

EXAMINATION

OF THE *Free*

EXAMINERS EXAMINED,

BEING A

DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

OPPOSED TO THE

AGE OF REASON,

*by Thomas Paine.*

.....\*

BY WILLIAM WYCHE,

AUTHOR OF SEVERAL WORKS, AND CITIZEN  
UNITED-STATES OF AMERICA.

.....\*

*Le tems present est gros de l'infidelité.*

NOT LEIBNITZ.

.....\*

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED BY *Wayland* AND *Davis*, AND SOLD BY  
*L. Wayland*, No. 151, WATER-STREET.—1795.

*(Copy-right secured.)*

4 January, 1892.

From the library of  
THOMAS H. H. H.

TO  
THE REV. ISAAC LEWIS, D. D.  
OF  
WEST GREENWICH,  
CONNECTICUT.

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED

IN  
TESTIMONY OF RESPECT,

BY

*W. W T C H E.*

*NEW-YORK, Jan. 19, 1795.*

---

A N

E X A M I N A T I O N, &c.

---

TO declaim against christianity, has, of late, become extremely fashionable in the literary world. The same beaten track of pretended argument is repeatedly pursued, whilst the vanity of writers is highly gratified in endeavoring to overturn the prevailing opinions of mankind. For my own part, satisfied with the doctrines of christianity, till I see, what has never yet taken place—them overturned by invincible reasons; I offer some remarks on a pamphlet lately published, under the title of the “*Examiners Examined*,” in order to oppose the rising flood of infidelity.

In the conclusion of this work, the author “solemnly declares that the happiness of mankind *are* his *views*, in wishing to propagate deism.” To promote the happiness of mankind is confessedly a laudable desire; it were to be wished, that, with such a *view*, the author had recourse to means of a tendency to produce an end of this nature. Unfortunately, in the publication before us, he seems to have deviated widely from his

aim, and to be like unto the “ foolish man who built his house upon the sand, and the rain descended, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house and it fell ;” \* but we cannot follow the text and add, “ *great* was the fall thereof.” This writer so *apparently* friendly to the interests of the human race, discovers the wily fox in the external garb of the innocent lamb. In promising felicity, he seeks its destruction. By propagating deism, he destroys every hope of salvation, lays the axe at the root of religion, and insultingly tells us he means to increase our happiness. By persuading us to give up the revelations and promises of God, and to adopt his pretended rational, yet fantastic, system, in the room, he would render us a cold and sceptic race of beings, ignorant of every religious principle, but those which the whim and fancy of each individual dictate.

To show how contrary the author’s declarations and conduct are, we need only look a little further in the conclusion, and a few other detached passages. “ He wishes not to persecute nor wound the feelings of any, but to convince by fair argument.” How little do other sentences comport with this? If such is the author’s intent, why does he wound the feelings of the author of the Folly of Reason, and tell us that his pamphlet “ was probably written from no other than mercenary views” ? What occasion the succeeding sneers on Wake-

\* *Matthew*, vii. 26, 27.

field, as being a fellow of *Jesus* college? Why style him a "conceited pedant"? Why insinuate that the Layman is "really a gentleman of the cloth"? Why style the *New-York Reviewer*, "a *soi disant*, Esquire"? Why sarcastically style Mr. Ogden "the apostle of virtue and religion"? Are these marks of the author's candor? of his desire not to wound the feelings of others? Again, when he selects a few detached passages from the objects of his criticism, and leaves the most material parts unanswered, does he mean to display his desire of convincing by *fair* argument? These passages serve to demonstrate the propriety of an expression which the writer contends to be improper—the *bigotry of a deist*. If he define the word "bigotry," properly, in calling it "fanaticism, blind zeal, or superstition," his bigotry, in support of deism, is evinced in almost every page, and, to use nearly his own words, "he shows it by *example*, more than any writer on christianity."

When I first saw the part of this pamphlet intitled "*Thoughts on the Christian Religion*," I fully expected something new upon the subject; but perusal created a miserable disappointment; nothing was to be discovered but a repetition of old observations, dressed up in a declamatory style, and even that style, in some parts, portrays the crow shining in borrowed plumes. This whole division of the pamphlet, displays such poverty of original thought, frigidity of expression, and

even ignorance of the character of the authors quoted, that, through charity, we must suppose the author entirely blinded by vanity, or such an *irrational* defence of the Age of Reason, would never have seen the light.

As the author himself calls nearly three of his first pages declamation, it is unnecessary to make any remarks on them, I shall therefore proceed to what *he* calls his arguments. It does not, however, evince a desire of supporting opinion by *fair* argument, to commence with three pages of declamation, in which are hazarded a variety of bold, yet untrue assertions, never afterwards attempted to be proved.

We are told “that the public proofs of christianity, are no stronger than those in favor of Mahometanism. Mahomet is said to have wrought as many miracles, preached as good doctrine, converted ten times as many followers, and was far more successful than Jesus Christ.”

The number of Mahomet's miracles, is no proof in favor of his system—it depends on their reality. Had Jesus Christ performed but one act out of the common course of nature, it would have evinced his power far more than that of Mahomet, who might have produced 1000 miracles, the fallacy of which could all be traced. The miracles of our Saviour, were far different in their nature from those of the Turkish chief. The Mahometan miracles, were discovered by many, at the time, to be impostures; while those of christianity flashed convic-

tion on the minds of the beholders, and made them, with a sudden impulse, confess the divine agency. Mahomet entertained the populace with the tricks of a juggler : great part of his miracles were transacted in the dark, and rested solely on the evidence of himself ; but those of Christ were such as must have originated in supernatural power, and were transacted in the open face of day. We know the imposture of the writer of the Koran, from the trick he played upon his followers, in requesting one of his adherents to descend to the bottom of a well, and cry “ Mahomet is the prophet of God,” and then immediately he persuaded the people to fill up the well with stones, as a monument of the transaction, but in reality to prevent a discovery of the imposture. The vision of his being taken into the seven heavens, has no public notoriety to support it—a vision imagined in the night—unknown to the world, and its existence depending on the mere word of the inventor. Were the miracles of Christ of this nature ? do they depend on the *ipse dixit* of the performer ? On the contrary, were they not exhibited in the presence of multitudes ? When 5000 people were fed with a small portion of victuals, could this be an imposture ? But the very nature of the christian miracles, evince their truth. Their *reality* appears from the general objects on which they were employed. The benevolent Saviour of mankind himself was exercised in removing the miseries of the unfortunate—by a word,



6

he cured the halt, the maimed, and the blind ; and their diseases were gone—not for a short period, but for ever. The variety of these miracles, shows the immensity of his power—their beneficence eminently displays the God. But what more than all proves the miraculous gift of Jesus, is, that his future transactions were all predicted by the ancient prophets, and every miracle confirmed what was foretold. At the instant they were performed, though there were thousands of people inimical to the principles of our Saviour, among them, no doubt, men of abilities capable of detecting fallacy, yet none doubted that they were miracles, arising from powers above the comprehension of mankind. His very enemies, conscious of supernatural agency, attributed them to the influence of the devil, rather than to natural causes.

But “the doctrines of Mahomet are as good as those of christianity.” What ? are those doctrines propagated by fire and sword—propagated for the purpose of promoting ambition, to be compared with the mild and beneficent spirit which pervades christianity ? Is the leader of an army threatening all, who will not believe his principles, with destruction, to be compared to him who inculcated the practice of sound morality, who forbade persecution, and said, *love thy neighbour as thyself ? unto him who takest thy coat give the cloak also.*

But “the Turkish prophet converted ten times as many followers.” Is this a proof of his superiority

our Saviour? When the former operated upon the ears of mankind, and held his sword to the throat of the unbeliever, surely he had a greater chance of gaining followers than he who mildly preached the word of God, and endeavored to inculcate principles opposed to the prevailing vices of mankind. Mahomet gained his followers by force, but Christ by persuasion, and exhibiting marks of his divinity. If, however, success be a proof at all, the followers of Christ in later days, are far more numerous than those of Mahomet. Had Christ, indeed, converted all the world, he would not have answered the description of the prophets, who foretold the number of unbelievers. The few he did convert, by the mere force of preaching and miracle, show the strong evidence, in the minds of those who followed him, of his divine mission. The difference between the characters of Mahomet, and of Christ, and the effects their principles had on their different followers, is so elegantly displayed in a passage of one of Bishop Sherlock's sermons, that I cannot forbear inserting it: "Go to your natural religion, lay before her Mahomet and his disciples, arrayed in armour and in blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands, who fell by his victorious sword. Show her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene,

carry her into his retirement, show her the prophet's chamber—his concubines and his wives, and let her hear him allege revelation and a divine commission to justify his adultery and lust. When she is tired with this prospect, then show her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men. Let her see him in his most retired privacies, let her follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God. Let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross, let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do!* When natural religion has viewed both, ask her which is the prophet of God? But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene through the eyes of the centurion who attended at the cross. By him she spoke and said, *Truly this man was the son of God.*"

Our author asks "if the gospel system was clear, reasonable and true, what necessity for miracles to support it? A doctrine that is reasonable and true, will appear so to every unprejudiced mind, without the aid of any thing supernatural." I grant that an *unprejudiced* mind requires no miracle to support christianity—its divine light is evident to reason, from the intrinsic goodness of its doctrines. But where shall we find this *unprejudiced* being? can we call our author such—

every page of his work demonstrates bigotry in support of deism. But miracles were not intended to convert the atheist or the deist; they strive to discover God and his will from the light of nature—but it is the idolater and superstitious, to whom miracle is addressed. The state of the world, at the time our Saviour came upon earth, created a necessity for miracle. The gross superstitions of mankind, their worship of idols, and even the corruptions of the Jews, had thrown a film over their eyes, and nought but supernatural agency were of sufficient efficacy to clear their sight. This shows the little occasion for miracles at the present day: they, of course, ceased with the fall of idolatry.

The next argument against the Bible, is drawn from the corruptions of language. “The variety of translations and editions of the bible, and the continual improvements and alterations in human languages, amount to a presumptive proof, that the sense has been unavoidably mistaken, or *wilfully perverted*.” These circumstances might probably have occasioned mistakes; but they can afford no proof of a *wilful* perversion: if this reasoning were good, we might say of every book which has passed through several editions, that this is a proof of the original sense having been wilfully perverted. As a corroboration of this wise reasoning, we are informed that there is a striking disagreement between the different copies of the bible. This is a miserable mistake of the author, and arises from his ignorance of the

subject. Though it is easy to assert, it is difficult to prove. But the bible and its various copies have been carefully examined, and, after infinite labor, those who are best able to judge, from their own knowledge, pronounce all the copies to agree in the fundamental doctrines. Though there are thirty thousand readings, yet no material corruption has been discovered.

The author proceeds "admitting that the bible contains the only doctrine by which we can obtain salvation, which sect are we to embrace"? The answer is, examine for yourself, instead of seeking to destroy religion, because mankind have abused its pure and holy doctrines; read the scriptures yourself, and make up your faith. The abstruse and intricate parts of the bible, about which sects have foolishly divided, are not really essential—the moral and doctrinal parts are easily understood, and easily practised by the well disposed. The christian system does not create these differences they originate in the obstinacy and perversion of man. The author's sneer on the scripture, for causing divisions, which it never, in fact, intended, is too contemptible to deserve an answer.

It is next acknowledged, "that the doctrine, which has the greatest tendency to secure our present and future happiness, is the best," but denied that the christian religion tends to do so, because by it we are led to believe, that we are all miserable and ruined wretches, corrupt and exceeding wicked from our birth. If that

system is the best, which will secure our present and future happiness, the author is wrong in the conclusion, that the christian religion has not this tendency. There never was a sincere christian who was not truly happy. In the moments of misery and distress, his religion supports him, and he places the firmest reliance on the goodness of his maker. While at the brink of ruin, he hopes for protection, and, at his death, enjoys the heartfelt satisfaction of expecting a scene of felicity in another world. His happiness, provided he obey the commands of God, is secured to him in the realms of *futurity*. But deism has a contrary tendency—its follower, in the instant of distress, is miserable, and has no dependence on his God—his future happiness is totally cut off, since his principles lead him to deny the immortality of the soul. Look at the state of mankind, and we shall find it to answer the description of the holy writings. The very actions of human beings, testify them to be prone to sin, and, even the example of our author, is an instance of a man perverting the use of that glorious reason bestowed on him by God, for the purpose of disobeying the divine commands. In this indeed he has mistaken his object; without considering the evidence of revelation, he has thought proper to treat with scurrility its doctrines. It is the *evidence* alone, to which he ought to have attended, and if that appear plain, it is blasphemy to deny the principles. If God, for purposes of which he is the best judge, has thought proper to promulgate certain tenets, his crea-

tures ought cheerfully to obey them, they are only to examine what testimony there is to ground the idea of their having been revealed. The ways of deity are not to be scanned by the limited reason of man, and the evidence is sufficient to convince any rational mind, untinged with cold and sceptical ideas.

As for the superstitious notions of some people, who call themselves christians, in supposing every accident happening to them in the course of their lives, a judgment—this is not to be imputed to the christian religion, which does not authorise such absurdity.

We are next informed of a great contradiction in the bible from its being said first, that God created man *male and female*, and afterwards, finding Adam alone, created a help-meet for him. If the author had been acquainted with historial composition, he would not have made such a blundering observation. The historian, in stating the creation of man, never meant to say that God made man and woman *together*, or at once, but goes a little before the time, and, as woman was created afterwards, simply relates, what was the fact, that they were created, and, in a subsequent chapter, informs us the manner, time and occasion.

The idea of "God's repenting," is next insinuated as being inconsistent with his unchangeableness. This is easily seen to be a figurative expression used by the inspired writers. They never meant that God actually

“repented” but to accommodate to the capacity of their readers, the notion of God’s remitting, through his infinite goodness, a punishment justly incurred, they used the phrase of the deity, having repented. The same observation, on the poetical style of scripture, may be applied to the succeeding passages, on which our author *wished* to exercise his ingenuity.

As to the declamation on the persecutions which have arisen in the world, through the efforts of mad, outrageous zealots, in support of christianity, they are evidently derived from abuse and perversion, and not from the spirit of christianity itself. The author might as well have exercised his brain, in declaiming against the liberty of the press, as against religion, because it has been abused. The freedom of the press is justly styled the bulwark of liberty; but obscenity, scandal and poisonous doctrines have arisen from its exercise. Shall we, however, say it ought to be abolished? Shall we, then, say, because men have applied a religion, in itself calculated for a different end, to supporting their own purposes, that it ought to be destroyed?

We are next entertained with a formidable argument against christianity—its advocates refuse to submit it to the test of reason—hence it is unreasonable. The reality of its mysteries is established upon the best evidence which the nature of the case admits—the mysteries themselves are above our comprehension—suf-



sufficient, if the evidence proves them to be of divine authority. The Deity best knows his will.

Not deeply to discern, not much to know,  
Mankind was born to wonder and adore.

But poor, weakfighted mortals, ought to comprehend the ways of God—are then men to abuse the blessing bestowed on them, and to exercise the reason they receive from their Creator, in disputing his commands? “The judgments of God are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out. His way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known.” But “the idea of the christian advocates, refusing to submit their religion to the test of rational inquiry,” is absurd. The book which contains it, is open to all, and our author has had the opportunity of displaying his reason, or rather the *want* of it, in making such nonsensical remarks.

The doctrinal part, however, of our Saviour’s system, is highly rational, as may be seen by an attentive perusal of the scriptures, and an examination of his own holy life. Take his example, and not that of *half* christians, and its purity and excellence will be eminently conspicuous. It is a religion which restrains every idea of criminal excesses, is admirably calculated to keep within bounds the passions, and lead mankind to the exercise of all the moral virtues. The grand principle of *love*, on which it is founded, is highly adapted to promote the harmony of social life.

Did ever such a man exist as the Saviour of the world? A man whose whole life was a constant scene of benevolence, and a pattern of uprightnes to the human race. Look at his piety and devotion—the beauty and simplicity of his prayers—the well adapted, striking style of his discourses—his universal charity—his attention to the sick and miserable—his contempt of riches—his humility and condescension. Are these marks of an impostor? When the Jews would have forced him to accept an earthly crown—view his disinterestedness, in refusing that throne which would have established his doctrines, and have been the means of converting the most unbelieving. Even at the cross, in all the pains of suffering agony, he prayed for his persecutors—he cried, “father forgive them for they know not what they do.” Yet this was a man interested in making mankind unhappy—in leading them from the *pure* and *holy* paths of deism, in which alone universal *felicity* is placed. We are informed in another paragraph, that the christian religion threatens damnation to those who do not follow it: “that there is no other name under heaven, by which a man can be saved but *by* Jesus Christ.” This affords an inference of the uncharitable spirit of christianity. Had the author been thoroughly acquainted with his mother tongue, he would have found no such meaning in this expression. It is true no man can be saved but *by* Jesus Christ—our Lord came to die for the sins of all mankind; by this he has washed away

original sin, and has been the cause of universal salvation. Every man who walks in the paths of righteousness, will be saved, whether he be a christian or not—for the benefit of our Saviour's expiation, extended to past, as well as to future generations, whether they ever received the light of christianity or not. The preposition *by* here, has not the force of *in* : a man may be saved *by* a law, though he be not *in* its pale.

Our examiner has been singularly unhappy in the philosophers he has chosen as authorities against the christian system. The poetical passages selected from Mr. Pope, are not opposed to the religion of Christ—they are levelled at the superstition of the *heathens*. The poet speaks of Gods, in the plural number, and of the *flamens* or priests of ancient Rome. There is a passage of Pope in praise of the *Messiah*—from which I shall quote a few lines—so that his authority is rather on the christian side :

“THE SAVIOUR comes ! by ancient bards foretold :  
 Hear him ye deaf, and all ye blind behold !  
 He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,  
 And on the sightless eye-balls pour the day.  
 'Tis he th' obstructed paths of sound shall clear  
 And bid new music charm th' unfolding ear ;  
 The dumb shall sing, the lame his crutch forego,  
 And leap exulting like the bounding roe ;

No sigh no murmur the wide world shall hear,  
 From ev'ry face he wipes off ev'ry tear.

- - - - -  
 - - - - -

One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze  
 O'erflow thy courts : The LIGHT HIMSELF shall shine,  
 Reveal'd and God's eternal day be thine !  
 The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,  
 Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away ;  
 But fix'd HIS word, HIS saving power remains,  
 Thy REALM forever lasts, thy OWN MESSIAH reigns."

Mr. Locke too is well known to have been a sincere christian. As for Hume he was a man of no principle whatever—neither christian nor deist in reality, as may be learnt from his life.

In the next passage of this work, the author exhibits a striking disagreement between principle and action. He informs us that, from an attentive perusal of enlightened writers, he has adopted a creed. What? This liberal writer, who pursues the dictates of his own reason, *adopt* a creed from others. Truly this is bringing us down to the old standard ; we may as well believe the bible, as believe in the mere opinions of man. But the bible has no authority to support it—what authority then have your philosophers doctrines to support them ? your belief simply—so that, after all, this rational being pins his faith upon other people's sleeves : and, what is worse, after telling us each man is to form

his faith from his own reason ; he draws up his adopted creed, and endeavors to impose it on the world. As to the creed itself, we may leave it for the author to believe, since it contains nothing of any great importance, and may be considered as a whimsical desire of following the example of Thomas Paine.

I cheerfully acquiesce in one observation of the author's, " that the religion, which tends to promote discord, pride and deceit, is prejudicial to society." These consequences cannot be imputed to the pure spirit of christianity ; but to deism they may. When every man begins to establish, or adopt his own creed, universal discord will take place, and each will be disputing the superiority of his belief. As to pride, it is highly gratified by deism, and I rather think this to be the reason why the author thought proper to publish his opinions, in opposition to those of the world, secretly exulting in the pre-eminence of his boasted reason. As to deceit, when the hopes of a future state\* are destroyed, every man will prey upon his fellow-creatures, carrying a fair face to the world, in order to get rid of human punishments, without any dread of the future displeasure of the Deity.

\* *It is necessary to mention, that every deist does not disbelieve the immortality of the soul. Mr. Paine seems to believe it—but our bigot totally denies the existence of a future state.*

The author declares the christian religion must fall— tells us, “the sun of reason has begun to appear, dispelling the thick and almost impenetrable mists of ignorance and superstition, illuminating the most secret recesses of the mind, and will continue to increase in splendor, till it shine forth in one clear, unclouded and eternal day.” This bombastic sentence is big with prophecy—but I believe we may invert the words a little, and with greater certainty predict, “that the cloud of infidelity has begun to appear, covering with thick and almost impenetrable mists, the bright and holy religion of God; but, at the approaching termination of the present æra, religion will again illuminate the most secret recesses of the mind, and continue to increase in splendor, till the day of judgment, when the Son of God will appear, in all his glory, to testify the truth of his doctrines.

So much for the “*Thoughts on Christianity*.” We may truly see it is not on this part of the work that the author has built his fame. Slight, superficial reasoning, clothed in a faulty\* style, constitute the whole. *As this may be styled mere assertion unsupported by proof, I shall employ this note in a few hints on the subject of the author's style; his work will probably be of greater utility in this respect than in any other, since it may serve as a caution to young writers, exhibiting them a specimen of faults which they ought to avoid. This cannot offend an author, who has chiefly attacked the style, and not the arguments, of his opponents. The very first sentence affords abundance of matter for criticism:*

on this subject. In the subsequent answers to the different remarks on Paine, he is intitled to a greater portion of credit, and all this without proving Paine's

*“ Religion, in some form or other, seems to have been observed by mankind, in all ages and all parts of the world; and considered as the most noble employment, of the most divine nature, and producing the most beneficial effects to society of all the objects that have engaged their attention.”* This is truly a partial, clumsy sentence, and, as an introductory one, peculiarly faulty. *“ In some form or other,”* is a heavy expression. The verb *“ considered,”* wants an auxiliary verb to mark the sense; it is not sufficiently connected with, *“ observed,”* to be governed by the same auxiliary verb. Religion itself is not an employment, though the exercise of it is. Producing wants the particle *as* to precede it; as it is, the sense is imperfect. Effects cannot be produced from objects. The apparent meaning of the sentence is, that religion has produced these beneficial effects from the objects themselves; and, not, as I suppose the author's intention was, that among all the pursuits of man, religion had produced the most beneficial effects to him. The sentence would have been more clear thus expressed. Religion, in different forms, seems in all ages and all parts of the world, to have been observed by mankind, who have considered its exercise, as the most noble employment of the most divine nature, and as more productive of beneficial effects to society, than any other pursuit, in which it has been engaged.

principles to be right, or injuring christianity. Overturning weak arguments, proves not the justice of the opposite doctrines. Many of these works may be de-

Page 6. *Infamous oblivion is an inconsistent expression. Oblivion buries the memory of what is past, it cannot, then, be infamous.*

Page 7. *“How is the honor and character of the Almighty affronted by the absurd and impious doctrines it contains,”* Honor and character require a plural verb. *To feel an affront is an act of the mind on a sense of injury—but how honor and character can be affronted, it is difficult to conceive; yet they are made sensible beings, and affronted at doctrines.*

*I shall therefore give the reasons why I disbelieve the christian system, and all the arguments advanced in its favour.* Belief, or disbelief, can only apply to truth or falsehood. *It is absurd to say, I dont believe an argument: propriety would dictate—I am not convinced by it.*

*With respect to the public proofs exhibited by its founders.* In reading this sentence, we are at a loss to know to what the word its applies. Travelling several lines backwards, in the preceding paragraph, the word bible appears to be the antecedent; but the bible cannot be intended: the author, I presume, meant the founders of the christian religion.

Page 8. *“Professions springing out of the bible—expresses a droll discordant idea.*



servedly styled, "trash;" the writers were, like our author, incompetent to the task of polemical composition; and though their *intentions* were good, I acknowledge their arguments to be weak. Our redoubted hero has employed himself, like the knight of the woeful countenance, in combating windmills; but when victory attends his steps, the giant remains unaffailed.

Even here, this *fair* examiner misses his aim—instead of answering the reasoning in the work, he leaves it alone, and employs himself in finding fault with the style of his opponents.

I must confess I did not expect to find invective and abuse from the pen of such a candid and impartial writer; especially as a *deist* cannot be *bigotted*: but he

*Page 10. "All eternity" tautology: the word all adds nothing to the sense.*

*Page 13. A specimen of sublime and pathetic bombast: "But I stop, or, "I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word would harrow up the soul," chill the blood with horror, and draw forth curses from the grave against the very name of a religion, which has been made the pretext for such cruelties." This is soaring with a vengeance; but it is lucky that the author stopped, and let the poor people remain quiet in their graves.*

*Page 41 "But the more time that elapses since the writing of it, renders the probability of its not coming unchanged and mistranslated the greater." Through ignorance the author asserts the very thing he meant to deny.*

discovers here the cloven foot, and shows himself as capable of illiberality, as a christian. In this attack, he seems to be addressing his favorite goddess Deism, in his sacred poetry :

O let *my strong, unerring* hand  
 Thy bolts forever throw,  
 And deal damnation round the land,  
 On each *I* judge thy foe.

As to the observations on the "*Folly of Reason,*" pass them over, for great as the folly of that piece is, greater is the folly of the answer ; and shall leave our author in quiet possession of the field, after vanquishing his opposite champion, for not understanding his mortal-tongue, as well as himself. I only remark, that his observations, on the indecency of some parts of the bible, relate not the doctrines of christianity. They are to be found in the historical parts of the old testament, in which the fidelity of the historian made him relate the facts as they were ; but the plainness of the scriptures did not admit of polished composition.

As to Wakefield's *Examination*, it never was considered as an answer to Paine—the author, though he pretends to be a christian, approaches, in fact, to a deist ; and this pretended examination is evidently intended as a secret vehicle for his own doctrines—doctrines which, are repugnant to the fundamental principles of the christian religion. Wakefield seems to have imbibed

*jesuitical* principles in Jesus College, and has cunningly attacked the religion of Christ, under the masque of its defender. As his observations are not intended to have any great degree of force against Paine, our author can gain no great triumph in wasting five and twenty pages for the purpose of conquering Wakefield ; so that it is unnecessary to misemploy time, in defence of the latter :—his pamphlet will soon sink into that contempt, from which the learned name of the author will not be able to preserve it.

The “ *Age of Infidelity,*” by a Layman, is a publication of a very different kind ; and, as it was intended seriously, and contains sound argument, our author fails in succeeding as well with this opponent, as the two first. I proceed to obviate the force of his replies on the last work.

Our hero here aware of his incapacity to answer the Layman, very adroitly tells us, he has animadverted on most of his errors, in the review of Wakefield. This might have passed for current, but, upon comparing Wakefield and the Layman together, scarce a single observation appears to be similar : so that this declaration amounts to a confession, that the latter is but partially answered. Here again we have a specimen of endeavouring to convince by *fair* argument.

Our redoubted opponent to what he does not understand, has either ignorantly, or wilfully, mistaken the

meaning of the Layman's first passages. He has fallen foul upon him for asserting, that the genuine gospel of Christ is too pure and divine to meet the approbation of men of vicious hearts, who have hitherto composed the majority of mankind. He acknowledges the purity of christianity, but contends there is no necessity for *divine nature* to teach such doctrine, as many heathens have done the same. This is simple *ipse dixit*, unfounded by proof. To it we may oppose the well evidenced assertion, that no heathen ever preached or practised such morality, as the Saviour of the world. But, if the doctrine be so plain and simple, as to be comprehended by mankind, without the aid of divine revelation—it answers our author's ideas of sound religion—that it is comprehensible to reason : hence we perceive a confession of the rationality of the christian system.

The Layman does not insinuate, that there is any vice in disbelief ; but says the doctrine of deism, so favorable to the practice of vice, has chiefly met with advocates among the vicious and corrupt, who, enjoying that opinion, think they sin securely.

Notwithstanding our author's ideas, mankind are evidently in a state of depravity : the major part are engaged in constant scenes of dissipation and vice. This any rational and unprejudiced observer of human nature can declare from his own remarks.

The most material part of the Layman's pamphlet is left unanswered ; this is like our author's mode ; he seldom encounters substances, but amuses himself in fencing with shadows on the wall. The Layman has, in a masterly manner, exhibited a sketch of the evidences in support of christianity, and shown its truth from the best testimony that it was possible to produce. This stuck in the stomach of our author, and he wisely left it unanswered ; even without a single remark. The Layman's definition of revelation too, in opposition to Mr. Paine, is passed over in silence, as incapable of answer.

As to the comparison between the religions of Christ and of Mahomet, sufficient has already been said upon the subject\* to do away the force of our author's objections. A few remarks here on the subject will suffice. The extracts on this head only evince the opinions of the Turks—the Koran, however, does not contain the sublime morality of the religion of Christ. “ In all religions the life of the founder supplies the silence of his written revelation ; the sayings of Mahomet were so many lessons of truth ; his actions so many examples of virtue.” Where the author got his intelligence I know not ; but, if he had studied history a little, he would have spared himself the shame of making such an untrue assertion. If a constant gratification of the sensual appetite ; a life of debauchery ; and revelling in the

\* *Ante* page 8.

arms of vicious women, can be called so many examples of virtue, then Mahomet was truly the prophet of God. *His* life, indeed "supplies the silence of his written revelation," and if we can judge any thing from his actions, we shall be able to discover few marks of divinity. Far different was the character of Christ; he never waged war on the peaceful inhabitants of the earth, nor sought earthly dominion and self aggrandizement; he did not convert by destruction. But the *virtues* Mahomet did all this. The sayings of Christ were the sayings of truth; through his mouth she spake the most sublime and incontrovertible axioms of morality. The sayings of Mahomet, except a few truisms, were false: of this character his vision in the seven heavens bears every trait. Take away the evidence of the arch impostor himself, and the fabric falls to the ground.

The author tells us, Mahomet has been unjustly abused by christians; this he pretends to prove by a brief statement of the causes, which led to his establishment, and by taking notice of some of the most important precepts enjoined in the Koran. All this mighty task is performed by citing a few detached passages from an author of *undoubted respectability*. This *respectability*, however, we are to take upon trust; for, with respect to the name of the author, we are left in the dark. It is somewhat singular that our undaunted

champion of reason, should have recourse to authority at all; particularly to a poisoned source—a bigotted author.\*

Mahometanism, we are told by this unknown author, and echoed by our examiner, is undoubtedly a great improvement of the Jewish and christian systems—why? because it establishes the unity of God, and approaches nearer to deism. This is a pretty *petitio principii*; the object in dispute is taken for granted. Deism must first be proved preferable to christianity, before the conclusion can be drawn.

Another objection may be gathered from a set of defaultory observations—the doctrine contained in the Koran is more *sublime*, than that of the testament. Here let our author answer this objection in his own words: “In the name of common sense, what has sublimity to do with truth or falshood? Truth is truth without the assistance of artificial support, and all the majestic sentiments, that ever were invented, cannot make a falsh story true.”

The Koran is superior to the bible, because it enjoins cleanliness. Though this be a very necessary regulation in the constitution of man, what has it to do with religion, or the duties of man to his Maker? The writers of the bible did not employ themselves in directions which had nothing to do with their object.

\* Gibbon I presume, from the style.

Our author, or rather his guide, or both, are mistaken, when they tell us that the Mahometan religion is destitute of a priesthood, and that the people assemble at the mosque and *imam*. An imam, instead of being a place for worship, is actually a priest; for the Mahometans have an order of priesthood designated by the name of *imams*, the chief of whom is called the *mufti*.

“The legislator, who interdicted wine, cannot surely be accused of alluring his proselytes, by the indulgence of their sensual appetites.” In this respect, indeed, he cannot; but the sobriety of Mahomet’s followers, was a necessary regulation to preserve himself. The numerous enemies he had to combat; the necessity of always being on the watch in a state of warfare, obliged him always to have his votaries at command; the indulgence of wine would probably have made them unruly, and, at some unlucky intoxicated moment, his enemies might have found an easy prey. But other sensual indulgences made amends for this interdiction. The allowance of four wives, with as many concubines as the man thought proper, opened a field of sensual joy sufficiently alluring to the convert. The promise, too, of voluptuousness, in the arms of the Houris, after death in the realms of Paradise, held forth a temptation sufficient to enchant the warm complexion of an Asiatic.

“The circumstance of the Mahometan religion deriving its establishment to the sword, cannot abridge its



merits. We expect the government of the French Republic will be established by the sword." The comparison between religion and government, is farcical. Government must, it is true, be established by the means in the power of man : when the political frame is torn by divisions, human beings can only have recourse to the law of arms ; and the chance of success is as equally with the wrong side, as with the right. But when the Deity reveals his will, by his prophet, it is repugnant to the idea of his benevolence and mercy, that this prophet should propagate his doctrines by the power of the sword. Nothing can more strongly characterise the religious impostor, than cruelty and revenge : passions which cannot exist in the Messenger of a Being, whose attributes are mercy and love. Our Saviour appeared as a God himself, surrounded with the glorious qualifications of divinity. His tongue, and his exemplary manners, were his only weapons : with these he converted his votaries.

The Layman's elucidation of Moses's account of the fall, next affords room for censure. Instead of using argument, the author just boldly asserts, that this account\* *belittles* the character of the Deity, and that the idea of hereditary original sin, was engendered in the flighty imagination of fanatics, must appear evident. Had the author been kind enough to have used some

\* *This is a new expression.*

proofs here, they might have been worth answering: it is the author of the *Folly of Reason*, who is told, that he has rejected argument and reason, and substituted declamation and bare assertion, in their place," may retort upon his friendly examiner: *Before thou tuckest the mote out of thy brother's eye, pluck the beam out of thine own.*

The author proceeds with a few ideas, borrowed from other writers, on the subject of *free agency*, and, with the assistance of Dr. Beattie, thinks he has overcome the great difficulty of reconciling it with the prescience of God. "He observes, it will be universally admitted, that there are some things which the Deity cannot do: He cannot deceive, cannot commit evil. Neither is it more derogatory to his character, to say, there are some things, which he cannot know." This answer is not satisfactory. The Deity is, undoubtedly, all-powerful; whatever he will, he can do; if he thought proper, he could commit what we call sin: instead of saying, that he *can* not, it is more correct to say that he *will* not. This doctrine, in order to make a free agent of man, makes God act from necessity, and limits his power. The doctrine, however, of liberty, is not incompatible with christianity. Dr. Beattie, and most of the other supporters of free agency, are christians. The idea of rewards and punishments, held out in scripture, implies, that man is free. The prescience of the Deity, requires not the belief

of man's acting from necessity. Whenever I offer two alternatives to a man, and leave him to act as he pleases, though I do not compel him to follow the one or the other, I can judge, from his passions and habits of life, which course he will take. Predestination, too, is one of the chief doctrines of our author's beloved religion, which approaches so near to deism—that of Mahomet : it is, therefore, somewhat singular, that he should be opposed to it.

The Layman observes, that the sacred historians are answerable for facts alone, not for their morality ; in the Jewish history he stained with blood and cruelty, so is that of all other nations. To this our author replies, that other historians do not pretend that God commanded those cruelties, and instances the destruction of the *innocent* Canaanites. The *innocence* of that people is the dispute, if we are to take the whole of the story, they notoriously violated the commands of God. These cruelties were, then, a mercy to the people of other ages and nations. The severe example, made of the Canaanites, was a beneficence to the other inhabitants of the earth. It was not the revenge of God that excited this destruction, but merely to warn the human race ; a few were punished to save the whole.

The ensuing page or two of the answer, as it is called, simply consists of declamation, in sneering at that as trifling, which is not replied to by reasoning : but ridicule is a far better weapon to dart at truth, than argument.

of man's acting from necessity. Whenever I offer two alternatives to a man, and leave him to act as he pleases, though I do not compel him to follow the one or the other, I can judge, from his passions and habits of life, which course he will take. Predestination, too, is one of the chief doctrines of our author's beloved religion, which approaches so near to deism—that of Mahomet : it is, therefore, somewhat singular, that he should be opposed to it.

The Layman observes, that the sacred historians are answerable for facts alone, not for their morality ; in the Jewish history he stained with blood and cruelty, so is that of all other nations. To this our author replies, that other historians do not pretend that God commanded those cruelties, and instances the destruction of the *innocent* Canaanites. The *innocence* of that people is the dispute, if we are to take the whole of the story, they notoriously violated the commands of God. These cruelties were, then, a mercy to the people of other ages and nations. The severe example, made of the Canaanites, was a beneficence to the other inhabitants of the earth. It was not the revenge of God that excited this destruction, but merely to warn the human race ; a few were punished to save the whole.

The ensuing page or two of the answer, as it is called, simply consists of declamation, in sneering at that as trifling, which is not replied to by reasoning : but ridicule is a far better weapon to dart at truth, than argument.

The author endeavors to find a defence for Paine's assertion that there are five deities of the christians : God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, the God Providence, and the Goddess Nature ; but says nothing about this misrepresentation, only leaves it to the *candor* of the reader—this *candor* will, I fancy, see that Paine was only amusing his imagination, with a play upon words.

We are told, it is not granted, that Christ wrought miracles, as it rests upon *hearsay* only:—When a combination of witnesses who saw a fact, with their own eyes, solemnly declare so—it is more than *hearsay* : and that this was the fact the author would have seen, had he attended to the Layman's sketch of the testimony on the subject.

The author continues, “the greatest improvement, that now remains to be made in divine knowlege, is to revive *again*, the simple religion of our first parents.” If we follow the example of our first parents, as related in scripture, we shall believe in God, and obey his commands. Our first parents had not all the revelation, which God has pleased to communicate to their children, but we find, except in one single instance, that Adam testified obedience to the God, who made him.

I have been very concise in my remarks upon this part of the pamphlet, since, though the author has employed several pages against the Layman, very little else

can be discovered but idle declamation. The Layman, however, remains unanswered, and his work is a very respectable publication.

As to what the author calls the fourth assault upon the *fortress* of deism, or the *Guide to Reason*, it is too ridiculous to deserve remarks on either side.

The observations on the *New-York Reviewer*, and his *Examiner*, have nothing to do with the cause of christianity ; the pamphlet is unnecessarily swelled on this subject. The *new idea*, however, of the *Reviewer* is certainly just, that the French are relapsing into the idolatry of the Heathens, and the scheme of national worship shown by our author, to make the idea absurd, evidently proves it to be just. The Pagans originally created deities in their own minds—such as the cardinal virtues ; in process of time, they erected statues to their imaginary beings ; and shortly afterwards, when the original notion was lost, the statues themselves became the object of worship. Just so it may be with the French. They have set apart national days in honor of ideal beings, as liberty—truth—justice—chastity—courage—fidelity, &c. If the age of barbarism should ever be renewed, and ignorance once more obtain dominion, Pagan worship will again take place ; ideas of these fantastic deities will float in the minds of the vulgar, and the beings themselves will become the object of adoration.

With respect to the anonymous publication in the Philadelphia paper, I detest illiberal abuse as much as the author, and heartily coincide with him in his remarks on that piece. Mr. Paine's character does not affect the point; by the justice, or injustice, of his arguments, I am willing he shall be tried.

The most *violent* invective against a violent invective, contains remarks on Uzal Ogden's Address. He is charged with endeavoring to traduce the character of Paine, because he says, "unpleasing is the task to expose an individual to public obloquy, on account of the impropriety of his conduct." Mr. Ogden's expression is perfectly consistent. If Paine is proved to be an enemy to the human race, in endeavoring to poison the minds of the weak, with principles destructive to their salvation—the very confuting him unavoidably exposes Paine to public obloquy. We have no reason to infer that it is Ogden's intention to *traduce* Paine; simply that such will be the consequence of exposing his errors, and this "the interests of virtue and religion require." If Paine believed himself his principles to be true, he had no business to publish them—he had no right to shake the faith of others; if the principles of christianity were even doubtful, a respect to what might be the will of God, would suggest the indecency of making converts an end, which the *unbigotted* deists affirm is not in their view.

What does the author mean by asserting that christianity does not *dignify human nature*? That religion which creates in man the belief of an immortal soul, certainly dignifies his nature, and makes him of infinite more importance in the scale of beings, than if he was born to reside in this world simply, then to die, and be no more.

Mr. Ogden says "it becomes a duty to divest this deistical enthusiast and incendiary of his masque," such language we are told is improper, Paine has openly put his name to the work—how then can he wear a masque? This is idle; the name of Paine, hitherto the apparent friend of the human race, is a greater masque, than if the name had been concealed. Revering the advocate of civil liberty, mankind are more apt to be imposed upon by his arts; under the veil of their friend, he has acted the part of their secret enemy. Pretending amity he has endeavored to undermine the interests of virtue and religion. But our author may be justly styled "masqued" in his own sense of the word; he did not dare to father the foundling of his brain: he has thrown it upon the protection of the world without a name.

"Why should deism be the constant theme of abuse for the bigots of all other persuasions. Let the opposers of deism prove, that its doctrine tends to destroy the peace and happiness of society." Deism is not



theme of abuse : the real advocates of christianity oppose deism by fair argument, and wish not to wound the feelings of any ; but they see no reason why they should be abused themselves. The author has uncharitably inveighed against christianity and its professors, and any thing said against him is but a fair retort. Had he adhered to his declaration, I should never have reflected upon his ignorance and want of candor. Had he not attacked the style of his opponents, I should not have animadverted on the faults of his style. As it is, he may thank himself for obtaining the character attributed to Wakefield : that of a conceited and violent adversary.

That the doctrine of deism tends to destroy the peace and happiness of society has frequently been demonstrated. When once the basis of religion is destroyed, morality stands upon unstable principles : its chief strength is broken. Man no longer depends on his Maker, will prey upon his fellow-creatures. He may pursue his own interest, though destructive to the social interest, with impunity. His expectation of a day of judgment gone, what sanction is there to restrain his iniquity ?

“Temples of *reason* will succeed temples of superstition.” It may not be amiss to consider the import of the term *reason*, so often misapplied by the author. His

reason tells him to renounce christianity ; mine to support it. He may call mine weak, I may term his so. Here we are at variance. To whom must we appeal for a standard ? who must be the common judge ? the majority of mankind. But the majority of those to whom the christian system has been revealed, are christians, notwithstanding the attacks of infidels for several centuries past. Reason, as it has been used, is a vague and indefinite term ; every man's fancy is his reason, and according to that he must believe. Hence a variety of different modes of worship must be established. Hence we see the necessity of revelation, in order to know and follow the true God, and obey his will. The age of reason would be the age of contradiction ; and continual disputes would arise. These temples of reason, so much desired by the author, would contain as many doctrines, as the confusion of tongues did languages at the tower of Babel. Each philosopher would sport his own ideas, and change them as often as his experience, or whim, or fancy dictated. We should not know what to believe, or how to believe. Few instances would occur of a *P. ine* and an *Examiner* concurring. Temples of reason would soon become temples of confusion.

I now bring my remarks to a close : the fame of the pamphlet, on which I have been alluding, is built upon the overthrow of those who could not stand

Had the author turned his attention to the evidences of christianity, instead of examining the arguments of its weak defenders, he would have found a harder task. As it is, he has succeeded partially, without any merit, in misemploying his powers to overcome light and unsubstantial reasoning. Before I conclude, let me give him some words of advice—never to attack that which he does not understand—never to copy passages from other authors, and foster them on the world as his own—to study logical argument before he engages again in polemical controversy; but, above all, to be a little more conversant in spelling and composing his mother-tongue.

Until something like argument appears in favor of deism, I shall continue a christian. In ail that has lately been said nothing new appears. It consists of a repetition of old arguments, repeatedly refuted. Let every one examine for himself, and he will find, after the most mature reflection, that the only truest happiness consists in the christian system; that solid—that unalloyed happiness, which can support mankind, even in the moments of trying distress. Let man look up to his God, and place a confidence in his promises, and he will never have reason to say, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!”

The concluding words of the author's pamphlet, are predictive of its success—*ga ira*. It shall fall: deism

will be the speculation of a day existing only in visionary brains : it must fall, and the pure and holy religion of Christ will remain triumphant. Its scoffers and revilers, I sincerely hope, may meet with more mercy, than they have reason to expect.

F I N I S.

---

## E R R A T A.

PAGE 5, line 8, for *reason*, read *reasons*.

— 6, line 10, for *insultingly tells*, read *insults our reason by telling*.

— 7, line 4, after *si disant*, dele ,

— 16, line 16, for *historial*, read *historical*.

— 17, line 4, after *deity*, dele ,

— 18, line 25, for *to and*, read *and to*.

— 23, line 9, after *predict*, dele “

— 25, line 20, note, for *intend*, read *intended*.

— 26, line 14, for *deist*, read *deist*.

— 27, line 16, after *relate*, add *to*.

— 28, line 16, for *on*, read *to*.

line 25, after *which*, dele ,

— 33, line 12, after *himself*, insert \* and at the bottom

a note, read, *History informs us the real reason of this prediction : the pretended prophet had once been nearly surprised in his camp, while his followers were under the domination of Bacchus ; wine was prohibited, to prevent a similar danger.*

*JUST PUBLISHED BY*  
L. WAYLAND, No. 151, Water-Street,  
**THE EXAMINERS EXAMINED ;**  
BEING A  
*DEFENCE of the AGE of REASON,*  
PRICE 2s. 6d. in MARBLE.

A L S O,  
**D U N N ' S S E R M O N,**  
Before the New-York Society, for the Information and  
Assistance of Persons Emigrating from Foreign  
Countries—price 1s. 6d.

L I K E W I S E,  
**T H E T R I A L S**  
Of Watt and Downie, Gerald, Muir, Walker, &c. for  
Treason and Seditious.