] seven thousand; and the remnant were affrighted and gave glory to the God of heaven.” An *earthquake* is, in prophetic language, a revolution; and the tenth part of the city is one of those ten kingdoms into which the Roman empire was divided, which seems very likely to intend France, which was the tenth or last of them. Now it is very remarkable, that from this passage *Monf. Jurieu*,* a French protestant minister about 1687, predicted a revolution in France, between 1785, and 1795, answerable in many remarkable points to what we have seen accomplished; particularly an abolition of all vain titles, armorial bearings, and ecclesiastical orders; and the introduction (after some time) of universal peace, prosperity and religion.

So far as this has been accomplished, it seems no contemptible confirmation on the truth of sacred prophecy; and the remaining part so well corresponds with the present appearances of affairs, as to encourage our hope, that the rest will be as punctually fulfilled. And when they are so, when these two grand predictions of the fall of Baby-

* Accomplishment of the Scripture Prophecies.

lon, and the conversion of the Jews shall be accomplished, prophetic evidence will shine with unexampled and irresistible splendour; and, no doubt, greatly contribute to the universal spread of the pure and peaceable doctrines of Christianity throughout the world.

These remarks might have been considerably extended, with advantage to our argument; but as I have made some other observations on this subject in another tract,* and wish rather to induce and assist my readers to think and reason for themselves, than to exhaust the subject by my reflections, I conclude this Appendix with my warmest wishes for the progress of free enquiry, and the establishment of sacred truth.—
 ‘GREAT IS THE TRUTH AND SHALL PREVAIL!’
 —Amen.

* The *Age of Infidelity*, in answer to Thomas Paine’s *Age of Reason*—where are proofs adduced of some of the above propositions, and farther remarks on this and the other evidences of Christianity.

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