

1810.

A  
VINDICATION  
OF THE  
DIVINE INSPIRATION  
OF  
THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,  
AND THE DOCTRINES CONTAINED IN THEM,  
IN ANSWER TO  
MR. PAINE'S AGE OF REASON.

*Be ready always to give an answer to every man, that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*  
1 Peter iii. 15.

*For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?* 1 Sam. xvii. 26.



THIRD EDITION.

## *Preface to the Second Edition.*

A CONSIDERABLE change seems to have taken place in the minds of numbers, respecting *The Age of Reason*, and its celebrated author, since the first publication of this answer: yet it may be feared that infidelity and scepticism are not proportionably decreased. Perhaps the enemies of revelation have even established themselves on more tenable ground; and, by conceding that the books of the Old and New Testament are *authentick records*, they derive some advantage in denying that they are *divinely inspired*: but if this point be maintained, the rest is of comparatively small moment; for we still want an *authoritative standard of faith and practice*. It was on this ground therefore, that the author ventured to meet the Goliath of modern infidelity: and as he has sufficient evidence that his answer has not been wholly unsuccessful, he was not willing it should be out of print in Britain: as it has been printed and circulated on the other side of the Atlantick.

It seemed, however, unnecessary to take up the reader's time, in exposing the ignorance, errors, or misrepresentations of Mr. P. or in answering such *sophisms*, as he alone would have advanced. Some passages therefore are retrenched, in order to render the answers to plausible objections more nervous, by bringing them nearer together, and in some instances enlarging on them.

The author has also bestowed considerable pains, in making the whole more instructive and convincing to the serious enquirer. He hopes therefore, that the work is rendered more suitable to the case of those, who, without having read *The Age of Reason*, are yet perplexed with difficulties concerning the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, and wish to have their objections fairly considered, their arguments answered, and their doubts removed.

## PREFACE.

In respect of Mr. P.'s work, it may be proper to observe, that it by no means accords to its title. *The Age of Reason*, is far more replete with wit and rhetorick, than with sober discussion and solid argument. It is in fact an attempt to reduce to practice Lord Shaftsbury's famous maxim that *ridicule is the test of truth*; except that scurrility and acrimony frequently predominate. It is easy to answer Mr. P.'s reasoning: but his *confident assertions, vehement declamations, and smart repartees, are very imposing*. Every reader should therefore pause from time to time; and when he has been carried away by the Author's popular eloquence and wit; he should seriously ask himself, What *argument* does all this contain?

Hitherto the human race has, in one way or other, been generally destitute of true religion; and that author must be very sanguine, who expects to produce a sudden revolution. There is however no fear, 'lest the Bible should fall,' as Mr. P. seems to predict; for it has stood many far more formidable assaults, and will survive every opponent: but doubtless numbers will fall and perish, by means of the publications of infidels: and on the other hand a few individuals may be preserved or recovered by every effort to counteract them; and this may suffice to stimulate our exertions.

When Mr. P. thought himself near death, he rejoiced that he had published the first part of *The Age of Reason*. This indeed proved *the sincerity of his enmity to the Bible*: but should a christian adduce a circumstance of this kind as a *proof that his principles were true*, he would, not without reason, be counted an *enthusiast*.

Though *priests* be not allowed to pay the same regard to their credit, interest, or even subsistence, which all other men do without censure: yet, so long as they believe the Bible to be the word of God, they are bound in conscience to defend it; and why should they not be as much authorized, and as competent, to write on religion, and in defence of it, as other men are concerning their several professions?

Mr. P. professes to draw all his arguments against the Scriptures from the Scriptures themselves: yet his quotations



## PREFACE.

from ancient and modern enemies to christianity prove, that he would gladly have employed other weapons, had he known where to have found any that suited his purpose. But men of *greater learning and application* than he, are here at a loss: for the more the subject is calmly and solidly investigated, the fuller will be the proof, that “ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY  
“INSPIRATION OF GOD; and is profitable for doctrine, for re-  
“proof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that  
“the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto  
“all good works.”

# VINDICATION, &c.

## BOOK I.

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### CHAP. I.

#### THE BOOKS OF MOSES.

**MR. PAINE** undertakes to *demonstrate*, that Moses did not write those books which are ascribed to him; and consequently that they are destitute of authority. They would not, however, be destitute of authority, though it were known that Moses did not write them: for they may be authentick records, even if penned by another author. Yet I am far from conceding this point: and having answered other objections, I shall give my reasons for believing, both that Moses wrote these books, and that he wrote them *under the immediate superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit*.

The arguments by which Mr. P. endeavours to overturn the authority of these ancient records, are of two sorts: some more directly tend to shew, that Moses could not be the author of them; and others to prove them unworthy of God, and thus to fix a charge

of imposture on the writer, for delivering his doctrines and commands in the name of the Lord.—I shall begin with the former.

I. It is alledged, that Moses could not be the author; because the writer generally speaks *in the third person*. But what weight is there in this argument? Xenophon and Cæsar, admired writers among the Greeks and Romans, do the same when recording *their own actions*: and no scholar ever questioned the authenticity of their works on that account.—In Deuteronomy, however, Moses speaks principally *in the first person*; and Mr. P. finds great confusion in the arrangement of that book, and says it is *dramatical*.\* Whereas it is obvious, that the historian *records facts in the third person*, and *delivers exhortations in the first*: and the changes of person are only pauses of the speaker, giving an account of the occasion on which each speech was delivered, and of some coincident circumstances. Mr. P. must therefore have strange ideas of the *drama*; if he applies that term to a single speaker addressing the same audience, at different times, almost in the manner of a modern preacher!

No accurate student of the Bible needs to be informed, that the city *Laish* did not receive the name of *Dan*, till long after the death of Moses.† Yet it would be difficult to prove that no such place as *Dan* existed in the days of Abraham, in whose history that name occurs:‡ *Dan* signifies *judgment*: and perhaps

\* P. li. p. 7, 8.

† Judg. xviii. 29.

‡ P. ii. p. 10—12. Gen. xiv. 14.

a city in those parts might be so called, because some person was stationed there to administer justice. Admitting however that Laish was meant; must we thence infer that Moses did not write the book of Genesis? Some transcriber, in after times, knowing that *Laish* was then commonly called *Dan*, might insert this name, as a note in a parenthesis, to render the history more intelligible: and this note might afterwards be continued instead of the text; either by mistake, or with the same intent for which it was inserted. Arguments must be very scarce with infidels; when this single word is brought forward with great parade and confidence, as if it contained a full demonstration, that the books of Moses were anonymous impostures!

It may perhaps be proper to inform some readers, that the *Bible*, and the *Bible-chronology* are entirely distinct: we contend that the former is the infallible word of God; we allow ~~the~~ the latter to be the fallible calculations of learned men.\*

No doubt some parts of the thirty-sixth chapter of Genesis were inserted long after the death of Moses.† The compiler of the books of Chronicles abridged several genealogies from Genesis; and he continued the list of names far beyond the times of Moses, in the latter part of the first chapter. In consequence, probably, some transcriber put these additions, to the genealogies in the thirty-sixth of Genesis, where they have stood to this day. Studious men have always been aware of the difficulty, and have attempted to

\* P. ii. p. 10.

† P. ii. p. 12—14.

obviate it: and the *Age of Reason* has not shewn that any new solution is wanted.

The assiduity of infidels may perhaps hereafter discover a few more instances of the same kind: but instead of wondering, that such trivial variations have taken place in these ancient records; we may be astonished, they have been so well preserved, that the most acute criticks can discover no alteration of any importance to our faith and practice.

As king Zedekiah is spoken of in the second book of Chronicles, Mr. P. (taking it for granted that these books were written before the book of Genesis because the verses above mentioned were taken from the first book,) concludes that Genesis was not extant till after the captivity; and that *the first book* in the Bible was written three hundred years after Homer's Iliad.\* He must mean the *first book in order*, not the most *ancient book*: for he allows David and Solomon to have written some part of the works ascribed to them.

But will any man seriously contend, on such slight grounds, that the books of Moses were penned after the captivity: when the whole religious system and civil polity of the Jews, for nearly one thousand years before, had been rested on those books; and all their other writers perpetually referred to them; as it is manifest from all the histories, Psalms, and prophecies of the Old Testament?

In fact, the line of David is in these books brought

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\* P. i. p. 32, 33.

down four generations lower than the time of Zerubabel:\* and if this too were written before the books of Moses; the Jews had not a written law till within about four hundred years before Christ! But at that time, the whole nation, by some unaccountable infatuation, was led to receive the works of an anonymous impostor as sacred books, which they and their fathers had always possessed, read, and obeyed, for above one thousand years; or at least, to allow that they had always suffered severe punishment, whenever they disregarded or disobeyed them!

Mr. P. does not seem to have made up his mind, as to the period, when he should allow the Jews to have been in actual possession of the books of Moses.† Such an explicit declaration would indeed subvert his cause: for it would be far easier to meet a direct charge, than vague and varying insinuations on the subject.

Moses lived till the Israelites had got possession of the countries, which had been governed by Sihon and Og, and he died on the borders of Canaan. Surely then he might write, that “the children of Israel did “eat manna till they came to a land inhabited;—they “did eat manna till they came to the borders of “Canaan.”‡

The historian remarks, that “the man Moses was “meek above all men which were upon the face of “the earth.” ‘Therefore,’ says Mr. P. ‘Moses could ‘not be the writer; for to boast of meekness is the reverse of humility, and a lie in sentiment.’—But

\* 1 Chron. iii.

† P. ii p. 32, 33.

‡ Numb. xii.

*meekness* in this connexion is opposed to an *irascible disposition*; and the meekness of Moses is mentioned as an aggravation of the offence committed by Aaron and Miriam, and as a reason of the Lord's interposition to plead his cause against them.\* To speak truth of ourselves is not always vain-glorious boasting; nay, there are occasions, on which a man may mention his own meekness and gentleness in consistency with the deepest humility. Our Lord himself said "I am meek" and lowly in heart:" and, though infidels, who seem to think themselves exclusively warranted to proclaim their own virtues, may despise this remark; yet christians will reverence the example, and not wonder that Moses, having impartially recorded his own faults, should be led by the Holy Spirit to mention this excellency of his character.—Some indeed think, that a *blameable lenity* was intended, and others seem to admit that the words were inserted by another hand: but I see not the least occasion to have recourse to such suppositions; for the readiness with which Moses forgave the offenders, and the earnestness with which he prayed for Miriam, illustrate the account given of his unassuming and gentle disposition.

Mr. P. seems to think it self-evident, that all accounts of giants must be fabulous; and consequently *that the Bible is a fable*.† But men are now sometimes seen considerably above eight feet high, and proportionably large; authentick histories mention those of a still greater size: and a well-attested relation,

\* Exod. xvi. 35.

† P. ii. p. 17.

of men ten or twelve feet high, would not be incredible; for none of our reasoning can shew this to be impossible.—A bedstead, fifteen or sixteen feet long, must have been needlessly long, and the disproportion must be ascribed to the ostentation of the king of Bashan.\*—Even if Rabbah were never taken till the days of David, which cannot be proved: yet Moses might know, that the Ammonites had seized upon the bedstead of Og, or bought it of the Israelites, and reserved it as a curiosity in their capital city. But suppose the passage in question were added as a note many years afterwar's; how does this invalidate the authenticity of the books of Moses?

The fourth commandment, as it stands in the fifth of Deuteronomy, varies from the original law written in the twentieth of Exodus: hence it is inferred that the writer of these books received his materials from tradition, or invented them himself.† But impostors do not admit such *apparent* inconsistencies, which may at all times be avoided with very little trouble: so that they are rather proofs of the writer's conscious integrity. In fact, Moses, when delivering a most impressive and pathetick exhortation, did not confine himself to the words which he had recorded as an historian. The people very well knew the original ground for hallowing the sabbath, in honour of the Creator: and he thought himself at liberty, to remind them of their obligations to JEHOVAH their Redeemer from Egyptian bondage, and of the humanity due to their

\* Deut. iii. 11.

† P. ii. p. 2.



bond servants: for this constituted another important reason for hallowing the sabbath. *Distinct* motives are not necessarily *inconsistent*. Mr. P. in writing his several pamphlets, might both aim to free mankind from *vulgar prejudices*, and to obtain celebrity for himself; and he might deem it proper on some occasions to insist on the one motive, and in different circumstances to bring forward the other, without being justly chargeable with inconsistency or self-contradiction.

Mr. P. cannot suppose any christian believes that Moses wrote the account of his own death and burial; and if he thinks, that none have attempted to account for the circumstance, of these events being recorded in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, his information must be very defective! Almost any of those expositors, against whom he declaims, though he certainly never consulted them, would have shewn him that he has made no new discoveries, and that the difficulty is far from insuperable.—Perhaps Joshua or Eleazar added this chapter, or it was taken from the authentick records of the nation at a later period; when the words, “no man knoweth his sepulchre to this day,” were evidently subjoined.—The preceding history plainly implies, that Moses should *die*;\* and the concluding chapter records the accomplishment of these intimations. “Moses died—according to the word of the Lord, and he buried him.” Mr. P. cannot find the antecedent to *he* in this passage!!!†—If it be asked,

\* Numb. xxvii. 13. Deut. iv. 21, 22. xxxi. 14. 16. 27. xxxii. 50.

† Deut. xxxiv. 5, 6.

how it was known that the Lord buried Moses? I answer, by immediate revelation; and a good reason may be assigned, why he should thus be buried: namely, lest the Israelites should idolize his relicks, as they did the brazen serpent, or as papists do the bones of the saints.

II. We now proceed to consider objections of another nature, and far more important; as being intended to prove the books of Moses in all respects unworthy of God.—Mr. P.\* finds great fault with the history of the creation. ‘It begins abruptly; it is nobody that speaks; it is nobody that hears; it is addressed to nobody; it has neither first, nor second, nor third person.’ Does this passage contain either *reason* or common sense? The sacred writer first addresses the reader, and then he introduces the Creator speaking to the chaos, which promptly obeys his omnipotent commands. And in what does this differ from the manner of other historians except in simplicity and sublimity? For even *infidels* of taste will doubtless coincide with the *pagan* Longinus, in admiring the history of the creation as inimitably beautiful, after all Mr. P.’s endeavours to ridicule it: and we need but compare it with the whimsical absurdities of the other *world-makers* whom he mentions, to learn the difference between man’s vain imaginations and the sure testimony of God.

Mr. P. attempts to *burlesque* the history of the fall, in subserviency to his grand design.† Let the serious

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\* P. i. p. 15.

† P. i. p. 10, 11. 46. P. ii. 14.

reader however determine, whether the sacred writers borrowed their doctrine concerning the devil and his angels from pagan mythology; or whether these fables were distorted traditions concerning the fall of angels, decorated by the ingenuity of the poets.—The notion of Satan *warring* against the Almighty, who defeated him, is grounded on a passage in the Revelation of John;\* which may *refer* to the fall of angels, and the opposition of fallen angels to the kingdom of Christ; but which directly *predicts* other events.—No doubt this book was written long after the fables of Jupiter and the giants, of Jupiter's casting Vulcan out of heaven, and of Pluto's reigning in Tartarus, were invented; but the doctrine of *fallen angels* was published in the Old Testament, many centuries before the date of these fables, and in all probability was known by tradition from the beginning.

The doctrine of Scripture on this subject must here be stated.—God created multitudes of angels, and endued them with noble powers and faculties: but, as they were moral and accountable agents, some of them revolted from their Creator, incurred his displeasure, lost the divine image of holiness, became malignant and desperate, and, as determined enemies, employed all their abilities in attempting to counteract his plans and to ruin his other creatures. Though “cast down  
“to hell, and bound in chains of darkness to the  
“judgment of the great day,” so that it is impossible for them to escape eternal condemnation; yet they are

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\* Rev. xii. 7, 8.

permitted, under certain limitations, for a season, to shew their power and malice; as wicked men practise and prosper for a time.—Being united in one kingdom, under Satan or the Devil, every thing they do is frequently attributed to their leader; as generals are said to do those things, which they perform by the troops under their command: so that *omnipotence* or *omnipresence* is no more ascribed personally to the devil, than to Alexander or Cæsar. It is therefore a direct slander to affirm that ‘christian divines give ‘him a power equally great, or even greater, than they ‘ascribe to the Almighty.’ The sacred writers never represent Satan, as ‘defeating the power and wisdom ‘of God:’ but as *permitted* to try and prevail against our first parents, to tempt their posterity, and to maintain his influence over wicked men, his *willing* servants; and even this will be over-ruled to the brighter display of the Lord’s glory, the greater advantage of all his friends, and the deeper confusion of Satan and his adherents.

The Lord created the parents of our race in his *own image*: but though perfectly holy, they were not unchangeable; for immutability is an incommunicable divine perfection. As a test of their obedience, they were forbidden to eat of the fruit of one tree, and warned that in the day they ate of it they should surely die. The tempter however, concealing himself in the serpent, which is represented to have been a most beautiful and sagacious animal before this transaction, prevailed by his insinuations on Eve, and by her on Adam, presumptuously to violate this single easy restriction. Immediately they both became mortal, and

their future lives resembled a lingering execution. Their *spiritual life*, or *the holy image of God*, and capacity for happiness in his service and favour, was also extinct; and they became prone to sin, like the tempter to whom they had listened. And as they were created with immortal souls; the guilt they had contracted, with the crimes which they would be continually adding, must have ensured their final misery, had not mercy been vouchsafed through the promised Seed of the woman.

Nothing is easier than ridicule, to a man of a lively imagination, who is not restrained by any regard to piety or decorum. This transaction may be called, ‘a *tete-a-tete* between the serpent and the woman:’ ‘the woman *in her longing* eating an apple:’ ‘the snake persuading her to eat an apple: and the eating of that apple damning all mankind.’ But what is there in all this, except profaneness? Might not the Creator require some test of obedience and gratitude from his favoured creature, and some condition of further blessings? Could any thing be more easy, than this single instance of self-denial among a profusion of delights? And was not wilful and presumptuous disobedience, from unbelief, hard thoughts of God, sensual concupiscence, and ambition of independence, a most flagrant act of rebellion and ingratitude? For who can deny, that the easier the command, the more atrocious the violation of it? They, who vindicate or palliate such conduct, must have a very feeble sense of their obligations to God, whatever they argue about moral obligations among men.

But do all mankind deserve damnation for Adam’s sin? Instead of answering such a bold interrogation,

I would only say, “Nay but, O man, who art thou  
“that repliest against God?” It is undeniable, that  
pain, sorrow, and death exist, and that men are prone  
to wickedness in every age and country. The great-  
est philosophers can give no satisfactory account, how  
the world was brought into its present deplorable con-  
dition; and the scriptural narration is at least as rea-  
sonable as any hitherto devised. Now if Adam by trans-  
gression became sinful and mortal, his whole posterity  
must fall *in* and *with* him; for every creature propa-  
gates its own nature and all its essential properties.  
Accordingly children are liable to pain, sickness, and  
death; and the state of the world accords exactly to  
the sentence denounced on Adam.\* Children like-  
wise shew precisely the same propensities to pride,  
envy, sensuality, and other corrupt passions, as appear  
more strongly marked in grown persons. If then all  
men actually sin and deserve punishment, if they be  
incapable of a holy felicity in the enjoyment of God,  
and if there be a future state of righteous retribution:  
they must be condemned *in consequence* of Adam’s  
sin, unless mercy and grace deliver them. Would it  
not then better become us to leave these matters to a  
world of clearer light, and to employ ourselves in  
seeking mercy, and victory over our evil propensities,  
or in alleviating the miseries of mankind; than in dis-  
puting about what we do not understand, and ridi-  
culing what we cannot disprove? Could it even be *de-*  
*monstrated*, that the Mosaick account of the fall were

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\* Gen. iii. 16—19.

false; the wickedness and misery of our race would not be in the least diminished, and unrepented sin would surely expose men to the wrath of God. As to *infants* who die without actually transgressing the divine law; we are not bound to determine any thing about them, but may safely leave them in the hands of infinite justice and mercy.

The circumstance of Eve's not expressing wonder at the serpent's speaking, may be accounted for by the brevity of the narrative, and the extraordinary sagacity before observed in that animal; and by supposing with great probability, that Satan ascribed this gift bestowed on the serpent, to the salutary tendency of the forbidden fruit.

Mr. P. can clearly see the doctrine of *evil spirits* in the scriptures: and so far he is right. But as Satan's kingdom is the power of darkness, and as he is most successful when least suspected: it is not impossible but Mr. P. may be indebted for many of his brilliant thoughts to Satan's suggestions, especially 'such as 'bolt into the mind of their own accord;'\* and that he may abundantly repay his obligations, even while he denies Satan's existence, by endeavouring to set men against the religion of Him, who "was manifested to destroy the works of the devil."

'Take away from Genesis,' says Mr. P. 'the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the 'strange belief that it is the word of God hath stood; 'and nothing remains but an anonymous book of sto-

‘ries—absurdities, or—downright lies. The story of  
 ‘Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his ark, drop  
 ‘to a level with the Arabian tales, without the merit  
 ‘of being entertaining; and the account of men living  
 ‘to eight or nine hundred years becomes as fabulous  
 ‘as the immortality of the giants.’—But is it not more  
 wonderful, that God should at all destroy the work of  
 his own hands, than that he should preserve his crea-  
 tures for many hundred years?—Many traditions  
 among the heathen confirm the account of the deluge,  
 and learned men have discerned traces of it all over  
 the earth.—The opinion of the divine inspiration of  
 the book of Genesis is not supported, *only* or *princi-*  
*pally*, by the opinion that Moses wrote it, but rests on  
 other evidence.—This despised book contains the  
 most satisfactory account of the creation, the entrance  
 of sin, the origin of the nations dispersed through the  
 earth, and the history of the remote ages, at this day  
 extant in the world: with many most extraordinary  
 prophecies, fulfilling at this day. And the story of  
 Joseph, in the opinion of most competent judges, is  
 the most pathetick and interesting that ever was re-  
 lated!

Mr. P. has given a fair specimen of his *candour*  
 and *caution*, in his observations on the conduct of  
 Moses and the Israelites, respecting the Midianitish  
 women and children.—The Lord prohibited the Is-  
 raelites to assault or distress the Moabites and Am-  
 monites, with whom the Midianites were intimately  
 connected: \* yet Balak, king of Moab, when they ap-

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\* Deut. ii. 9—13.



proached his land, instead of sending an ambassador to desire peace, or openly making war upon them, sent for Balaam to curse them. When that project did not answer, he followed Balaam's counsel, and, by means of the Midianitish women, seduced the Israelites into fornication and then into idolatry, in order that they might provoke the Lord to curse them. In this diabolical design he so far succeeded, that twenty four thousand of them were cut off by divine judgments in one day. Moses was therefore commanded to avenge Israel, on the Midianites, who seem to have been most criminal: and twelve thousand Israelites were sent into the country of Moab and Midian, who were completely successful and did not so much as lose a single man. Mr. P. calls this a *plundering excursion*, though, even if Moses had acted by his own authority, the war would have been completely justifiable.

But after the return of the detachment with the spoil and prisoners, Moses ordered all the grown women to be put to death; and this excites most dreadful exclamations. The *sword of war* indeed should distinguish between armed opponents and those who make no resistance: but the *sword of justice* knows no such distinction. Deliberate insidious temptation to sin must appear, to all wise and virtuous men, the greatest of injuries. The sex of the culprit does not in other cases excuse guilt or exempt from punishment: and if the women, in defiance of modesty and decency, openly suffered themselves to be hired by the princes and priests of Baal, to become prostitutes to the Israelites, in order to promote idolatry, and to

bring guilt and wrath upon the worshippers of JEHOVAH; was it meet the tempters should escape with impunity, while the tempted were severely punished? The project of thus seducing Israel was reasonably adjudged the national sin of Midian and Moab: and was it proper the principal criminals should escape? Moses could not possibly know the individual transgressors; and the Lord commonly involves many in publick calamities who are not equally criminal: by his orders therefore the virgins were mercifully spared, and the rest were righteously punished.

But Mr. P. says, that an order was given to *debauch the daughters*, as well as to slay the mothers; and he calculates that thirty two thousand were thus consigned to debauchery!—If he could *prove* this, he would have an argument against the divine authority of the books of Moses, far more cogent than any he has hitherto produced: for a holy God may justly condemn transgressors to death, but he cannot command them to violate his own righteous laws.—But where did Mr. P. learn, that the Israelites were even *allowed* to debauch their female slaves? In fact the law of Moses did not permit a man to *marry* a captive, without many delays and previous formalities: and if afterwards he divorced her, he was bound to set her at liberty, “because he had humbled her.”\* And it is most certain that the passage referred to, compared with other Scriptures, implies nothing about *debauching* the female children, or even taking them as con-

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\* Deut. xxi. 10—14.

cubines; but merely of retaining them as slaves, educating them in their families, employing them in domestick services; and either incorporating them by marriage as proselytes with the Israelites, or marrying them to their servants.

It cannot, however, be denied, that the male children, as well as the grown women, were consigned to the slaughter: and was not this very dreadful? Certainly; and wicked too, if Moses did it of his own mind, and to gratify his own passions. But this coincides with another subject, which I shall here, once for all, fully consider: namely, the orders given and executed respecting the extirpation of the Canaanites and Amalekites.

Every one acquainted with logick must perceive, that all who make these orders an objection to the divine original of the Old Testament, argue completely in a circle, and beg the question. They *assume it as self-evident*, that the Lord could never command Moses or Joshua to destroy these nations: they next execrate them for doing such things without authority: and thence they infer that God never spake to mankind by such wicked persons. But should they not first of all *prove*, that the Judge of the world could not *justly* give these orders? Till this be done, all their inferences from a false or disputed principle must be false or disputable; and all their declamations, mere rhetorical arts of imposing on the understanding by appealing to the passions.

A judge may condemn a criminal to die, and an executioner may take away his life, without murder, or even injustice: yet if an unauthorized person should

put him to death, he would be a murderer.—Man is surely accountable to his Maker; wickedness merits punishment: and the supreme Judge may inflict *deserved* punishment in what manner he sees good. According to the Scripture, death is the execution of a righteous judgment denounced against men, as transgressors of the divine law: and a more rational account of our maladies and miseries, and of the triumph of death over the whole human species, has not yet been given. If then sinners die, because God inflicts death as a part of their merited punishment: the *justice* is precisely the same, whether the sword or disease fulfil the divine mandate. The Canaanites were sinners against the Lord exceedingly, and had filled up the measure of their crimes; who then will say, that He might not *justly* have destroyed them by pestilence, deluges, and earthquakes? Who will contend, that it would have been wicked in an angel to have executed the Creator's commission in cutting them off, as the army of Sennacherib was slain? And why might not the Lord select a nation, and, having sealed their commission by publick miracles, require them to extirpate an abominable race of men from the face of the earth?

The same objection might be made, with equal validity, though not so plausibly, against all the ways, by which God inflicts death upon mankind: We must therefore, either deny that God inflicts diseases and death, and by a species of practical atheism resolve every thing into chance or necessity; or blaspheme God as cruel and unjust; or else allow that he may execute criminals in what way he sees good. The di-

vine commission to Moses and Joshua must indeed be proved by other arguments: but these considerations completely invalidate *the objection*, and demonstrate that God might *justly* give them such orders. If it be urged that famines, earthquakes, and pestilences, though equally destructive, do not so much contradict men's notions of God; it may be answered, that "the world by wisdom knew not God;" and pagan deities, as characterized by Greek and Roman authors, prove men's notions in this respect too fallible and absurd, to be in the least depended on.

' But wherein could crying or smiling infants offend? To read without horror of their slaughter must undo every thing tender, sympathizing, or benevolent in our nature: and the sacrifice I must make to believe the Bible would be sufficient *to determine my choice.*'—*Unbelief* is then *the effect of choice*, not of unavoidable error or ignorance. But who can read of the ravages made by a conflagration, the miseries of famine and pestilence, or the desolations of an earthquake, without horror? Yet who disbelieves a well attested narrative of such events on that account? Or who, but an atheist, denies the justice of God in them?—The *execution of criminals* is calculated to excite horror, and not to gratify the finer feelings of benevolence: yet no declamation will convince a sober man that they are in all cases unnecessary, or that all concerned in them are sanguinary monster.—The aversion men feel to the scriptural history in this respect, above all other records of misery and bloodshed, arises from its opposition to the self-flattery of the human heart: for these awful executions militate

against their palliating notions concerning the evil of sin, and the demerit of despising and rebelling against God.

No doubt every humane heart revolts from the idea of slaughtering infants: yet infants die by thousands all over the world, with unspeakably more anguish, than a speedy undreaded death by the sword would occasion; and has not God the issues of life and death? Many a man who inherits an impaired estate, or a gouty constitution, sensibly feels, that children suffer in consequence of the crimes committed by their parents. Thus parents are punished in their children: and if the Lord sees good to prepare the souls of dying infants for heaven, and to receive them to himself; though the smiling or crying babes were supposed to have been as spotless as angels, they will not charge God with injustice or cruelty on account of their premature death, let who will on earth presume to arraign his conduct. Set aside the doctrine of original sin, allow pain and death to be the appointment of God, and deny the future happiness of infants dying without actual transgression; and I could declaim against the ordinary conduct of providence in this respect, with as much vehemence, and at least as much plausibility, as Mr. P. does against the Bible; had I no more reverence for the *works*, than he has for the *word* of God.

But if some great and important ends were answered, by the peculiar method in which the Lord punished the nations of Canaan: then the objection is not only removed; but the divine wisdom is illustrated, and a presumptive argument afforded that these books

are a revelation from God.—Who can deny that the world has been full of atrocious crimes in every age? Or who will say, that it does not become the Ruler of the universe to take effectual methods for the restraint of man's wickedness? If then the Canaanites were addicted to abominable idolatries and detestable lusts: if their altars reeked with human sacrifices, and their religious worship was connected with the most shameless impurities: it must have been peculiarly worthy of God, to inflict vengeance on them in a way as extraordinary as their crimes had been, and suited to produce durable and extensive effects on the surrounding nations. His powerful hand and awful justice, and the difference between Him and the idols of the heathen, would be rendered far more conspicuous in punishing them by the sword of his worshippers, than if he had desolated the land by earthquakes and inundations: for these are commonly ascribed to natural causes, and God is forgotten even in the midst of them. Thus the affecting solemnities of a *publick execution* are generally deemed more conducive to the ends of good government, than the *concealed punishment* of a criminal. But especially these transactions were calculated to warn the Israelites themselves, against the abominations which they were commissioned to punish: and if they did not fully answer that purpose, we must impute it to the strength of human depravity. The whole history throws immense light on the plan of divine government: it shews the malignity of sin, and proves that it will be punished far more severely than we naturally imagine: it teaches all, who reverence the Bible, to fear the wrath of God

and seek his mercy: and the beneficial effects of these temporary miseries, on all succeeding ages and nations, exceed all calculation; while the whole number, that perished, bears no more proportion to the vast multitudes who have profited by their doom, than the few criminals who suffer under the mildest government, do to the nation, that is thus preserved in peace and good order.

“The earth is the LORD’s and the fulness of it.” Surely, then, he had a right to bestow that proportion of it on his worshippers, which the Canaanites had forfeited by their crimes! The Israelites did not come by stealth to take possession of it; but had long before avowed their purpose, and the grant of it which they had received from JEHOVAH.

Those of the inhabitants who submitted were treated with clemency: and from these examples we may infer, that others might have been spared, if they had not hardened their hearts in impenitent defiance of God. Had the infants alone been preserved; they must either have been retained in the most rigorous bondage, or lived to perpetuate the bloody contest. The women were in general as criminal as the men; and if there were exceptions, the righteous Judge would discriminate properly in another world; though national judgments, however executed, make not these exact distinctions.

If Israel, by these severities, contracted a ferocious spirit, which they gratified on other occasions; they proportionably disregarded the law given them, which required love to neighbours, strangers, and enemies; and, the case of the devoted Canaanites excepted, pre-



scribed rules for war, at least as equitable and mild as those of any heathen nation.\* And it should be noted, that the just notions of modern times, and even those of infidels, respecting clemency towards enemies, originated not with the admired Greeks and Romans; but with christians, who learned them from the Scriptures: so that when christian princes were known in the world, more humane sentiments on these subjects soon began to be adopted.

The credit given to the Bible is often ascribed to the prejudices of education. But though an obscure individual, I feel impelled to declare, that I once was not much more disposed to believe the Scriptures than Mr. P.: and having got rid of the shackles of education, was much flattered by my emancipation and superior discernment. Yet nearly thirty years, employed in diligently investigating the evidences and contents of the Bible, have produced in me an unshaken assurance that it is the word of God.

The most remote shadow of a proof cannot be produced, that Moses carried on war under pretence of religion. He made no proselytes by the sword: and neither he, nor any other person mentioned with approbation in Scripture, made war on any neighbouring nation because they were idolaters. If any man pretend to draw the conduct of Moses, in the case of Midian, or of Joshua in that of the Canaanites, into precedent; let him work such miracles and produce such credentials as they did; till that be done, Mr. P.

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\* Numb. xx. 14—21. Deut. xx. 10—14.

has my free consent to pour fourth against him that torrent of indignant reproach, which he hath unjustly bestowed on some of the most excellent characters, that ever appeared in the world.

Mr. P. most virulently reprobates the law, which condemns the stubborn and rebellious son to be stoned;\* yet that law contained much wisdom and mercy under its apparent severity. The parents were the only prosecutors; and as both of them must concur, natural affection would effectually prevent the frequent execution of the penalty denounced: and indeed we do not read a single instance of the kind, in the whole subsequent history. If, however, such an extraordinary event at any time occurred; it could not fail to excite general attention, and to produce immense effects on the minds both of parents and children: so that the solemn execution of one incorrigible criminal would be a salutary warning to tens of thousands. The very existence of such a law would increase the authority of parents, and give energy to their admonitions; as well as fortify the minds of young persons against the enticements of bad company, and other temptations. Thus it would powerfully tend to *prevent wickedness*; the great end proposed by every wise legislator!

It would likewise be a perpetual monitor to parents, not improperly to indulge their children; to establish their authority by salutary correction in their tender years; to watch over them, and give them good instructions; to check the first buddings of vice, to set

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\* Deut. xxi. 18—21.

them a good example, and to pray for them without ceasing. These must have been the effects of this law, on all who duly attended to it: and we may learn similar lessons from the *spirit* of the statute, though it be now obsolete: for the Law-giver is unchangeable.

The prosecution was not allowed merely for *stubbornness*, but for *obstinate persevering rebellion against parental authority, contempt of correction, gluttony, and drunkenness*; crimes destructive to families and communities. These offences must be so fully proved, as to induce the elders to condemn and execute the criminal: and their authority would secure every innocent person against the hasty rage, or the deliberate malice, of those few parents, who were capable of such desperate wickedness as the murder of their own children.—This law therefore, so harmless and beneficial in its operations, yet so contrary to human policy, rather proves than invalidates the divine original of the book, in which it is contained: though it do not at all coincide with *modern notions*, which, rushing from one extreme to another, directly tend to dissolve all obligations to submission, either to human or divine authority.

Whether priests are fond of preaching from Deuteronomy or not, we know that our Lord answered all Satan's suggestions by quotations from it; and the tempter may therefore be supposed to have a peculiar dislike to this book. The heart-searching God alone can *know*, whether the *desire of tithes*, or the *love of souls*, excites the minister's diligence; but, after all Mr. P.'s ridicule of "the ox treading out the grain;"

such ministers, as answer the emblem of that most laborious, tractable, and useful animal, will certainly deserve, and need not to fear but they will receive, a suitable provision, while the Lord has work for them; whatever may become of tithes and establishments.

And now, what do all these objections against the books of Moses amount to, when stripped of the wit, ridicule, and declamation, with which they are exhibited? The writer generally speaks of himself in the third person: a very few instances occur, in which a trifling alteration has been made in the text, during a course of above three thousand years: an account of the death and burial of the author is subjoined: events are recorded, which seem to us improbable, because contrary to our general observation: actions were done, by the *command of God*, which *without that command* would have been unjust: and laws are given, which do not coincide with modern notions, concerning government and parental authority. These *frivolous objections* are called *demonstrations*; and the author supplies his want of argument, by declaiming against Moses, and against impostors and priests, with peculiar vehemence and acrimony!

It now remains to state briefly the grounds on which we maintain the divine superintending inspiration of Moses; as well as that he was the writer of the books that bare his name, excepting the very few passages which have been mentioned.—The books in question give plain intimations to that effect. “Moses  
“wrote all the words of the Lord:—and he took the  
“book of the covenant, and read in the audience of

“ the people.”\* “ And it came to pass, that when  
 “ Moses had made an end of writing the words of  
 “ this law in a book, *until they were finished*,—He  
 “ commanded the Levites, saying, take this book of  
 “ the law, and put it in the sides of the ark, that it may  
 “ be a witness against thee.”†—Reference to the law,  
*written* by Moses, is continually made in the subse-  
 quent books of Scripture. The testimony of all anti-  
 quity, Jews and pagans; with that of the whole chris-  
 tian church, and their avowed enemies the modern  
 Jews, concur in ascribing these books to Moses; and  
 even this testimony, from time immemorial, requires  
 something more forcible to invalidate it, than a few  
 stale objections which have been repeatedly answered.  
 How could such an unanimous opinion have prevail-  
 ed in the world, if there had been no foundation for  
 it! If it did not originate with the publication of these  
 books, at what time could it have been introduced?  
 Is it possible that the whole nation of Israel should  
 have been persuaded by an anonymous impostor, that  
 they had for ages past been governed by laws, and  
 conversant in histories, which they had never before  
 seen? If the rulers and a large majority, from selfish  
 motives had attempted such a barefaced imposition,  
 would not some opponents have risen up, and two  
 parties been formed?—However the minority had for  
 a time been run down at home, would not other ages  
 have heard of it? And if some received these books  
 as genuine, would not others have rejected them as

\* Exod. xxiv. 4—7.

† Deut. xxxi. 24—26.

spurious? Indeed it is too late for a man to attempt disproving any books having been written by the person whose name they have certainly born for above two thousand years, with almost the unanimous consent of all mankind.

The history contained in these books is confirmed by the most ancient records of the pagan world, and even by the fables of the poets, and has every mark of authenticity. The view given in them of the perfections, works, and government of God, is in all respects most rational and sublime; and as much excels all that pagans have written on those subjects, as the sun outshines a taper. The *moral* law, the sum of which is, "love God with all thy heart;" and love "thy neighbour as thyself," is perfectly "holy, just, and good;" but no Gentile ever gave such a delineation of man's duty. The *judicial* laws will be found wise, equitable, and beneficial, in proportion as they are considered attentively, and are well understood. The *ceremonial* institutions were not only ordinances of divine worship, and barriers against idolatry, but evident types and shadows of good things to come; and as such, a kind of prophecy, the exact accomplishment of which is a full proof of their divine original.

The miracles wrought by Moses were of such a nature, that they could not be counterfeited: millions, both of friends and enemies, were appealed to as eye witnesses: and if they had not been actually performed, by the person who wrote the books in which they are recorded; when and how could it have been possible to persuade the whole nation of Israel, that they

and their forefathers had always believed them? And if they were wrought by Moses, they prove both the authenticity and divine inspiration of his writings: for he continually declares that he spake, wrote, and acted by divine authority.

The prophecies contained in these books, which have been exactly fulfilled, since the same truth. Regardless of ridicule, I still venture to maintain, that the first promise, of the seed of the woman, is a most astonishing prediction; not only of the crucifixion and triumphs of Christ, but of the persecutions, supports, and victories of the church, in every age of the world. The prophecy of Noah, concerning the descendants of Canaan, has received a most wonderful accomplishment in the history of mankind to this present day. The blessings pronounced by Jacob on his sons were evident predictions, verified by the event; especially that of the sceptre not departing from Judah till Shiloh came. Balaam's predictions have been wonderfully fulfilled, especially in the dominion of the Macedonians and Romans over the countries once possessed by the Assyrians and Hebrews. And the state of the Jews to this day is prophetically described in two remarkable passages.\*

Finally the testimony of our Lord and his apostles, who always refer to these books, as written by Moses, and as the *scriptures*, the *oracles of God*, the *law of God*, fully confirms them both as genuine, and as divinely inspired; with all those who duly reverence

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\* Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii.

the testimony of Christ. So that every evidence, that proves the truth of christianity, confirms also the divine authority of the Old Testament in general, and of the books of Moses in particular.

And now. what are all Mr. P.'s boasted *demonstrations*, that these books are spurious; compared with this body of evidence, thus compendiously stated, that they are genuine and divine? If *his* cause had not more to recommend it to the hearts of ungodly men, than to the understandings of sober diligent enquirers; no believer need trouble himself to answer him: but all those (alas, how numerous are they!) who are not willing to part with their sins, and lead a godly life, wish to disbelieve the Scriptures, either wholly or in part; and I do not think, that any man ever thoroughly desired to part with all his sins, and to get rid of the Bible at the same time.



## CHAP. II.

*The Historical Books of the Old Testament.*

## JOSHUA.

IN prefacing this book some years since, I observed, that, ‘ It is not certain who was the penman:—but it ‘ is probable that the substance of it was written by ‘ Joshua: though several passages appear to have been ‘ added after his decease; perhaps by Phinehas, or ‘ some other person, who was employed in connect- ‘ ing the *memorials* that he left behind him.’\* The *book of Jasher* contained or constituted a part of these memorials: for it seems to have been a collection of records and poems, made at the time when the events happened.

No doubt part of the book of Joshua was written after his death, and that of the elders who outlived him: and if Samuel, or some later prophet, compiled the whole of it in its present form from the records of Israel, how does this deduct from its authenticity, or invalidate its divine authority?—It is certainly very ancient: and the person who compiled it, testifies that Joshua wrote some part of it in the book of the law of God, and also attests that the *written law* was extant in his days.† The book of Jasher was appealed

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\* Family-Bible.

† Josh. xxiii. 6. . xiv. 26.

to for the truth of the facts recorded in it; which sufficiently proves that such memorials existed and were well known, when it was published.—The Jews have in every age considered it as an authentick part of their Scriptures, and preserved it with most scrupulous care. Joshua is repeatedly mentioned with approbation in the New Testament: and the book is quoted in a manner which both authenticates the history, and honours it as the word of God:\* and thus it is proved to be authentick and divine, by all the evidence which establishes the New Testament.

Horace a man of great genius and good sense, published an ode, in which he gloried that his fame would be celebrated to the end of the world: and Mr. P. repeatedly speaks of his own fame as celebrated on both sides of the Atlantick: yet the book of Joshua must be rejected as spurious, because the writer speaking of Joshua says, that “his fame was noised through all that country!” The only reason of this conclusion seems to be, that Joshua referred all the glory to the LORD God of Israel.

Joshua, as commander of Israel, meditated an attack on Jericho; when one in human form, with a drawn sword in his hand, accosted him, declaring himself to be Captain of the LORD's host. Joshua could not but know who this was; for he knew whom he served as the leader of the armies of Israel: he therefore fell on his face and worshipped him, as one who waited to receive his orders. He was then direct-

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\* Josh. i. 5. Heb. xiii. 5.

ed, according to the customs of those times, “to loose his shoe from off his foot,” as Moses had done when JEHOVAH appeared to him in the bush; and he obeyed.—‘And what then?’ says Mr. P. ‘Nothing; here ends the story and the chapter too.’\*—Here ends the *chapter*, it is true, and the division of the chapters is here peculiarly injudicious; but who does not know that the division of the Bible into chapters and verses is comparatively a modern arrangement?—The *story*, however, proceeds. And the reader is first informed of the situation of Jericho: then the Captain of the Lord’s host, now called JEHOVAH, promises to deliver Jericho into Joshua’s hands, and gives him directions in what manner to conduct the assault: and Joshua following those directions, is completely successful.† The appearance of JEHOVAH *in human form* is not particular to this place:‡ and Mr. P. is not mistaken, in condemning as idolatry, the honour on this occasion paid to him who appeared as man, if he were not also God. I shall, however, leave the Socinians to answer this on their principles; for such passages create no difficulties to those, who believe the doctrines of the Trinity, and of Christ’s eternal Deity.

It might have been expected that this champion of infidelity would ridicule the miracle of the sun standing still at the command of Joshua: but wit and humour are not arguments; and a descant on the sublime and the ridiculous does not prove the thing im-

\* Note, Part ii. p. 34, 35.

† Josh. v. 13—15. vi.

‡ Gen. xviii. xxxi. xxxv. 24—30. Hos. xii. 3—5. John i. 1. 8.

possible. The actual suspension of the earth's diurnal motion would be infinitely easier to omnipotence, than stopping a ship under sail would be to the mariners: and if done gradually, it would occasion no more difference to the inhabitants. We cannot reasonably expect that authentick pagan history should confirm such an event; but some traces of it are supposed discoverable in Herodotus: and the fable of Phaeton, for one day driving the chariot of the sun, with the confusion which he occasioned, seems a plain intimation, that one day had occurred, unlike all that had preceded or followed it. The suspension of the earth's diurnal motion must make the moon also *appear* to stand still, if visible as it often is in the day-time: and if Joshua had been introduced, speaking in the language of the Newtonian philosophy, the argument against the antiquity of the book would have been far more plausible, than it now is. Should any deny that God *could* work such a miracle; it is sufficient to answer, "Ye do err, not knowing—the power of God." If any say, that he would not on such an occasion, I enquire, "Who hath known the mind of the LORD? "or who hath been his counsellor?"

## JUDGES.

This book is repeatedly referred to in the New Testament, as a part of the Jewish Scriptures:\* so that the proofs of the divine inspiration of the New

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\* Acts xiii. 20. Heb. xi. 82.

Testament also prove, that though *anonymous* it is not *without authority*. Probably it was compiled from the records of the times, by Samuel, or under his inspection.—The writer of this book expressly asserts that Jerusalem had been taken by Judah, before Adonibezek was brought thither:\* and Mr. P. as expressly contradicts him!† It appears however from several passages, that the men of Judah had taken and burned Jerusalem: but that the Jebusites kept possession of some part of it, probably the hill of Zion; and that they were not expelled till the time of David.‡ Mr. P. supposes the book of Judges to have been written soon after that time: and should this be granted him, how does it invalidate the authenticity of the history contained in it? There is allowedly some difficulty in the chronology of the Judges; yet learned men have been able to settle that matter with tolerable clearness. But how a difficulty of this kind, in a *single book of such high antiquity*, can ‘prove the uncertain and fabulous state of the Bible,’ does not appear to men of common capacity.||

## RUTH.

Mr. P. thinks this a bungling story; but very good judges have thought otherwise. Ruth was not a *strolling girl*; but a woman who had been married nearly ten years, and had been long approved as a vir-

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\* Judg. i. 4—8.

† P. ii. p. 22, 23.

‡ Josh. xv. 63. Judg. i. 1—8. 21. 2 Sam. v. || P. ii. p. 12.

tuous widow. It is very unfair to judge the conduct of persons, who lived so long ago, by modern usages; especially as an occasion of traducing the Bible. In fact Ruth's conduct was approved by all concerned in the transactions, and her character was declared to be unexceptionable. The unaffected simplicity and piety of Boaz and his reapers are worthy of admiration and imitation. The Book is replete with important instruction; and it contains the genealogy of David and of Christ, which is referred to in the New Testament.

#### THE BOOKS OF SAMUEL.

Mr. P.'s argument, by which he proves that the whole of these books was not written by Samuel, is absolutely conclusive: for the greatest part of the events recorded in them happened after his death. But it will by no means follow that *they are destitute of authority*; for this circumstance is altogether insufficient to preponderate against the testimony of the Jewish nation for above two thousand years at least; together with that of Christ and his apostles in the New Testament, and with the internal evidence of their authenticity and divine inspiration.

When Samuel was raised up to be the judge of Israel, a new epoch commenced: and the history of the two kings, whom he anointed, forms a crisis as it were, between the government by judges and the full establishment of hereditary monarchy. For this reason perhaps these books, as containing an account of the revolution in which Samuel had so great a share,

were called by his name.—The titles given to the books of Scripture are not supposed to be of divine authority: so that perhaps these were improperly called the books of Samuel, and the name, given them in the Septuagint and vulgate, of the first and second books of Kings, is more suitable. Probably Nathan and Gad, or other prophets in the days of David and Solomon, compiled them from the original records. The history contained in them has every mark of authenticity; they coincide with many of the Psalms, and with other parts of Scripture which refer to them; and they are replete with most important instruction.

Saul and his servant indeed cannot be justified, as to the manner in which they purposed to consult Samuel: but surely the Bible is not chargeable with the faults, which it records without approbation.\* The verse relative to the word SEER was doubtless added afterwards as an explanatory note.†—Mr. P. says, ‘many senseless and broken passages are found in the Bible;’‡ for instance, “Saul reigned one year; and “when he had reigned two years, he chose him two “thousand men.”|| This, however, may fairly mean, that Saul reigned one year before any thing remarkable happened; but after he had *reigned two years*, or in *second year of his reign*, according to the Hebrew idiom, the subsequent events took place. Such remarks can only be made, in order to prejudice superficial readers against the Scriptures.

\* P. ii. p. 23, 24.

† 1 Sam. ix. 9.

‡ Note, P. ii. p. 54.

|| 1 Sam. xiii. 1.

Saul had executed the command of God by Samuel, in slaying even the women and children of Amalek: but, probably from *respect to royalty*, he had spared Agag, whose “sword had made women childless.” In this single instance, Samuel, who had long acted as chief magistrate of Israel, exercised *apparent severity*; “he hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord:” and hatred of prophets renders Mr. P. such an humane friend to kings, that he reprobates his impartial conduct in the most virulent manner!\*

Mr. P. endeavours to prove, that the writer of these books contradicts himself; because Saul did not recollect David, when he returned from slaying Goliath.†— But David was very young when he stood as a musician before Saul. He indeed became Saul’s armour-bearer, but it does not appear that he entered on actual service; nor is it said that Abner had any acquaintance with him. Saul’s mind was disordered, and his affairs in much confusion. Kings, especially such kings as Saul, are approached and served by so many fresh faces, that they are apt *literally* to forget their old acquaintance. Some years seem to have elapsed, from the time when David left court, to his appearance in a shepherd’s dress before Saul in the army. Young persons alter greatly in a little time: yet Saul spake as if he had some confused knowledge of him; so that the charge is hardly plausible.

Mr. P.’s eloquent harangue against the ‘callous indifference and stubbornness of priests,’ contains no

\* P. ii. p. 60—63. 1 Sam. xv.

† Note, P. ii. p. 51. 1 Sam. xvi. xvii.



*argument* against the divine authority of the Scriptures.\* The true minister of Christ will not wish to escape reviling from the man, who calls the Bible a *blasphemous fraud*. Doubtless numbers will find their minds *tranquillized* by Mr. P.'s labours; for they will help sinners to shake off all fear of wrath, to indulge a haughty self-important spirit, and to vindicate their impiety and rebellion against God. They will in all respects operate, as the insinuation of the serpent, "Ye shall not surely die," did on the mind of Eve: but should such persons at last find themselves fatally deceived, they will not very agreeably own their obligations to this *humane deist*, at the day of judgment, and in the eternal world.

#### KINGS AND CHRONICLES.

Mr. P. says, 'the Jewish kings were in general a *parcel of rascals*.' I suppose he meant to include the kings of Israel: but they were not *Jewish* kings. The kings of Israel were indeed universally apostates from the law and instituted worship of God; and no one of them receives a good character from the sacred historian: and therefore I have no objection to this language being applied to them.—The tyranny and persecution of the house of Ahab had been so detestable; that if a Brutus had stabbed any of them, or a modern convention had doomed them to the scaffold, their patriotism would have been applauded: but when God

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\* P. ii. p. 25, 26.

employed Jehu to execute vengeance on them, it becomes murder and assassination!\*

Mr. P. considers the seventy descendants of Ahab as *smiling infants*; but they were in general grown men; and they were slain by the elders of Jezreel, who had been the instruments of Jezebel's tyranny, in the murder of Naboth and his sons. We have, however, no more occasion to vindicate Jehu's character, in justifying the conduct of the Lord, who employed him to punish the family of Ahab, and gave him a temporal recompence; than we have to insist on the virtue of the executioner, in justifying the punishment of a murderer.—The Bible is no more answerable for the cruelties recorded in it with marked disapprobation; than Mr. P. is for the cruelty of that party in the French convention, whose conduct he justly execrates. The severities inflicted by the Israelites on the inhabitants of Canaan, many centuries before, cannot be proved to have been the source of those wars, which were carried on between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah: for the relative situation of these kingdoms might account for them; and such bloody contests have continually taken place in other countries, in similar circumstances, though they never read or heard of the Bible.

Mr. P. finds but seventeen kings and one queen in Judah, from the death of Solomon to the captivity: I suppose he omits Jehoahaz and Jeconiah. Of the remaining seventeen, eleven died natural deaths; three

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\* P. ii. p. 25—27.

were slain in battle; and three were slain by their own servants, none of whom succeeded to the throne. Athaliah, one of the most detestable of usurpers and murderers, was put to death by Jehoiada.—From the accession of David to the captivity, the kingdom of Judah was continued in one family, by lineal descent from father to son, except as the sons of Josiah reigned in succession. This was a space of almost five hundred years, in which there was not a single revolution or civil war, and only one short interruption. Perhaps it would be difficult to find any thing, in universal history, equal to this permanent order and regularity. How many revolutions, usurpations, murders of reigning kings by rivals and subjects, changes in the succession, and civil wars carried on with savage cruelty, are found in the history of England, within the last five hundred years? Yet who thinks this a sufficient reason for reviling the English nation?

The reigns of David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah, amount together to three hundred and thirteen years; to which we may add the former part of Jehoshaphat's reign, during the life of Jehoiada: \* and the greatest part of this time was evidently passed, either in profound peace, or in remarkable prosperity. Let then any impartial man compare the state of Judah, from the accession of David to the death of Josiah, with the same term of years in the history of Greece, or Rome; and he will be constrained to admit, that the condition of Judah was unspeakably most desirable.

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\* 2 Kings xiii.

The nation of Israel acted inconsistently with their peculiar advantages, as the chosen people of God; and their crimes are assigned in Scripture, as the reason of their numerous calamities. Indeed they were neither chosen for their *merit*, nor on their *own account* exclusively; but from the wise and holy love and mercy of God, and for the purposes of his own glory, in the benefit of other ages and nations, especially in introducing the gospel and kingdom of his beloved Son. The wickedness of this favoured people, in direct opposition to the requirements of their law, decisively proves the depravity of human nature: and he, who *impartially* compares the history of Israel with that of other nations, will find that they were not more wicked, nor indeed so wicked by far, as many have been and are at this day. But the crimes of *idolators* are concealed or excused; while those of *God's worshippers* are painted in the most horrid colours that ingenuity and eloquence can furnish, and aggravated by many palpable misrepresentations!

Mr. P. asserts that 'the genealogy from *Adam* to *Saul* takes up the first nine chapters of Chronicles:' when in fact the descendants of David to four generations after Zerubbabel are found in the third chapter; and the succession of the high priests till the captivity in the sixth chapter, besides other matters of the same kind! This would be unworthy of notice, did it not shew that the author is not so competent to his undertaking, as many readers may suppose him. He considers the book of Chronicles as a repetition of the books of Kings: and others speak of them in the

same manner. But an attentive examination of them must convince any man, that this is erroneous: for the second book of Chronicles contains the history of Judah only, and of the kings that succeeded David till the captivity; and it gives a more copious and methodical account of them than is found in the books of Kings. The latter, from the division of the nation into two kingdoms, resemble an history of France and England carried on together, with continual transitions from one to the other. The former is like the history of England apart, in which the affairs of France are only mentioned, when connected with those of England.

What then shall we think of a man, who charges two historians with being impostors and liars, because they do not exactly relate the same events? Had they written the history of the same kingdom, they might surely have had the liberty to select, according to their different views, the peculiar facts which they would record: for no historian can record every thing that happens. But their histories relate to distinct subjects, and the writer of Chronicles had nothing immediately to do with the affairs of Israel. He who undertakes to write the annals of England, is not bound to relate the extraordinary measures and edicts of the French convention: and should some author in future times on this ground assert, that ‘ the historians of England and France did not believe one another, they knew each other too well:’ the observation would not greatly recommend his candour and penetration.

The history of Jeroboam and his altar belonged to the affairs of Israel: but had the historian of Judah deemed it false, he would probably have contradicted it. The extraordinary prophecy, however, connected with it, which Josiah above three hundred years after, exactly accomplished in the view of the whole nation, sufficiently authenticates the narrative, in the judgment of all sober men. The actions of Elijah and Elisha also belonged to the history of Israel; for neither of them resided or prophesied in Judah. The writer of Chronicles, however, would not have declined recording the translation of Elijah, or the miracles of Elisha, had they fallen within his plan, lest he should be accused of lying and romancing: for he relates facts equally marvellous; such as the slaughter of Sennacherib's army by an angel, and the retrograde motion of the shadow on the dial of Ahaz, at Hezekiah's request.

Some difficulty occurs in reconciling the dates given in different places, of the time when Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat began to reign: but similar difficulties occur in many other ancient histories. Perhaps Jehoram was admitted to a share in the regal authority before he succeeded to the kingdom at his father's death; as Solomon had been before him: or perhaps some trivial error in a numeral letter has taken place, by the inadvertency of transcribers.

The historians could not properly speak of the several prophets who lived in the times of which they wrote, further than they had some concern in publick affairs. But in general they mention the prophets with pe-

culiar respect; and uniformly ascribe the calamities of Judah and Israel to the conduct of the rulers and people in despising and persecuting them, and in hearkening to the false prophets who contradicted them.—Mr. P. says, ‘ the name of Jonah is mentioned on account of the restoration of a track of land by Jeroboam.’\* The passage referred to is this: “ Jeroboam the son of Joash, restored the coast of Israel,—according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet which was of Gath-hepher.”†—This is surely a very honourable mention of Jonah as a servant of the Lord, and a prophet whose predictions had been signally accomplished: whereas an inattentive reader would have supposed from Mr. P.’s account, that Jonah had only been named as concurring in some civil transaction.

Upon the whole, as far as the historians and prophets are capable of honouring each other, they certainly do it.—And did not brevity forbid, it would be easy to prove, from the prophecies contained in these books, and evidently accomplished, and from the New Testament; that they not only contain authentick history, taken from the records of Judah and Israel, but were written under the superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit; for they certainly were contained in those Scriptures, which our Lord declared “ must be fulfilled,” “ and could not be broken;” and of which

\* Note, P. ii. p. 31.

† 2 Kings xiv. 25.

Paul declares that they all “ were given by inspiration  
“ of God.”\*

#### EZRA AND NEHEMIAH.

Probably Ezra himself compiled the books of Chronicles, or the greatest part of them, from the publick records of the nation, and other books to which he appeals as his authority: and if he chose to begin the history of the Jews, subsequent to the captivity, with the same words that closed his preceding narrative, it might most reasonably be ascribed to a scrupulous regard to accuracy.

Mr. P. speaks of Ezra and Nehemiah, as if they returned *together with the first Jews from Babylon*; and he says that ‘ the book of Ezra was written immediately after, or about five hundred and thirty-six before Christ, and Nehemiah was another of the returned persons, who wrote an account of the *same affair.*’ But in fact Ezra did not return till nearly eighty years after the decree of Cyrus, according to the ablest chronologers: and it is evident by *his own account*, that the temple, after many delays was completed some time before he arrived at Jerusalem.—Nehemiah returned thirteen years afterwards; he continues his narrative from the conclusion of Ezra’s history, and relates *none of the same events.* So ill informed is this writer, as to the contents of that volume he undertakes to invalidate!—The difference between

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\* 2 Tim. iii. 16.



the amount of those enrolled in families, and the number of the whole company, could not be a *mistake* of Ezra; and no impostor would have left so barefaced an error, if it were one. But the surplus might be Jews or Israelites, who were not able to prove their genealogies: and probably Ezra inserted the register, made at their first return from captivity, from the public records, without any alteration.

But the register in Nehemiah has greater difficulties. The narrative leads one to expect, that a new enrolment would be made of the Jews residing at that time in Judea: but instead of this, the old register of those who returned with Zerubbabel is inserted, with some variations; and the same sum total is mentioned, though the several sums amount to thirty-one thousand and eighty-nine.\* I firmly believe Nehemiah's history to be authentick and divine; but we are not authorized to expect miracles to prevent the unessential mistakes of transcribers. I therefore suspect that, by some means or other, an incorrect copy of the first register was here substituted, instead of the new register made by Nehemiah. A very slight acquaintance with critical learning will convince any candid man, that such variations in ancient authors may generally be discovered; and that they produce no uncertainty in the great outlines of the events recorded by them. But I think it better fairly to own the difficulty, than to pass it over in silence, or to give an answer which does not satisfy my own mind. It is however a sin-

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\* Ezra ii. Neh. vii.

gular instance; and in my judgment, does not weigh a grain in counterpoise against the weight of evidence in the opposite scale.

Mr. P. seems to allow that Ezra and Nehemiah wrote the books ascribed to them; but he says they are nothing to us.\* He here forgets that the prophecy of Jeremiah was extant when the book of Ezra was written, and that the events recorded by Ezra were a *declared accomplishment of his predictions*.† This is surely of some consequence in the argument. And we may add, that these two books so constantly refer to all the preceding parts of Scripture, that they conclusively prove the whole to have been then extant, and received by the Jews as authentick records of divine authority. If then Ezra and Nehemiah wrote these books soon after the captivity, we may confidently infer, that the writings of Moses, and all the historical part of the Old Testament, (except Esther,) were received by the whole Jewish nation, as a divine revelation, at least five hundred years before the birth of Christ.

#### ESTHER.

Mr. P. says, ‘if Madam Esther thought it any honour to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus,’ &c.‡ Now where did he learn that she thus *offered* herself to be a kept mistress to the king? I apprehend that she was not put to her choice whether she would enter Ahasuerus’s seraglio or not. Such insinuations

\* P. ii. p. 35.

† Ezra i. 1.

‡ P. ii. p. 37.

too much resemble the conduct of *hypocritical priests*, who say, ‘if the people choose to be deceived, let ‘them be deceived.’—The book itself has this proof of authenticity, that the Jews to the present day observe the feast of *Purim*, in remembrance of the wonderful deliverance, which God vouchsafed them by means of Esther and Mordecai.

## CHAP. III.

*From Job to Solomon's Song.*

## JOB.

MR. P. speaks respectfully of this book,\* but tries to prove it to be of gentile extraction. It coincides, however, so entirely with the other Scriptures, in the doctrine of human depravity, of the impossibility of any man justifying himself before God, of the Redeemer that would stand at the latter day upon the earth, of a future resurrection, and the presumption of our reasonings concerning the works and ways of God; that it accords with no other gentile book: and it must either be explained away as a fabulous drama, or Mr. P. and his friends will not long retain their respect for it.

The word *Satan*, he says, is not mentioned in the Bible, except in Job. The reader may see the *accuracy* of this observation by turning to the passages referred to!† But *this* appears still more fully in his observation, that *Pleiades*, *Orion*, and *Arcturus* are Greek names; and that the Jews were so ignorant of

\* P. i. p. 28. P. ii. 37, 38.

† 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Ps. cix. 6. Zech. iii. 1, 2.

astronomy, that they had no words answerable to them. The learned reader will know, that no such words occur in the Hebrew Bible; and the unlearned may be assured that the original word for *Arcturus* is *Ilus*, that for *Orion* is *Chesil*, and that for *Pleiades*, *Kima*.\*

In order to calumniate the Jews, the heathens are said ‘to be a just and moral people, not addicted to ‘cruelty and revenge.’ What heathens are meant I know not: but the writers of the Greeks and Romans, and of every other nation whose histories are extant, represent mankind in a very different light. Romances about just and moral nations, not addicted to cruelty and revenge, may be found; but where shall we meet with an authentick history of such a people by an impartial well informed writer?

#### PSALMS.

If the Spirit of God spake by the Psalmist, “and “his words were upon his tongue,”† and if Christ and his apostles may be credited; the Psalms, which some persons venture to call *revengeful*, were prophecies, and denunciations of vengeance on the enemies of the Messiah and his cause. That many of them are predictions, which have been most wonderfully accomplished, no sober man can deny.‡ And whatever ridicule may be employed to degrade the Psalms, they are undoubtedly a collection of the most

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\* Job ix. 9. xxxviii. 31, 32.      † 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

‡ Ps. xxii. lxix. cx.

beautiful odes, and the most exalted strains of heavenly piety, that ever were published to mankind. Those ascribed to David bear *internal* evidence of being genuine; and it is generally understood that a considerable part of the collection was penned by other prophets and inspired persons. The absurd supposition, however, of David being the author of the hundred and thirty seventh Psalm, gives Mr. P. an opportunity of declaiming against the imposition of the Bible, and of diverting his readers with the fancy of 'a man's walking in procession at his own funeral.' But is this the frame of mind, which becomes an enquirer after important truth?

## PROVERBS.

Mr. P. allows that there is some wisdom in the Proverbs ascribed to Solomon; though he once decided, (at a time *when he had no Bible*,) that they were inferior to the proverbs of the Spaniards, or the maxims of Dr. Franklin!\* But he supposes it to have been the fashion of that day to make *proverbs*, as it is now to make *jest-books*. If this were indeed the case, *that* should have been called the *Age of Reason*, and *this* the *age of levity and folly*: for surely wise proverbs are more reasonable, than profane, filthy, and scurrilous jests, according to the custom of modern times!

Mr. P. expresses great approbation of Agur's prayer, 'as the only sensible, well-conceived, and well-

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\* P. i. p. 16.

‘expressed prayer in the Bible!’\* I would therefore heartily recommend it to his constant and fervent use; with an especial attention to the clause, “remove  
“from me vanity and lies.”† If Agur were a gentile, as he supposes, the Jews were not so bigotted, as to reject what they found good even among the heathen: but I imagine Mr. P. knows no more than the rest of us, who Agur and Lemuel were.

He adds, ‘The Jews never prayed but when they  
‘were in trouble; and never for any thing but victory, vengeance, and riches!’—All, who deem prayer their duty and privilege, will be peculiarly earnest in it during special trials, though they never wholly neglect it: and nations engaged in war, if they trust in God and appeal to him, must pray for victory.—Most of the prayers of this kind, recorded in Scripture, were presented by the rulers of Israel, when assaulted by injurions and blasphemous invaders: few prayers for vengeance can be found, which are not evident predictions, or warnings to the enemies of God: and scarcely any for riches, unless exemption from famine, and the blessings of plentiful harvest be so called. Solomon’s prayer, for *wisdom*, and not for riches, long life, or the life of his enemies, was not offered in trouble. Mr. P. commends the nineteenth Psalm,‡ yet the latter part of it is a prayer, neither for victory, vengeance, nor riches: and no one, conversant in the Scripture, can be at a loss for instances of a similar kind. He who thus wantonly slanders a whole

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\* P. ii. p. 39.

† Prov. xxx. 7—9.

‡ P. ii. p. 28, 29.

nation, is not the most proper person to declaim against the wickedness of priests and prophets.

## ECCLESIASTES.\*

Mr. P. treats Ecclesiastes, as the reflection of a worn out debauchee, and supposes the exclamation, “All is vanity,” to relate entirely to Solomon’s thousand wives and concubines: and he represents him, not as a *penitent* but as *melancholy*. But in fact these wives and concubines are but once hinted at; while the preacher shews in the most convincing and affecting manner, from experience and the nature of things, that magnificence, authority, and sensual indulgence; and even science and wisdom, unless connected with true religion, are *vanity and vexation of spirit*: and he closes with exhorting the reader in the prospect of a future judgment, to “fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”

Far be it from me to vindicate Solomon in that conduct, of which he seems to have deeply repented: yet he is represented in Scripture, as drawn aside in his *old age*, and not as *licentious in his youth*. Probably his immense seraglio was principally a foolish affectation of superior magnificence, and a conformity to the eastern customs; while some of his women gained the ascendancy over him, and induced him, towards the decline of life, to commit those crimes, from which he had before been exempt.

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\* P. ii. p. 41, 42.



## SOLOMON'S SONG.\*

Our author is very merry upon *Solomon's songs*, as he calls this book; and I agree with him, that he wants the tunes, and cannot sing such songs: that is, his heart is not in tune for them.† As this book is not quoted in the New Testament, and as few derive benefit from it till they have learned divine truth from other Scriptures; I shall not enter into any further argument about it: though I firmly believe it to be a very useful part of God's word.

The sacred writers are not accountable for the order in which the several books are placed in the Old Testament: nor are they arranged in the same manner in the Hebrew Bible, as in our translation. If therefore Solomon's Song has been misplaced; that does not at all disprove the divine inspiration of the holy Scriptures, which is the point I have undertaken to defend.

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\* P. ii. p. 42, 43.

† Rev. i. 5. v. 9—14. xiv. 3.

## CHAP. IV.

*The Prophets.*

## ISAIAH.

IT is probable, that Mr. P. is the first writer, capable of attracting the public notice, who has deemed the book of Isaiah to be ‘bombastical rant, extravagant metaphor, such stuff as a school-boy would have ‘been scarcely excusable for writing!’\* I shall however, leave him to settle this point with those able criticks, and admired judges of fine writing, who have decidedly preferred many parts of Isaiah’s poetry, for sublimity and beauty, to all other compositions now extant in the world.

Occasional poems and sermons are not always arranged in very regular order: some able authors have published volumes of miscellanies; and we ought not to judge of an eastern writer by *our* rules of method. A  *cursory* perusal will not always enable a man to discern the drift and plan of an author, when they may be clearly ascertained upon a more accurate investigation; and sometimes the conclusion of one poem or message, and the beginning of another, escape the notice of a hasty reader: so that there may

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\* P. ii. p. 43.

be much more order and connexion in this book, than Mr. P. supposes. The historical part was evidently added to illustrate the prophecies, and to *prevent*, not *make*, confusion.\*

It is very easy to ridicule *the burden of Damascus*, *the burden of Moab*, or *the burden of Babylon*; but not so easy to shew, by what means the writer could foresee, that Babylon, then growing in greatness, and shortly to be the metropolis of the world, would at length be “swept with the besom of destruction,” as it actually hath been; so that it is not at present certainly known, where that vast and magnificent city once stood!! This single prophecy amounts to a *demonstration*, that God spake by the prophet Isaiah.

\* The prediction of Cyrus by name, above an hundred years before his birth, if allowed to have been written by Isaiah, would have subverted our author’s whole system. Like an able general, therefore, he forms a stratagem of seizing our artillery, and employing it against us! He confidently *asserts*, (and that passes for *proof* with many readers,) that the whole passage was written an hundred and fifty years after Isaiah’s death, in compliment to Cyrus!†

But the connexion of these predictions,‡ with the whole scope of the prophet’s address to the people in the name of JEHOVAH, tends to expose the absurdity of this bold assertion. The God of Israel repeatedly appeals to *prophecies already accomplished*, as proofs of his deity in opposition to the claims of idols: he

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\* P. ii. p. 43, 44. † P. ii. p. 44, 45. ‡ Is. xlv. 23. xlv. 1—4.

adds, "New things do I declare, before they come to pass I tell you of them:" He thus challenges his rivals, the idols of the nations, saying, "Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods:"\* and after various other predictions, he delivers that in question, with the greatest solemnity, as a proof of his eternal power and Godhead.

Had this prophecy stood *single* in the writings of Isaiah, this pretence might have been rather more plausible: but the whole book is replete with predictions at least equally plain, and verified by the events in the most astonishing manner! So that it might as reasonably be asserted, that the fifty-third chapter was written after the crucifixion of Christ, and the establishment of his religion; or the fourteenth after the entire desolation of Babylon: as that the prediction concerning Cyrus was added after he had conquered the Chaldean monarchy.

The testimony of the Jews, through every age, to this book as genuine, though it contains such numerous prophecies, which were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, sufficiently determines that point with all sober and competent judges; for how could it be possible to persuade a whole nation that they had always been acquainted with the prediction, during the course of an hundred and fifty years, if they had never before heard any thing of it? But infidels seem to *take it for granted*, that if priests be *sufficiently knavish* to attempt

\* Is. xli. 23. xliii. 9.

imposition, the people will always be found *sufficiently foolish* to swallow their impostures without examination! whereas much art has ever been found necessary for such attempts; the prophecies of impostors have always been ambiguous; and the miracles to which they pretended, either doubtful in their nature, or wrought only before a few individuals who were friendly to the cause.

It may also be added, that a man must have taken a singular method of complimenting a great prince; who should forge predictions, tending to pour contempt on his religion, and to degrade the gods, to which he was continually sacrificing.

Mr. P. in speaking of our Lord's miraculous conception, as predicted by Isaiah, uses these words, 'This doctrine has stained every spot in Christendom with blood, and marked it with desolation.'—Blood enough has, alas! been shed by men called christians; but this doctrine has seldom been so much as the pretence of it. The Athanasians and Arians had too acrimonious contests: but both parties agreed in the miraculous conception, and in this application of Isaiah's prophecy. The papal antichrist has been drunk with the blood of martyrs: but where has the denial of the miraculous conception of Christ been so much as the pretext of these outrages? The Socinians have *only of late* denied the miraculous conception; though many of them, and others likewise, have understood Matthew, as quoting Isaiah by way of accommodation; but they have not in many instances been harassed with bloody desolating persecution. Indeed there would be some difficulty in precisely

pointing out a dozen spots in Christendom, stained with blood, and marked with desolation *on this account.*

Should we grant, that the prophecy had a subordinate reference to events, which took place soon after it was delivered:\* it would still be true, that the literal and exact accomplishment can only be found in that great event, to which the evangelist applies it. Some measure of obscurity seems adapted to the nature of prophecy, prior to its fulfilment: and, though the virgin's Son was named JESUS; yet he was EMMANUEL, in his person and character, and has been so called with fervent adoring love and gratitude by tens of thousands in all succeeding generations.

Mr. P. has brought a direct charge of imposition and falsehood against Isaiah, which requires some notice.—The kings of Israel and Syria confederated to invade Judah, to destroy the family of David, and make the son of Tabeal king of Judah: and Isaiah predicted, that this counsel should not stand; that the kingdom of Israel should come to an end in seventy-five years; that the confederate princes should be destroyed; and that the family of David should be preserved till the coming of Emmanuel. At the same time, however, he declared to Ahaz and his princes, that “if they would not believe, they should not be established.”—But we find,† that “the Lord delivered Ahaz into the hand of the king of Syria, and into the hand of the king of Israel;” and that they

\* Is. vii. 14.

† 2 Chron. xxviii.

made most dreadful havock of the Jews, and took an immense number of captives:—on this ground, Mr. P. says, ‘ the two kings *did succeed*, Ahaz was defeated and *destroyed*. Thus much for this lying prophet, and his book of falsehoods.’\* But we ask, did the two kings succeed in *dethroning Ahaz, destroying the family of David, and advancing the son of Tabeal to the throne?* Ahaz indeed was not established, because he did not believe: he was *defeated*, but he was not *destroyed*; for he survived both the confederate princes many years, and died a natural death. Pekah, king of Israel, *induced by the humane remonstrances of a prophet*, sent back the prisoners, refreshed and clothed from the spoil; and he was slain by Hosea in the fourth year of Ahaz; as Rezin king of Syria was by Tiglath-Pilezer about the same time. Within the prescribed years, the Assyrians finally destroyed the kingdom of Israel, and the family of David was preserved till the birth of Emmanuel. Isaiah’s predictions were therefore most circumstantially fulfilled during the course of above seven hundred years: and his accuser was either grossly ignorant of his subject, or very desirous of misleading his readers.

#### JEREMIAH.†

Jeremiah had prophesied about forty years, when Jerusalem was taken: and, as he had been the faithful friend of his country, and of succeeding princes, for

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\* P. ii. p. 40.

† P. ii. p. 47—54.

so long a time; it requires something more than Mr. P.'s assertion to convince an impartial person, that he became a traitor at last; especially as he refused the favours offered him by Nebuchadnezzar, after the city was desolated according to his predictions.

The Lord declares by the prophet, that his promises and threatenings *to nations* contain an implied condition; so that national repentance would avert threatened judgments, and national wickedness forfeit promised mercies.\* This Mr. P. calls 'an absurd subterfuge of the prophet.' But surely it was a salutary warning and an encouraging instruction, both to Israel and to other nations. *Had the people repented, and yet judgments had come on them; or had they escaped judgments without repentance;* the prophet would have had no subterfuge: and if he had denounced vengeance without any intimation of mercy; the unrelenting spirit of prophets would have furnished a subject for declamation.

The disorder, charged on this book, might arise from the conduct of those, who after Jeremiah's death put his detached messages together, without much regard to the order in which they were delivered. His *predictions* however are generally *dated*, though his *sermons* are not.

Mr. P. accuses Jeremiah of contradicting himself, because two different accounts are given of his imprisonment by Zedekiah: but nothing can be more evident than that he was twice imprisoned; once in the

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\* Jer. xviii. 7, 8.



house of Jonathan the scribe, whence he was liberated to the court of the prison by Zedekiah; the second time in the dungeon of Malchijah the son of Hammeleck, whence he was freed by Ebed-meleck.\*

Mr. P. undertakes to prove, by the example of Jeremiah, that ‘a man of God could tell a lie;’ and if he had succeeded, it would not much have served his cause, unless he could also have proved that he *vindicated* it: for believers do not consider the sacred writers as *impeccable*, though they wrote under an infallible guidance. His attempt however, is completely unsuccessful. Zedekiah directed the prophet to say to the princes, “I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan’s house to die there;” and “he told them according to all the words the king commanded.”—Now’ says Mr. P: ‘Jeremiah did not go to Zedekiah to make his supplication:’ true; neither did he say that he *went for that purpose*: but he adds, ‘neither did he make it.’ Here some will believe Jeremiah, who said “he did make his supplication to the king:” and some will credit Mr. P. when he says, ‘he did not make it.’ For my part I believe *the prophet*, considering him as the best informed of the two, and perceiving no reason to suspect his veracity. And even a *man of God* is not bound to tell an impertinent inquirer all he knows.

Mr. P. next accuses Jeremiah of delivering false predictions. The prophet had told Zedekiah, that

“ his eyes should behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and that he should speak to him mouth to mouth; that he should go to Babylon: that he should not die by the sword but in peace, and that they should burn odours for him and lament him.”\*

Mr. P. contrasts this prophecy with the history of the event,† and adds, ‘ what can we say of these prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?’‡ Yet the prediction was fulfilled most exactly; for Zedekiah must have seen the eyes of the king of Babylon, when the latter slew his sons *before his eyes*: he was carried to Babylon where he died, not by the sword, but in peace; and there can be no reasonable doubt, but he received funeral honours from the captive Jews, by the permission of the king of Babylon.

Ezekiel also foretold, that “ Zedekiah should not see Babylon, though he should die there.”§ And some years ago I wrote thus, ‘ Perhaps Zedekiah fancied the two prophets contradicted each other, and so disregarded both; but both were exactly accomplished, when he was brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, had his eyes put out, and was carried to Babylon.’|| I have since that time entertained some doubts, whether I had not ascribed to Zedekiah a degree of *inattention*, beyond all probability. Mr. P. however, has actually far exceeded it.

He next asserts, that ‘ Jeremiah joined himself to Nebuchadnezzar, and went about prophesying for

\* Jer. xxxiv.

† Jer. lli. 10, 11.

‡ P. ii. p. 53.

§ Ezek. xii. 13.

|| Family Bible.

‘him among the Egyptians.’ This representation of Jeremiah’s conduct contradicts in express terms the only narrative we have of those events. He refused the friendly offer of Nebuzaraddan; and with a patriotism which would have been admired in any man, except a prophet or a priest, he chose to cast his lot among the remnant of his distressed countrymen. He did all in his power to prevent their migration into Egypt, and was at length carried along with them by force. There indeed he prophesied against the Egyptians and other nations, and especially *against the Babylonians*, without the least advantage or attention from Nebuchadnezzar: and these prophecies, with their *remote* but exact accomplishment, will stand to the end of time as demonstrations that Jeremiah spake by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. P. represents the prophets as party men in politics, and he produces as an instance the prophet from Judah, who went to Jeroboam.\* No doubt he took part with the worshippers of JEHOVAH against the devotees of the golden calves: but the old prophet at Bethel does not seem to have *sided* with Jeroboam, though he had not courage to protest against his idolatry. His assertion that the prophet of Judah was ‘found dead by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel, who no doubt called him a lying prophet,’ is absurd in the extreme, and directly contradicts the whole narrative.

Mr. P. next attacks Elisha as a *Judahmite* prophet,

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\* 1 Kings xiii.

though he spent his life in Israel, and never at all prophesied in Judah!—Joram the son of Ahab was a very wicked man and a most incorrigible idolater: Jehoshaphat, though faulty in forming connexions with him and his family, was a most pious and equitable prince. When therefore these two kings, with the king of Edom, applied to Elisha in extreme distress,\* he shewed respect to Jehoshaphat, but would shew none to Joram. In any other man Mr. P. would have admired the noble spirit evinced by this conduct: but in this case he calls it ‘the venom and vulgarity of a party-prophet!’

The prophet, probably finding himself discomposed by recollecting the idolatries and persecutions of Ahab’s family, called for a *minstrel*, that his serenity might be restored, and his mind prepared for the prophetick impulse. Mr. P. strangely mistakes the *minstrel*, or player on an instrument, for the instrument itself: and adds, ‘Elisha said, (singing most probably to the tune he was playing) Thus saith the Lord, make the valley full of ditches—without either *farce* or *fiddle*, the way to get water was to dig for it.’—Does this jumble of mistake and raillery require any answer? Neither the kings nor their officers expected to find water by digging there, and how came Elisha by his superior discernment? The Moabites deceived by this singular appearance of the water, rushed upon their destruction; which would not have been the case, had water been generally ob-

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\* 2 Kings iii.

served in that place. Whole armies have been known to perish, for want of water, in those very deserts; and it is indeed self-evident, that this army was preserved, and rendered victorious, either by the sagacity of the prophet, or by the word which the Lord spake by him: yet he must be branded as *venomous* and *virulent*, for protesting against Joram's crimes, in far milder language, than Mr. P. or his friends have used against the kings of France or England!

The conduct of Elisha, in cursing the children in the name of the Lord, has been objected to by more candid and serious men than Mr. P. and therefore requires some consideration. These children, or *young persons, immediately after Elijah's translation*, reproached Elisha with his baldness, and bade him *go up, or ascend*; as if they had said, 'a good riddance of all prophets.\*' They had been evidently taught by their idolatrous parents to revile the prophets of JEHOVAH; their enmity was become desperate: and if true religion be important, it was proper to apply some effectual remedy to the inveterate evil. If the prophet had cursed them *in his own spirit*, would JEHOVAH have concurred in his malignity? Were the she-bears at his command? Would any consequences have followed? Had the prophet slain the children himself, or employed any of his party in putting them to death, *there would have been some pretence* for these bitter accusations: but as the case stands, the justice of God is directly arraigned; for he was the *only agent* in the

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\* 2 Kings ii. 23.

business.—If the children had died of a fever, the affair would not have been noticed: yet the solemnity of the sentence and execution, while it was no severer punishment to them, was far more calculated to make an useful impression on their survivors.

#### EZEKIEL AND DANIEL.\*

Mr. P. is of opinion that the books of Ezekiel and Daniel are *genuine*. This concession may perhaps surprise such persons, as are not aware of the fecundity of his genius; especially as Daniel's prophecies have received so circumstantial an accomplishment, that an ancient opposer of christianity had no way of escaping conviction, but by asserting, contrary to all proof, that they were written after the events predicted in them! But Mr. P. perhaps afraid lest his reader's attention should flag, has prepared a new fund of amusement, by *imagining* these books to contain a *political cypher* or *secret alphabet*, under the pretence of dreams and visions, and that they relate to plans about recovering Jerusalem. Hence he infers, that we 'have nothing to do with them:' and provided that be the inference, numbers will excuse the want of proof and probability.

It is, however, very wonderful, that these *political devices* should contain such animated exhortations and fervent prayers; and above all so many prophecies, that have been ever since fulfilling! Egypt is become

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\* P. ii. p. 57—60.

a *base* kingdom, and has been subject to a foreign yoke almost from the time when the prophet wrote.\* Tyre, that prosperous commercial city, is now a place for fishermen to dry their nets.† And the four great monarchies, Alexander's conquests, and the affairs of his successors; the cutting off of the Messiah, and the desolation of Jerusalem after seventy weeks, have exactly accomplished Daniel's predictions. Surely then Mr. P. had a mind to make trial of the credulity of mankind, in this whimsical absurdity!

Ezekiel is supposed to have been carried captive eleven years before the desolations of Jerusalem, and Daniel about eighteen;‡ and not 'both together, nine years before,' as Mr. P. erroneously states it. Daniel was employed at court, and Ezekiel lived at a distance, and we do not read of any intercourse between them. The first six chapters of Daniel are *historical*, and relate to miraculous interpositions of God in behalf of his people; and not the most remote intimation of a project for recovering Jerusalem is found in the whole book. Many of Ezekiel's visions, and all Daniel's, are dated after the desolation of Jerusalem; when the poor dispersed captives could have no hope of recovering or rebuilding that city by any stratagem: nay, some of Daniel's visions are dated after the return of the Jews from Babylon, by the decree of Cyrus.

Mr. P. has no right to find fault with romantick interpretations of Scripture; after having given the most

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\* Ezek. xxix. 14, 15. † Ezek. xxvi. 14. ‡ Ezek. i. 2. Dan. i.

*ridiculous exposition* of Ezekiel's vision, that the world has yet seen! His own words may justly be retorted on him. 'Such applications of Scripture shew the fraud or extreme folly, to which the credulity of modern infidelity can go!'

Mr. P. asserts that Ezekiel's prediction concerning the forty years desolation of Egypt never came to pass: but it requires a complete knowledge of all that happened in those ages to prove this.—It is certain that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt, and carried multitudes of its inhabitants captives: forty years from that time brings us to the reign of Cyrus; when it is probable that the Egyptians, as well as the Jews, were allowed to return home, and inhabit their wasted country.\* And is it not more rational to elucidate the obscurity of history by this prophecy; than to make the obscurity of history an argument against a prophecy, of which every other part, as contained in four chapters, has most certainly been accomplished? Especially when the next verse is fulfilling at this present day: "Egypt shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more among the nations."

### JONAH.†

Mr. P. having greatly diverted himself and his readers, with the story of *Jonah and his whale*; seriously undertakes to prove, that the whole book was a gentile fable, intended to ridicule and satirize the Jews and their prophets!‡

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\* Ezek. xxix. 11—14.

† P. i. p. 59.

‡ P. ii. p. 60—63.



Jonah's conduct, in various particulars, admits of no excuse: yet it is much easier to condemn him, than it would have been to have acted properly in his circumstances. The mariners deserve commendation for their desire to preserve his life: but his narrative, and his manner of speaking concerning the Lord, must have impressed them with awe, lest they should provoke the God of Israel, by putting his servant to death.

The mariners at first “called every man *upon his god*,” but after they had heard the words of Jonah, they “feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to JEHOVAH, and made vows.” They had been idolaters; but probably were converted to the true religion by what they saw and heard on this occasion.

The Almighty God was certainly able to prepare a great fish to swallow Jonah, and could preserve him alive to the third day in its belly; however profane scoffers may ridicule the narrative. The fables of Hercules swallowed by a sea-monster, and ship-wrecked Amphion carried to shore by a dolphin, seem to have been derived from the vague report of this transaction.

Jonah's conduct and disposition at Nineveh too much ‘resembled that malevolent spirit, that blackness of character, which men ascribe—to the devil;’ that is, depraved nature too much shewed itself. Yet he should not be blamed for delivering his message faithfully. His conduct is unparalleled in Scripture; no one there mentioned with approbation, shewed so proud, angry, impatient, self-seeking. and presumptuous a disposition, as he did.—Jeremiah appealed to the Lord, “that he had not desired the woeful day,”

which he predicted: he declared, that if the people “ would not hear, he would weep in secret places for “ their pride;” and his lamentations evince his sincerity. Moses preferred death to the destruction of his ungrateful countrymen, even with the greatest advantage to himself and family.—“ Rivers of waters ran “ down David’s eyes, because men kept not God’s “ law:” and Paul had continual heaviness and sorrow of heart on account of his unbelieving countrymen. So that *prophesying evil* does not incline men *to wish for it*: because all do not prefer their own credit to the glory of God and the happiness of multitudes, as Jonah did most wickedly on one occasion.

The Creator’s *partiality*, if Mr. P. will use that word, appears as much in other histories as in that of the Bible. The Lord does certainly afford advantages to some nations and individuals, which he withholds from others: but the Scripture never represents him, as conniving at the sins of his favoured nation, or punishing the guiltless because they did not belong to it. On the contrary, he says, “ You only have I known “ of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish “ you for all your iniquities.”\*

Learned men agree that *three days, and three nights*, in the Hebrew idiom, denote any portion of time ending on the third day: and if neither ancient nor modern Jews object *on t<sup>his</sup> ground*, to the application of the history of Jonah to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; it does not seem very candid in others

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\* Amos iii. 2.

to attempt it. Our Lord's express testimony confirms the whole account, so that it stands on all the evidence of the New Testament: and the history is replete with most important instruction.

As to the other *minor prophets*, Mr. P. leaves them 'to sleep undisturbed in the laps of their nurses the 'priests;' content with having ridiculed *the idea of the greater and lesser prophets*,\* which common sense explains to mean no more, than that the books of the latter are much shorter than those of the former.

'I have now,' says this confident writer, 'gone 'through the Bible, as a man would go through a 'wood, with an axe on his shoulder, and fell trees;'<sup>†</sup> a man *going through a wood with an axe on his shoulder* differs widely from *cutting down the whole wood*:<sup>‡</sup> and Mr. P.'s cavils, against the several books in the Bible, differ as widely from subverting their authority by unanswerable arguments. If he supposes that he hath done his work; "It is as when an hungry man "dreameth that he eateth; but he awaketh and his soul "is empty."

For I appeal to every impartial man, who will bestow pains fairly to investigate the subject, whether Mr. P. has substantiated a single charge against the writers of the Old Testament; except as its contents do not accord to men's common opinions; its arrangement is not formed on modern notions of method; and some trivial alterations have taken place in the text.

Convinced of Mr. P.'s talents and determined resolution in his undertakings, and conscious, that a joy-

\* P. i. p. 18.

† P. ii. p. 64.

‡ P. i. p. 18.

less life and hopeless death must be the consequence, if the only source of my confidence and consolation could be torn from me; I opened these books with a sort of trepidation. But I must declare, that I never felt a firmer assurance that the Bible is the word of God, than I do at this moment; having found, that misapprehension, misrepresentation, wit, declamation, and invective, are the sum total, which the keenest capacity and most virulent enmity can produce against it.

## CHAP. V.

*The New Testament.*

## THE GOSPELS.

**MR. P.** opens his attack on this part of Scripture by saying, ‘The New Testament, they tell us, is founded on the prophecies of the old; if so, it must follow the fate of its foundation.’\*—Injudicious concessions have often been made by the friends of truth: and this seems to be one. The prophecies of the Old Testament prepared the way for the coming of Christ; and, as accomplished in him, they constitute an unanswerable proof that christianity is a divine revelation: and the testimony of our Lord and his apostles so confirm the divine inspiration of the Old Testament, that if strict *demonstration* could be brought against it, believers would be reduced to great difficulty; but that is impossible.—In other respects the New Testament stands on its own basis: internal and external evidence confirm most fully it’s divine original; and this *alone* might be sufficient to support the authority of the Old Testament also, if we had not other proof in abun-

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\* P. ii. p. 64.

dance. But indeed the two parts of Scripture give stability and symmetry to each other. The Old Testament led to an expectation of the New, as its completion; the New Testament presupposes the truth of the history, and the divine authority of the laws, ordinances, and instructions, of the Old.

Mr. P. admits in an hesitating manner that such a person as Christ might exist: adding, that ‘there is no ground either to believe or disbelieve!’\* Indeed!—Why, was the existence of any one man since the creation so undeniably proved? It would be comparatively a moderate degree of scepticism, to doubt the existence of Alexander, Julius Cæsar, or Mahomet; for the effect of their existence, on the state of mankind in all succeeding ages, is very small, compared with that produced by christianity: and how could that religion have existed, if Christ had not existed?

It is now generally allowed, that Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph in the line of Solomon, and Luke that of Mary in the line of Nathan, sons of David. The method in use among the Jews, in keeping their registers, required the name of Joseph to be inserted, instead of Mary his wife, as constituting a link in the chain or pedigree: and it was proper that both genealogies should be given. This solution of the difficulty is so obvious and satisfactory, that it is wonderful any difference in sentiment should have prevailed among learned men on the subject. The writers of

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\* P. ii. p. 65.

the New Testament would not have had common sense, if they had inserted manifest contradictions in their narratives: and forgery could have no occasion for them, as it would have been very easy for one of them to copy from the others. Indeed lists of names are strange things to forge! Though I firmly believe that the evangelists wrote by the superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit; I suppose they copied such matters from the publick registers: and as none of the ancient enemies of christianity attempted to disprove these genealogies, while the original registers existed; it will be wonderful, if *proof* should now be given that they were falsified.

The genealogy of Matthew, from David to Christ, contains no more than twenty-seven generations, and Mr. P. asserts on this account that ‘it is not so much ‘as a reasonable lie:’ for he computes that, upon an average, every one in this succession lived to the age of forty, before his *eldest son* was born. He should have said, his *eldest surviving son*, yet that would have been but little to the purpose. For Solomon was not David’s eldest son; Abijah was not Rehoboam’s:\* and after the captivity, the line might be continued in the younger male branches. We know also from the history, that the three immediate successors of Jehoram, son of Jehosaphat, are omitted in the genealogy, it is uncertain on what account; as is likewise Jehoiakim the father of Jeconiah. There were therefore nineteen generations from David to the captivity: and

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\* 2 Chron. xi. 18—21.

similar omissions might occur in the subsequent part of the genealogy.

Mr. P. to strengthen this argument asserts, that 'Solomon had his house full of wives and mistresses at the age of one and twenty.' But where did he learn this? Solomon had one wife when his father died, and soon after he married Pharaoh's daughter. He might have many other wives and concubines at the same time for any thing we know; but the Scripture no where mentions them.

Mr. P.'s language concerning the miraculous conception of Christ, is such a mixture of misrepresentation, absurdity, indecency, and blasphemous impiety, as perhaps never was equalled! It deserves and requires no answer: and it is too vile even to bear being further exposed to just contempt and abhorrence!

The Holy Ghost has hitherto been supposed to be, either *a divine person, according to the doctrine of the Trinity; or a created spirit of supra-angelick dignity; or a peculiar mode of divine operation:* but who ever thought of understanding that expression to mean *a ghost, or departed spirit*, according to the vulgar acceptance of the word?—The language of Scripture teaches us nothing more, than that the divine power of the Holy Spirit *miraculously* produced the human nature of Christ in the womb of the virgin; and that he was thus *truly man*, though conceived and born without the defilement, which is communicated to all the natural descendants of fallen Adam.

Had Mary's testimony to the appearance of the angel, and the miracle of her pregnancy, been *single and unsupported*, it would not have been entitled to credit:



but connected with the preceding prophecies, the testimony of Zacharias and Elizabeth, and the well-known circumstances attending the birth of John Baptist, and confirmed by all the subsequent events, it becomes credible in the highest degree: for every proof of christianity authenticates it.

Mr. P. touches but slightly on the *disagreement* of the evangelists, in their histories of the events that occurred from the birth to the death of Christ: but it is an old objection which must not pass unnoticed. Had the four evangelists recorded precisely the same miracles, discourses, and events, with the same circumstances; the charge of forgery would have been more plausible. If four authors should give us as many histories of certain interesting transactions in China or Japan, not writing by concert, each would record such facts as had more immediately fallen under his observation, with such circumstances as most engaged his attention; and each would follow his own peculiar plan. When these histories were published, events would be found recorded in one, which were not mentioned in the other, with *apparent* incongruities which a little attention might reconcile; and the order of the narrative would not be exactly the same in them all. And on this ground a man might stand forth, and affirm that they were impostures and contradictory legends.—Now suppose four other men to give each an account of some transactions in a remote part of the world; and no difference at all to be found in their books, but that of style and manner; and another person should on this ground exclaim, ‘These men have combined to deceive us:

‘ had not this been the case, there must have been some variations in their narrative:’ we might leave it to any man of candour to determine which of these objections would be most reasonable.

Industry, ingenuity, and malice have, for ages, been employed, in endeavouring to prove the evangelists inconsistent with each other: but not a single *contradiction* has hitherto been proved upon them. Their circumstantial variations, in relating the same event, only evince that they did not copy from one another. They recorded those facts, which most impressed their own minds as important: they wrote in succession, and did not think the preceding historians needed any vouchers: and it suited their design, to omit many things for the sake of brevity, and that they might relate others of equal moment.—But one thing is fact. These four men, of whom such contemptuous things are spoken, have done, without appearing to have intended it, what was never performed by any authors before or since. They have drawn a perfect human character, without a single flaw! They have given the history of one, whose spirit, words, and actions, were in every particular exactly what they ought to have been! who always did the very thing which was proper, and in the best manner imaginable! who never once deviated from the most consummate wisdom, purity, benevolence, compassion, meekness, humility, fortitude, patience, piety, zeal, and every other excellency! and who in no instance let one virtue or holy disposition entrench on another; but exercised them all in entire harmony and exact proportion! The more the histories of the evangelists are

examined, the clearer will this appear: and the more evidently will it be perceived, that they all coincide in the view which they give of their Lord's character. This subject challenges investigation, and sets infidelity at defiance! Either these four men exceeded in genius and capacity all the writers that ever lived; or they wrote under the special guidance of divine inspiration: for without labour or affectation they have effected, what hath baffled all others, who have set themselves purposely to accomplish it.

Indeed that man seems to have a peculiarly vitiated taste in *composition*, who does not admire the simplicity connected with sublimity, with which the evangelists record the miracles of Christ. I should think that even infidels of genius must be struck with the *manner*, in which such astonishing events are related.

The story of Herod's slaying the children *rests* on Matthew's testimony, and on the proofs of *his divine inspiration*: it accords perfectly to the character of that bloody tyrant! and it was not necessary that the succeeding evangelists should repeat it. John Baptist was born at Hebron, at a considerable distance from *the coasts of Bethlehem*; so that Mr. P.'s attempt to prove, from his preservation, that the story belies itself, is ridiculous in the extreme.

Had the evangelists expressly undertaken to give an exact copy of the inscription over the cross of Christ; nothing could have been more easy: but they perfectly agree as to the import of it, which is quite sufficient.

Mr. P. asserts, that 'Peter was the only one of the  
' men called apostles, who appears to have been near

‘the spot at the crucifixion.’ Yet John tells us, that he witnessed the whole scene, and received the orders of his dying Lord concerning his mother. ‘We may infer from these circumstances, trivial as they are,’ that this author knows very little about the subject on which he writes; and numerous other instances might be adduced, if it were worth while.

Peter denied his Lord with cursing and swearing; that is, he disclaimed all acquaintance with him: but he did not deny him to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God. How great soever his crime was; his ingenuous confession of it, and his subsequent labours and sufferings in the cause of Christ, sufficiently entitle him to credit, in his testimony both to the crucifixion and resurrection: but his testimony is a very small part of the evidence on which our faith is surely founded.

Different methods have been taken to reconcile the sixth hour, mentioned by John, with the accounts of the time of our Lord’s crucifixion, as stated by the other evangelists: but if it be allowed a trivial error in some transcriber, which might easily take place in a *numeral letter*; what doubt can that excite in a serious mind as to the authenticity of a narrative, attested in all its leading parts, by four distinct historians? Impostors would have avoided such observable inaccuracies.\*

Matthew is generally allowed to have written before the other evangelists: had they not therefore credited his account of the miracles attending Christ’s

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\* P. ii. p. 71.

death; they would have contradicted it: for the circumstances which he related were of so extraordinary and publick a nature, that they could not have escaped detection, if they had been false.\*

It would have degraded the sacred history, to have noticed such subjects, as Mr. P. proposes in his questions, concerning the saints that arose, and came out of the graves after Christ's resurrection. Our Lord's reply to the frivolous objection of the Sadducees may suffice to answer them all. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." We may indeed add, that there is no reasonable doubt, but these risen saints accompanied their ascending Lord, to grace his triumphs, as the first-fruits of his resurrection. Mr. P. says, 'Had it been Moses and Aaron, and Joshua and Samuel, and David,' (supposing them to have appeared to the people,) 'not an unconverted Jew had remained in all Jerusalem.' It might be asked, how the Jews could have *known* these risen saints to have been Moses and Aaron, &c. except by their own testimony, or by immediate revelation? But waying this: the reader has his option, whether he will credit this assertion of Mr. P. or the words of Christ, "If they believe not Moses and the prophets; neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Matthew alone relates the account of the Roman soldiers who guarded the sepulchre: but does this prove, 'that according to the other evangelists *there were none?*' Will not common sense determine, that

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\* P. ii. p. 72.

*their* silence allows the truth of *his* narrative? By publishing his gospel, and relating the base conduct of the priests and rulers, Matthew had openly challenged them to disprove it if they could: but this they never attempted; and surely they would not have silently endured so disgraceful an imputation, if they had not had substantial reasons for their conduct.

The absurdity of the story, which the rulers put into the mouth of the soldiers, is sufficiently evident: but if men act absurdly, historians are not to blame for recording their actions. The evangelist appealed to the whole nation, that the story was notorious; that it had been propagated immediately after the body of Christ was missing; and that it had continued current till the time when he published his narrative. It is most evident that some of the soldiers had affirmed, they were paid for circulating it: none of them were called to account, that we know of, for this or any other part of their conduct: and no man stepped forth, to say, that such a story had not been propagated, or was not current; that the priests had not bribed the soldiers to spread it; or that they could give a more satisfactory account of the manner in which the body of Jesus had been removed. How could men have been persuaded that such a report had long been current, if they had never before heard of it? or that it was still current, if every body knew it was not so? Or how could an anonymous writer, or rather one who assumed another man's name, have thus appealed to facts, as well known when his work was published, and for some time before; if such facts had been mere forgeries?—Mr. P. indeed argues from the expression, “until this

“ day,” that Matthew did not write the gospel, and that it was manufactured long afterwards. But *seven* or *eight* years would suffice in this case, and warrant a man to use such words. We have abundant proof of the antiquity and genuineness of Matthew’s gospel. But could it be shewn to have been published long afterwards, it would still further establish the fact in question: for an appeal to contemporaries some ages after, that the report concerning the soldiers was commonly circulated till *that day* must be an additional evidence of its truth.

The circumstances of our Lord’s resurrection, as recorded by the four evangelists, have been long known to involve some difficulty, and to have the appearance of inconsistency: insomuch, that Celsus, in the *second century*, brings this as an objection to the christian religion. But Mr. P. by confounding things evidently distinct, and using various methods of embarrassing the subject, has given the whole an air of self-contradiction, very suited to impose on the incautious reader: and, as this subject is more likely to embarrass even *a serious enquirer*, than any other in ‘The Age of Reason,’ I shall endeavour to give a compendious statement of the narrative, as it may be collected by carefully comparing the four evangelists.

Mary Magdalene, the other Mary or Mary the mother of James and Joses, Salome, and Joanna, are the women named in the history: but Luke, having mentioned all the others, except Salome, says, “there were “other women with them.” This company, on the evening of our Lord’s crucifixion, concerted the plan,

and bought the spices, for the anointing of his body: and then retiring, probably to separate lodgings, they “rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandment.” But early on the morning after, they proceeded according to appointment, to *meet at the sepulchre*; for there is no mention of their *previous meeting* at any other place; and thus they reached that spot at different times. Mary Magdalene seems to have set out with the other Mary and Salome, from one place; Joanna, and the other women with her, from another. But Mary Magdalene, being peculiarly fervent in spirit, appears to have out-gone her companions, and to have arrived first at the sepulchre, *while it was yet dark, or day break*;\* and seeing the stone removed, she ran back to inform Peter. In the mean while the other Mary and Salome reached the sepulchre; and finding it open, they went in and saw the angel, or angels. Matthew and Mark mention only one angel, because only one spake to the women: but they do not say there was no more than one. Thus Matthew mentions two demoniacks, where Mark and Luke speak of but one; doubtless because that one was most remarkable, both before and after his dispossession. Though possibly Luke spake of Joanna, and her company.—While these women returned into the city, Peter and John seem to have passed them by another road: and coming to the sepulchre they saw no angels.† But Mary Magdalene, who had followed them, and staid at the sepulchre when they returned, saw two angels, and afterwards Christ himself; who di-

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\* John xx. 1, 2.

† John xx. 3—18.



rectly after appeared to the other Mary and Salome, as they returned to the city.\* In the mean time Joanna and her company arrived at the sepulchre *bearing the spices*: for though the other women are said to have *bought the spices*; yet it is probable that Joanna, and those accompanying her, carried them to the place. When therefore they first entered the sepulchre, they only observed that the body was gone: but afterwards two angels appeared and accosted them.† Then they returned into the city in haste, and meeting with the apostles, before the other women had seen them, they informed them of what they had observed; upon which Peter went again to the sepulchre. About this time the two disciples set out for Emmaus, having heard only the report of these women; and neither that of Mary Magdalene, nor that of the other Mary and Salome.‡ These at length arriving, informed the apostles that they had seen Jesus himself: and soon after on the same day he appeared to Peter also.

There are other ways of reconciling the *apparent* disagreement between the evangelists, in respect of this transaction: yet none can certainly say, that things occurred exactly in this or the other manner. It suffices to shew, that things *might* thus happen, and that the evangelists do not contradict each other. Had the apostles been examined in open court, to prove what Mr. P. calls an *alibi*, I am persuaded the explanations which they could have given of the general narrative, would have removed all appearance of inconsistency,

\* Matt. xxviii. 9—11.

† Luke xxiv. 1—9.

‡ Luke xxiv. 12—34.

as this arises entirely from the brevity, with which they touched upon the leading circumstances. It may, however, be observed, that the primitive enemies of christianity were as implacable at least as any are at present; that they were engaged by interest and reputation, as well as inclination, to prove the apostles false witnesses; that they desired exceedingly to put them to death; and that they certainly possessed more advantages for detecting the imposture, if there had been any, than a modern unbeliever can pretend to after seventeen hundred years: yet they never attempted to disprove the testimony of the apostles respecting the resurrection, or to shew that they contradicted each other.

The variations, in the narratives of the evangelists, are in fact no more than what arose from the occasion. Four men, relating the outlines of such an event, with great conciseness as circumstances impressed their minds, without trying to coincide in their several accounts, will always seem to disagree to the superficial observer. Such abstracts must appear in some measure abstruse to strangers, and especially in future ages: but if fuller investigation remove the difficulties, they rather confirm than invalidate the leading facts which they concur to establish. Let any man consult Rapin, Hume, Burnet, and Macauley, upon some parts of the English history which they have all written: and he will find, even where prejudices have not misled them, that circumstantial variations are discoverable, which require pains to reconcile, and *to form into one consistent narrative, without omitting the most minute particular.*

We do not pretend, that the inspired historians were changed into elegant and methodical writers; but that they were preserved from error, misrepresentation, or material omission. Should their narratives, therefore, not stand the ordeal of criticism, as to the arrangement and manner of composition, it would not at all affect the argument.

Some detached remarks must be added on Mr. P.'s misrepresentations of the subject. The different accounts given by the evangelists, of the *time* when the women arrived at the sepulchre, may be reconciled by considering that they did not all come together. In general none reached the spot before *day-break*, none after *sun-rise*; and minute exactness, in such things, is not at all requisite to historical truth.

Matthew alone mentions the angel's rolling away the stone, but all the other evangelists say it was *rolled away*: so that in fact they confirm his testimony. Matthew says the angel sat *on the stone*: Mr. P. says, that, 'according to the others, *there was no angel sitting on it.*'\* According to Matthew, the angel sat *on the stone*, when he appeared to the *keepers* or Roman soldiers; "and for fear of him they became as "dead men!" But they had so far recovered themselves, as to flee from the place, before any of the women arrived: and the angel or angels then appeared, *not on the stone, but in the sepulchre*. As no intimation is given, that any of the women saw the soldiers, on their arrival at the sepulchre; it is almost certain that they had previously left the place. Matthew in-

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\* P. ii. p. 74, 75.

deed seems to state the *report made by some of them to the chief priests*, as subsequent to the women's departure from the sepulchre: but the whole time required for all these transactions would be very short: and probably the soldiers retired in confusion to their quarters, and did not at first resume their confidence, or come to any determination what to do; till after a while, some of them went to inform the chief priests, and others dispersed rumours among their acquaintance concerning what had happened.—There is not, however, the least ground for Mr. P.'s confident assertion, that they were present, during '*the conversation of the women with the angel.*'

'Thomas,—as they say, would not believe, without having ocular and manual demonstration; *so neither will I*: and the reason is as good for me, and for every person as for 'Thomas!''\* Most certainly, because it was good for nothing in Thomas; but he was guilty of a most absurd incredulity. He that will not believe the combined testimony of several unexceptionable witnesses, is an obstinate unreasonable sceptick: and, if he carry his principles into temporal concerns, he must cease from business, food, and medicine, and die like a wrong-headed fanatic; because he cannot have ocular or manual demonstration, that he shall not be cheated in all his concerns, or poisoned by his cook or apothecary. In respect of another world, and its infinite concerns, the required proof cannot be had, till it be for ever too late.

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\* P. i. p. 9.

Mr. P. introduces the angel as saying of Christ, according to Matthew's account, *behold he is gone into Galilee*; instead of *behold he goeth, or is going*: though the same evangelist just after mentions his meeting the women! Matthew indeed says, "Then the eleven disciples went into Galilee:" but he does not say that they *went on the day when Christ arose*; how then does he contradict the account of John?

It appears from John, that the apostles staid at least eight days at Jerusalem, after our Lord's resurrection: for it was so long before Thomas was convinced, and owned Christ as his Lord and his God; and this does not at all disagree with Matthew's compendious narrative. But Mr. P. boldly says,\* 'It appears *from the evangelists*, that the whole space of time, from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension, is but a *few days*, apparently not more *than three or four*; and all the circumstances are reported to have happened nearly about the *same spot*.' Either Mr. P. is more ignorant of the writings which he would expose, than any other author ever was of his subject, or else he wilfully asserts what he knows to be false. No man, who reads the evangelists, can help seeing, that much longer time, *than three or four days*, was taken up in these transactions, and that *some* of them occurred *at the sea of Tiberias in Galilee*, at least sixty or seventy miles distant from Jerusalem. The writer of the Acts of the Apostles says expressly that our Lord continued forty days on earth, previously to his ascension; and

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\* P. ii. p. 8.

that the apostles began to preach on the feast of Pentecost, that is fifty days after Christ's resurrection.

Mr. P. intimates, that our Lord appointed the meeting in Galilee on the very evening of his resurrection; and he says, that ' Luke tells a story (concerning the disciples at Emmaus) ' which totally invalidates ' the account of his going to the mountain in Galilee.' But does not every attentive and candid man perceive, that the apostles might stay a week or ten days at Jerusalem, where Christ might repeatedly meet them in a private room: that then they might journey into Galilee, and meet him with numbers of those who had formerly known him: and that afterwards, returning to Jerusalem, they might witness his ascension?

He next objects to the '*skulking* privacy of our ' Lord's appearance, in the *recess* of a mountain, or ' in a *shut up house* in Jerusalem.\* The preposition, however, which the evangelist uses, in respect of the mountain in Galilee, is exactly the same with which he introduces the sermon on the mount. "He went " *up into a mountain.*"—A situation similar to that, from which he addressed an immense multitude, could not be a *skulking privacy*, or the *recess* of a mountain.

The Galileans, among whom our Lord had principally lived, were the most proper witnesses of his resurrection: and it cannot reasonably be questioned, but that on this occasion he was seen of five hundred brethren at once; when, probably by reason of the dis-

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\* P. ii. p. 79.

tance, some *still doubted*, till further evidence convinced them. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were less capable of recognizing his person: yet they saw what may be considered as equivalent, in the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, and the subsequent effects.

Important reasons may be assigned, why a competent number of witnesses should be selected to testify our Lord's resurrection, while God himself confirmed their testimony by miracles; rather than that he should shew himself to the rulers and people of the Jews. Had he done this, and had the scribes, elders, and priests, persisted in rejecting him; the testimony of the apostles would have laboured under many additional disadvantages, among other nations, and with future ages. Had they unanimously embraced the gospel, the whole would have the appearance of a scheme for aggrandizing the nation. In either case the evidence to us could not have been at all augmented: for we should have had only the testimony of the individuals who recorded those events; and these would at least have been as liable to objections and cavils as they now are.

Mr. P. remarks, ' that Paul *only* says five hundred ' saw Christ at once, and that the five hundred do not ' say it for themselves.\* ' Was it then to be expected that these five hundred persons should write as many books, to declare they saw the risen Saviour? If they had, we should have been five hundred times as much

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\* P. ii. p. 78.

perplexed, as we now are, in order to determine whether they were *genuine* or not! But Paul, by appealing to about three hundred living witnesses at once, put it into the power of his enemies to disprove his confident assertion, had it not been true: and as it has never been contradicted, it is equivalent to the testimony of multitudes. Mr. P. however, aware that Paul's testimony is very important, endeavours to set him aside: for he says, 'his evidence is like that of a man, who comes into a court of justice to swear, that what he hath sworn before is false. A man may often see reason, and he has always too a right, of changing his opinion; but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.' A man, it is true, has no *power to change matters of fact*; but surely he has *liberty to change his opinion concerning them!*

Paul, by crediting the gospel, which he once hated, *altered his opinion concerning matters of fact*: and when he attested what he had before denied; he only declared himself convinced, that Jesus was risen, and that christianity was true.

Should Mr. P. thus change his opinion concerning the gospel, and publicly avow his conviction of its truth; men of sober mind would think him an unexceptionable witness in the cause: especially, if he fully laid before the world, those arguments by which he had been convinced of his mistake, and unreservedly took shame to himself for his former groundless and violent enmity to the cause of God.

Mr. P. says, 'the story of Jesus Christ appearing after he was dead, is the story of an apparition.' If by a *miraculous* power he entered the room, not with-



out *opening the door, but without its being opened for him*; and if he *disappeared* or ceased to be seen by the disciples, though on other occasions they saw and handled that very body which had been crucified, and those hands and feet, and that side, which had been pierced: what proof do these circumstances afford that it was an *apparition*? Must a risen body be subject exactly to the same things, as our dying bodies are? May not God exert his power as he sees good? The risen Saviour ate and drank to prove that he was truly a living man: but this does not prove that he needed meat and drink.—The reality of the apostles' mission, did not at all rest on the Jews seeing Christ ascend; but on the miracles, which they were enabled to work before the people, after the descent of the Holy Ghost: yet the consistent united testimony of eleven unexceptionable witnesses, to words *spoken in a celler*, or actions done *upon a mountain*, is evidence *in publick*, sufficient to prove any thing which is not impossible; but if a man will not believe, till there be no *possibility of denial or dispute*, the light of eternity alone can convince him. There is proof enough of our Lord's ascension, to satisfy reason, to satisfy reasonable men: and the only wise God did not ask counsel either of ancient or modern sadducees, what kind and degree of evidence it was proper for him to afford.

Mr. P. alludes on this occasion to the ascent of a balloon.\* Now I would ask any reasonable man, whether he doubts the fact of men having ascended

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\* P. ii. p. 8.

into the air by means of a balloon, because he never saw it? The evidence given, that it hath been done, satisfies my mind as completely, as if I had witnessed the scene: and I am as sure of it, as to all practical purposes.

I agree with Mr. P. that it is impossible to *unite inspiration and contradiction*. But I affirm, with a confidence equal to *his*, that he has not proved, and that he cannot prove, a single contradiction upon the evangelists.

It is observable, that Mr. P. cannot find any avowed *opposer* of christianity, previous to A. D. 400, who denied the gospels to be *authentick* histories. The fact is, that Celsus in the second century, Porphyry in the third, and Julian in the fourth, admitted it, and argued against the christians on other principles. Mr. P. is therefore welcome to Faustus as a coadjutor in this undertaking: for he came too late to disprove by mere assertion what both friends and enemies had agreed in for nearly four hundred years.\* Faustus was a Manichean; he contended that Matthew did not write the gospel which bears his name, because he is always *mentioned in the third person*; and he has been generally treated as a very ignorant, or a very dishonest, man for this attempt. Mr. P. is also welcome to all the help that forged gospels can give him: for *forgery always implies the existence of the thing counterfeited, and commonly its excellency likewise*. And the hereticks who at the commencement of christianity, rejected as false all the New Testament, at least testified that the book *then* existed,

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\* P. ii. p. 84, 85.

and was generally deemed authentick and divine, though they refused to submit to it's authority. The inducements indeed to forgery, in the primitive times, were poverty, stripes, contempt, imprisonment, and martyrdom!—Mr. P.'s sneers at *possessions* may excite the laughter of some readers, but do not at all disprove the facts authenticated by the evangelists. And if the type and the anti-type, the prophecy and its fulfilment actually coincide; as the key and lock exactly fit together, notwithstanding the greatest intricacy of wards: the word *picklock* will never convince a rational man, that they were not intended for each other.

#### THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Mr. P. has scarcely said any thing about this book, except that it is *anonymous* and *anecdotal*.\* But it is in fact an *avowed* appendix to St. Luke's Gospel, and inscribed to the same person. And it is of far more consequence in the argument, than this slight notice seems to intimate: for it certainly gives us a most distinct and probable account of an undeniable fact, which it is impossible by any other means to account for, namely, *the success of christianity, after the crucifixion of its Founder, in opposition to all the authority, learning, and religion of the world, by the labours of a few poor fishermen, and others of equally obscure rank in the community.* Admit this narrative to be true; and the resurrection of Christ, with the divine authority of the Scriptures, is established beyond dispute: deny it; and besides the difficulty of disproving

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\* P. ii. p. 23.

so long received an history, it becomes necessary to give some other probable account of the *early* prevalence of the gospel, which is rendered indisputable by the testimony even of pagan writers.

The conversion of St. Paul likewise is recorded in this book; which Mr. P. indeed denies to have been miraculous. Does he then mean that the light above the brightness of the sun, the articulate voice calling to Saul by name and discoursing with him, and the other circumstances of the apostle's narrative, may all be ascribed to a flash of lightning?—The extraordinary change in the conduct and principles of Paul were notorious to all the world: and his own history of the manner in which it took place must be deemed authentick, till it be proved either *false* or *impossible*. He gave sufficient proof, that he did not attempt to impose on others: and the facts which he relates were of such a nature as to exclude the possibility of his being himself deceived: while his subsequent blindness for three days, and the silence of his companions, who would have contradicted his account had it been false, combine to establish it.

Mr. P. objects to Paul's testimony to christianity, because he was a *zealot*; or in other words because he spake and acted as a man in earnest: as if no man were an unexceptionable witness, who thoroughly believes his own testimony, and is ready to lay down his life in confirmation of it!—The difference between a *fact* and a *doctrine* in this case is not to the purpose: for admit the *facts*, by which the apostle was convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah; and the *doctrine* which he preached must be owned to be divine.

That Paul had been *extremely* prejudiced and violent against christianity must be allowed; and this rendered his conversion the more wonderful: but he ran into no extremes, in his zeal for the gospel: at least his vehement zeal was gentle, loving, patient and prudent, and he seemed disposed to treat no one with severity except himself.

#### THE EPISTLES OF PAUL.

Mr. P. seems to have very little examined this part of Scripture! for he scarcely notices any particular in it, except the apostle's discourse concerning the resurrection, which he strangely mistakes, or misrepresents.

‘ If,’ says he, ‘ I have already died in this body, and am raised again in the same body, it is presumptive evidence I shall die again.’ This objection entirely coincides with the cavil of the ancient Sadducees, and is answered by our Lord himself. Certainly this view of a resurrection is gloomy enough: but the apostle's doctrine of “ this mortal putting on immortality, and this corruptible putting on incorruption,” has a very different aspect.—Mr. P. says he should prefer a ‘ better body, with a more convenient form;’ and he thinks that every animal has in many respects the advantage of us. I apprehend some deists may so far reverence the Creator, as to deem Mr. P.'s language on this subject reprehensible, and savouring of ingratitude: nay, perhaps they may be disposed to maintain, that the erect structure of the human body best suits the rational nature; and that the astonishing ad-

vantages, which our *hands* afford us, give us a decided pre-eminence over all other creatures here below. We have however such bodies as it hath pleased God, and we must exist in another world according to his good pleasure, whatever we may *choose* or hope.

Mr. P. next retorts the apostle's words upon him, and repeatedly calls him *a fool!* But had he duly considered the nature of *death*, which is not *absolutely ceasing to exist*, but *ceasing to exist in the former manner*; he would, as a naturalist, have seen, that except *seeds die*, they are not quickened. “Unless they *die* they abide alone,” as our Lord also says; who is thus involved with the apostle in our author's peremptory charge. The seed, before it grows, ceases as much to be a grain of corn, as a man at death ceases to be a living man; and is as absolutely irrecoverable to its former mode of existence by any human power: yet it springs up into a new life, incomprehensibly, by the power of God, as men will rise at the last day. So that the illustration is sufficiently just and clear; even though *ingenuity* could find out some shades of difference, with which men in general are wholly unacquainted.

The rest of the epistolary writings are passed over by our author, with the same kind of neglect as he shewed to the minor prophets; except that he insinuates they were *forged*, and pretends that they are of no consequence in the argument; which will be considered in another place.

I suppose, his wit, in saying, ‘the whore of Babylon has been the common whore of all the priests; and each has accused the other of keeping the

‘strumpet,’ is intended as his confutation of the Apocalypse; for, this sally and an assertion; ‘that it is a book of riddles, which requires a revelation to explain it,’ is all that he advances concerning this part of Scripture. Yet the numerous predictions it contains, and the undeniable accomplishment which many of them have already received, amounts to a complete moral demonstration that it is the word of God.

Having gone through Mr. P.’s objections to the New Testament; I must declare my complete assurance, that, after all his most confident declamations about contradictions, lies, and impostures, he has not substantiated one single charge. And it would be easy to retort upon him: for the instances of disingenuity, misrepresentation, wilful calumny, or astonishing ignorance of the subject, which might be produced, were that necessary, are exceedingly numerous. And thus I leave the matter to the judgment of the candid and impartial reader.

I shall now proceed, in a second Part, to call the reader’s attention to several important subjects, which are not peculiar to any part of Scripture, but relate in some measure to the whole of the sacred oracles. In doing this, I mean both to exhibit the great outlines of that positive proof, on which I believe the divine inspiration of the Scriptures; and the real nature and tendency of the religion contained in them.

## BOOK II.

## CHAPTER I.

## REVELATION.

‘REVELATION, when applied to religion, means ‘ something communicated *immediately* from God to ‘ man.’\* By this definition Mr. P. begs the question: for if revelation means an *immediate* communication from God to man; then indeed nothing communicated from God to us, by the intervention of other men, whether speaking or writing, can be properly so called. The definition may, however, be admitted, in respect of the *original source* whence all revelation is derived: but if it pleased God, *immediately* to communicate to one man, what he meant him to declare to others in his name, and to *authenticate by proper credentials*; the real, or generally received, sense of the word *revelation* will be preserved, though it be communicated from one man to another, over the whole earth, and to the latest ages. The doctrine or precept came originally from God, by *immediate* communication, and was no human discovery or imposition.

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\* P. i. p. 5, 6.



Mr. P. allows that God has the power to make such a communication, if he pleases; but thinks it improbable he ever should:\* and he is confident that God *cannot* enable the man, who first receives this communication, to authenticate it to any other person, so as to render belief of it a duty! This is a very extraordinary assertion! I am able to send a message or a letter by a servant, or in some other way; and to give *full assurance* to a person at a distance, that it comes from me. I can make my will, and so attest it, that, after my death, all parties concerned shall be entirely satisfied it was *my* act and deed: and yet the omnipotent and eternal God *cannot* send a message or make known his will, by the intervention of any servant or messenger! Is this *reason*, or absurd and daring *presumption*? To support such a system, it was necessary to *assert* that miracles are impossible, and prophecies impostures and lies; and then to affirm, that we can have no proof but *heresay* of any supposed revelation! On this  $\xi$  and Mr. P. may stand; provided he can *demonstrate* principles: but if they be merely *assumed* and *false*, it must sink under him. For if a man comes with the rod of Moses in his hand, as well as with “Thus saith the LORD” in his mouth; the miracles which he performs are the seal of his mission, and his testimony can no longer be called *heresay* and *assertion*.

Mr. P. ventures on another definition of *revelation*; and says, ‘It is communication of something which

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\* P. ii. p. 95, 96.

the person did not know before.\* If so, then every accession to our knowledge, however obtained, might be called a revelation: which surely will not help us to affix right ideas to words. From this vague proposition our author infers, that all the historical and *anecdotal* part of the Bible is not within the compass of 'the word *revelation*, and therefore is not the word of God.' But surely God may reveal past events, of which no other information could be obtained. "By "faith," and consequently by revelation, "we understand that the worlds were framed by the word "of God."† Whatever traditionary information Moses might receive, concerning the creation, the fall, the deluge, and other events preceding his own time; he might be immediately instructed, and guided by an *infallible superintending inspiration*, in recording them. This was needful to enable him entirely to distinguish between truth and error in tradition; to know such things as had not been retained in the memory of mankind; and to form a history fully adequate to the ends proposed. In like manner, a similar superintending influence would be requisite, to preserve the sacred historians from falling into error or misrepresentations, through forgetfulness or prejudice, even in respect of those facts of which they had personal knowledge: and it would be still more necessary, when their information was received from others, either by word or writing. So that the idea of *revelation*, in its more general meaning, does not suppose the writer to be wholly ignorant of his subject, or to make no use of

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\* P. i. p. 14.

† Heb. xi. 3.

his knowledge and opportunities: but merely, that the infallible superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit preserved him from errors and prejudices, and all other causes of misapprehension or falsehood; and immediately communicated such things, as he would otherwise have omitted, through ignorance or forgetfulness.

I am induced to stand this ground, in respect of *the divine inspiration of every part of the scriptures*: because the sacred writers, for themselves and for each other, expressly and constantly claim it; so that their writings are together called *the oracles of God*. It is evident, that the Jewish Scriptures, in the days of Christ and his apostles, were nearly if not entirely the same as the Old Testament is at present: yet they are continually quoted in the New Testament, in a peculiar manner, as divine inspiration. And if we allow this to the historical part of the Old Testament; we can hardly deny it to the writings of the apostles and evangelists, which contain the only account extant in the world of the origin and success of christianity. The apostle Peter ranks the epistles of Paul among the *other Scriptures*;\* the sacred writers always speak with authority, as in the name of the Lord; and it will appear that their books have been regarded as the word of God, even from the primitive times. There seems no alternative, between admitting their claim to *inspiration* in the fullest sense, and utterly denying it. If some parts of the Scriptures

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\* 2 Peter iii. 16.

are inspired, but others not: we want either *another revelation* to enable us to distinguish between the word of God, and the word of man intermixed with it; or else an infallible authority on earth, to which we may appeal: and so we must either have recourse to the Pope, who has the title by prescription; or to those learned men, that give up the inspiration of some parts of Scripture in defending that of the rest, and who ought to oblige us by exactly distinguishing between them.

If the whole Scripture be inspired, sober critics may generally discover the interpolations and variations, which have occurred in a lapse of ages; and thus distinguish the word of God from human additions: and if a few passages still remain doubtful, the cause of truth will not be affected. But if the line be not exactly drawn between the infallible word of God, and human opinions or dubious passages; every one who is put to difficulty in maintaining his sentiments, by the authority of Scripture, will evade the argument, by contending that the text in question is not inspired: thus the standard of truth and duty will be rendered entirely vague and uncertain: and it will not be much worth while to contend for the *authenticity* or *genuineness* of these ancient records, if we give up their divine authority, as the infallible rule of our faith and practice.

Mr. P. says, that ‘Revelation could not make fictions true.’ It might, however, preserve men from writing fictions, and lead them to record all needful truth: and few have occasion to be told, how partial

and delusive most histories are, through the passions and misapprehensions of historians.

He observes in another place,\* that ‘not only *unchangeableness*, but even the *impossibility of a change* taking place, by any means or accident whatever, is an idea that must be affixed to what we call the word of God.’ Now what is this but asserting without the least proof, that God cannot give a revelation of himself to his creatures? Notwithstanding the imperfections of language, the want of an universal language, the errors of translators, copyists, and printers, &c.; authors make a tolerable shift to communicate their sentiments to mankind, (some of them even to remote ages and nations,) with little hazard of material mistakes: and cannot the almighty and only wise God do the same?

Though Mr. P. asserts, that translations of revelation can in no degree be depended on; and thence argues against the Bible:† yet he thinks translations may very well answer the purpose, in respect of natural knowledge, which is *his revelation*. ‘There is now nothing new to be learned from the dead languages: all the useful books are translated, and the time expended in teaching and learning them is wasted.’‡ but translations may not always be exact, and the knowledge of the original languages is very useful: yet good versions will suffice to afford the unlearned reader a competent knowledge of all that is essential in any book; learned men will give warning to their neigh-

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\* P. i. p. 19.

† P. i. p. 26.

‡ P. i. p. 37.

bours, if a palpably false translation be palmed upon them, of any work which interests mankind in general; and even the dissensions among christians in this land evince the fairness of our translation of the Scriptures; for all parties commonly refer to it. In like manner, the contests between christians and Jews, and the controversies carried on with real or supposed hereticks, warrant our confidence that these contending parties so watched over one another, as to prevent all material alterations in those books, to which they agreed in making their appeal.

If any christians reject *reason* in receiving revelation, they act as absurdly, as if a man should put out his eyes, that he may simply avail himself of the light of the sun; instead of putting out his candle as of no further use. *Reason* should be employed in weighing the evidences, and understanding the meaning, of *revelation*: and *faith* itself, in the common affairs of life, constitutes one important exercise of our rational faculties, by which we derive *information from testimony*, in a variety of cases, with which we could not otherwise be sufficiently acquainted for practical purposes. As far indeed as this exercise of our understanding relates to *the testimony of God in scripture*, it is so connected with the state of the will and affections, and produces such effects upon our whole conduct: that we, as fallen creatures, are morally incapable of it, without the influences of divine grace; and our vain fallible *reasonings*, with the conclusions deduced from them, must not be put in competition with the unerring decision of the word of God: nevertheless divine faith is in all respects most reasonable, and one of the highest uses of our rational powers.

Mr. P. seems to consider *false revelations*, as a proof that there is no *true revelation* :\* but do forged bank-bills prove that no genuine bank-bills exist? Nay, does not common sense deduce the opposite inference? Indeed false revelations could never have obtained credit; if men had not generally deemed a revelation possible, desirable, and even probable. We should then carefully distinguish between the precious and the vile; and not reject all together.

Revelation may be considered as *immediate* to the person who receives it from the Lord; and *mediate*, to all that receive it from him to whom it was first communicated. It relates to doctrines, precepts, or facts; and to things past; and present, (in time though invisible to us;) and future, as the day of Judgment and an eternal world. A communication from God of things wholly unknown before, and undiscoverable by other means, is an *entirely new revelation*: but immediate information concerning things in some measure known before, or discoverable in other ways, is a *partial revelation*. When new truths were revealed, new ordinances instituted, and material changes in religion introduced; unequivocal miracles were necessary to authenticate them, and to seal the prophet's mission and prove his authority. But where the messenger, though immediately inspired, was only employed to enforce those truths and precepts which had before been divinely attested, miracles were not absolutely necessary; (though they might be very useful in exciting the attention of the people;) for the appeal might

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\* P. i. p. 41.

be made to a preceding authenticated revelation. No *apparent* miracles can prove the truth of any doctrine, which contradicts the essential principles of a former authenticated revelation: such as JEHOVAH being the one living and true God, the heinousness of idolatry, &c. : but the excellent nature and tendency of a doctrine may be a corroborating evidence of its divine original. These thoughts, however, make way for another subject, which requires a particular consideration.



## CHAPTER II.

## MIRACLES.

MR. P. endeavours to confound *miracles* with *monsters*, *absurdities*, *impossibilities*, or natural uncommon events. ‘No one thing,’ says he, ‘is a greater miracle than another; an elephant not a greater miracle than a mite, a mountain than an atom!’ But whoever conceived *any of these creatures* to be *miracles*?\*—The ascension of a balloon, electricity, magnetism, and the recovery of a drowned person, are said ‘to have every thing in them which constitutes the idea of a miracle.’ Whereas nothing answers the proper idea of a miracle, which well informed persons can account for on natural principles; though it may answer the purpose of impostors in deceiving mankind. Will any man affirm that the miracles, said to have been wrought when Moses waved his rod, can be thus accounted for? What *natural* efficacy could fill Egypt with frogs, flies, lice, or locusts, exactly at the time when it was foretold they would come? or turn the waters into blood? or cause thick darkness for three days in the whole land, while Goshen enjoyed the light? or destroy in one night all the first-born

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\* P. i. p. 56, 57.

of man and beast? or divide the sea, for the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of Pharaoh? Could an artful man impose on the senses of two whole nations, in such matters, as a juggler can deceive a few people in a room? By what natural powers, which philosophy may explain, could Christ give immediate sight to a man born blind, cure inveterate paralyticks in a moment, and give *calmness* and rationality to distracted persons, and soundness to withered limbs? How could he restore full health at once to such as languished in fevers, or call the dead out of their graves? Could multitudes be persuaded that they saw these effects, when they saw them not? Could not the rulers, who crucified Jesus, have disproved his pretensions to miracles, if he had not wrought them? Would they and their posterity to this day have imputed them to magick, or similar causes, if they could have denied them? Did not these miracles challenge investigation from the best informed and most inimical persons? Were not time, place, and circumstances particularly mentioned; and the appeal thus made to vast multitudes? What have magnetism, electricity, balloons, or magical deceptions, in common with such miracles? In some cases the *suspended* principle of life may be restored by proper means; yet such humane efforts often prove unsuccessful: but when did Christ or his apostles fail of accomplishing their purpose? If among ten thousand supposed to be dead, one should be merely in the state of a strangled man; who could certainly know that one from all the rest, as carried forth to be buried, or as laid in the grave? And should any person now go forth, in the presence of as-

sembled multitudes, and say “Young man arise,” “Lazarus come forth;” would not his pretensions be soon exposed?

‘The lameness of the doctrine, which needs a miracle to prove it,’\* means its contrariety to our false notions and corrupt affections; and it implies, that we should not have discovered it without revelation. The argument therefore stands thus: ‘Every doctrine is *lame*, that we cannot know without revelation, or are not disposed to receive: so that revelation is needless and useless: miracles are only needful to support revelation; therefore all miracles are imposture; and cannot authenticate revelation:’ And thus our reasoner completely argues in a circle!

Miracles confirming important truth and giving authority to divine injunctions, answer far other purposes, than ‘to make people stare and wonder.’ They do not stand on the testimony of a *single* reporter, as if *Mr. P. should tell us he wrought a miracle in his study*; but on the testimony of hundreds and thousands of witnesses.—Who would have believed Lunardi, if he had told us, that he had ascended into the air in the deserts of Arabia; when no such event had ever *here* been witnessed? But as he ascended before ten thousand spectators, what reasonable man can doubt it? Or who in future ages will dispute the veracity of the authors who record it? The dilemma is therefore, not, whether it be more ‘probable that nature should go out of her course, or *a man tell a lie*.’ but whether it be more probable, that God, for wise reasons,

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\* P. i. p. 58.

should suspend or alter the course of nature, on some important occasions; or that ten thousands of witnesses should be deceived in the most evident facts, or combine together to deceive the world. And would not any one be ridiculed, who should gravely say, ‘ It is ‘ more probable that a man should lie, than that people ‘ should mount into the air?’ This I think is a fair statement of the evidence concerning balloons.

‘ It would have approached nearer to the idea of a ‘ miracle, if Jonah had swallowed the whale: this may ‘ serve for all cases of miracles.’\* This may indeed serve for a specimen of Mr. P.’s logick and candour. If a miracle be ‘ an *impossibility attested by a single ‘ witness,*’ his arguing against all miracles is conclusive. Indeed he speaks of miracles as things *naturally incredible*:† and in several places seems disposed to retail Mr. Hume’s famous sophism, that ‘ miracles are ‘ contrary to universal experience;’ which means neither more nor less than *the experience of all who never saw them!* The African prince, who called the Europeans liars, when they told him they had seen rivers and seas congealed by frost as hard as a stone, was of the same *reasonable* disposition! This was contrary to the universal experience of all those who inhabited the torrid zone; and it was more probable men should lie, than that things naturally incredible should be true!—But in fact, miracles must be extraordinary events, to answer the end proposed by them: and if they became so common, that every body had seen or observed them; we should be ready to think them the

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\* P. i. p. 59.

† P. ii. p. 4.

effect of some unknown natural causes, instead of a divine interposition.

Mr. P. says, ‘the most extraordinary of all the things called miracles, is that of the devil flying away with Jesus Christ.’\* The New Testament relates no transaction of this nature: we are there only told, that “the devil took Jesus to the holy city,” “and to the mountain:” and that “he brought him to Jerusalem;” which does not imply, that he was carried through the air, or went without his own free consent, or that it was properly speaking miraculous. So that in this, as in other instances, Mr. P.’s profane ridicule falls on his own absurd interpretation of Scripture.

Revelation has been shewn to be *possible*; and it will hereafter be proved *needful*. The God of goodness and mercy purposes, as we suppose, to make known to mankind his perfections, truth, and will; and to shew them, in what manner he is pleased to be approached and worshipped. He therefore communicates these things to an individual, and orders him to inform others concerning them. But the prophet may on such an occasion say, ‘How shall it be known that the Lord hath sent me? The things to be declared are contrary to men’s notions and practices; the world is full of impositions; how shall I be distinguished from a deceiver?’ Now does it not occur to every reasonable man, that miracles, which could endure the strictest examination, wrought in the presence of multitudes, and frequently repeated or varied, would dis-

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\* P. i. p. 59.

tinguish the true prophet from all pretenders to inspiration, who either wrought no miracles, or such only as were ambiguous and shrunk from investigation? If it be not unsuitable to God to give a revelation to his creatures; it cannot be either improper or impossible for him to affix such a seal to the instructions of his messengers as can neither be denied nor counterfeited, without exposing to shame the man who attempts it. To raise the dead is as easy to omnipotence, as to preserve the living; to restore the withered arm, as to wither the healthy one; and to cure instantaneously the paralytick after thirty eight years, as to send a stroke of the palsy. The glory of God and the benefit of mankind are the ends proposed; the means are obvious. All things may be alike *wonderful* to us; but all are not alike *miracles*: for miracles are effects produced, beyond the powers of man, and contrary to the ordinary course of nature: and when well authenticated, they are equally credible with other events; provided it appear also, that some important end was intended, and some great effects were produced by them. In this view, how different do the miracles of Scripture appear, from the *insulated, ambiguous, uncertain, and useless* miracles, pretended to have been wrought by Vespasian, or in favour of Alexander's army! Though Mr. P. says these are quite as well authenticated as the Bible-miracles!\*

If the miracles ascribed to Moses, or to Jesus Christ and his apostles, were actually performed; it must be allowed, that they were the work of omnipotence, and

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\* P. ii. p. 5.

can no otherwise be accounted for. It would also have been impossible to have forged such stories of publick miracles, so circumstantially related, and to have given them currency among contemporaries. Whole nations, especially of enemies, cannot thus be deprived of their senses, or inhibited the use of them. It would have been equally impossible to have persuaded the next generation, that their fathers had told them of these wonders from their infancy, and that they had seen and heard them; if they had never been told such stories by their fathers. And at what time could the belief have been received either by Jews or christians, that these *miracles had always been credited among them*, had there been no truth in them? The attempt to convince whole nations, or large bodies of people, that from time immemorial such things had been generally known and assuredly believed; and that they had observed certain festivals and institutions in commemoration of them, and were subject to laws and ordinances given at the same time; if the whole had been a forgery, must have been deemed an insult on the common sense of mankind.

The fables, which have obtained credit in different nations, had always some foundation in truth, however distorted. They never specify the *precise time, place, and manner*, in which things happened: and they do not appeal to numerous living witnesses, and challenge investigation. The poets of Greece and Rome did not pretend, that they were eye-witnesses of the stories, with which they embellished their works. Homer and Hesiod vamped up fabulous traditions current among the Greeks: but they did not

declare, that the whole nation, yea, and rival nations also, saw those things; and that they wrote their account *at the time* and *upon the spot*. This could never have obtained credit, even in those days.—But can any man conceive that it would now be possible to invent a history of the remote times of this nation; and to persuade mankind, that it had always been as commonly known among us, as the books of Moses are among the Jews, or the New Testament among christians? And would it not be equally impossible to introduce such an history with *this kind of appeal*, at any future time, had it never before been published?

In order to illustrate the subject, let us consider the single miracle of our Lord's resurrection.—His ignominious death and subsequent glory are evidently predicted in the Old Testament; and his enemies knew, that he had foretold his own resurrection on the third day, and took their measures accordingly. On the third day the body was gone, and they could give no rational account of its removal. Twelve men, of good character and sober understanding, such as any court of justice would allow to be unexceptionable witnesses, constantly affirmed that they saw Jesus after his resurrection, and examined his hands, feet, and side; that they had long known him, and were sure it was he; that they had repeated opportunities of conversing with him, and renewed assurances that they beheld the identical body again alive, which had been nailed to the cross; and at length that they saw him ascend towards heaven. In this testimony they persisted till death, without one of them deviating from it. In support of their testimony, they renounced



every interest, and faced all kinds of dangers and sufferings imaginable; till most of them sealed it with their blood. In all other respects they were most virtuous and holy characters: and their doctrine is so strict, that according to it a forgery of this kind, however well intended, will, unless repented of, ensure a man's eternal damnation. A great number of other witnesses confirmed their testimony; and the silence of their enemies, whose credit, authority, and even safety, were deeply concerned, tends to establish it. In authentick history we are told, that they wrought divers miracles, and communicated similar powers to others, in support of their evidence; and that thus God himself attested it. In the epistles written by them to the churches, they speak of these miraculous powers, as things well known, without fear of being disproved. Their success, in opposition to all the power, learning, genius, and religion in the world, merely by preaching a crucified and risen Saviour, confirms these claims and the event they testified: and the existence and effects of christianity for nearly eighteen hundred years, combine with all the foregoing proofs, to authenticate the miracle of Christ's resurrection.

If that event had not actually taken place, how could such multitudes, prejudiced in various ways against the gospel, have been induced to embrace it? How came they, who continued enemies, to submit silently to the charge of having murdered the Prince of life? Or how was christianity established in the world? No fact was ever so fully confirmed as this, by multiplied and varied testimony; and by permanent, extensive, and most important consequences.

Even the Jews have not denied the miracles of Christ and his apostles, however perplexed to account for them: yet each miracle was equal at least to an unexceptionable witness of the resurrection, and consequently to the truth of christianity. This may also answer Mr. P.'s objection to the testimony of the Jews. I suppose no man ever thought of bringing them forward as *direct voluntary* witnesses to the truth of the gospel: but they indisputably confirm the antiquity of the Old Testament, and the reverence with which it hath been regarded by their nation for at least five hundred years before Christ; they establish all the facts that relate to him, except his resurrection; and their present condition, fulfils the predictions both of the Old and New Testament. But to say, that the Jews are the best evidence '*concerning the truth of the gospel;*'\* is to affirm in other words, that none but enemies should be admitted as witnesses; and that when any of them are convinced and become christians, their testimony is thenceforth inadmissible.

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\* P. i. p. 9.

## CHAPTER III.

## PROPHECY.

MR. P. would persuade us that prophets were merely *poets*, or *musicians*, who made no pretensions to inspiration or prediction; and that christian theologists have advanced them to their present rank!\* This he endeavours to prove, by observing that there ‘is not a word in the Bible which signifies a *poet*.’ Certainly there is in the New Testament;† but if there were not, what would this be to the purpose? There is no word in the Bible for a metaphysician; *ergo* a prophet signifies a metaphysician!—But he says that the prophets wrote in verse! This they did frequently: yet they sometimes wrote in prose.—Occasionally they played also on musical instruments. What then? Did none except prophets write poetry, and use music and psalmody? Did they all do these things? The New Testament prophets are not recorded to have used either musick or poetry. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are expressly and repeatedly called *prophets*;‡ though Mr. P. denies it: and says, ‘it does not appear that they could either sing, play

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\* P. i. p. 17—19. 60, 61. P. ii. p. 54, 55.

† Acts xvii. 28.

‡ Gen. xx. 7. Ps. cv. 9—15.

musick, or make poetry.' But whatever were the original idea of a *prophet* or *prophesying*, who but Mr. P. would have confidently asserted the meaning at present annexed to those words to be a *modern* invention? What! did not the ancient Jews expect a Messiah according to the prophets?—Yet he allows that 'the profession of a SEER: the art of seeing, a visionary insight into things concealed, became incorporated into the word prophet, at the time when Saul banished the wizards!'\* Who can help noting with admiration this writer's consistency!

The words *poet* and *prophet* are in pagan writers in some respects synonymous: because the pagans ascribed poetick raptures to inspiration. Thus the poet was exalted into a prophet, not the prophet degraded into a versifier and musician: And I am confident the sober student of the Bible will find very few passages, in which the idea of a divine impulse, in one way or other, is not evidently connected with the words *prophet* or *prophesying*; except where false prophets are evidently intended.

The moral character of the *man* was not *essential* to the prophetic office. Balaam was a vile wretch; yet his predictions have been wonderfully accomplished: and many such prophets will be detected at the day of judgment. The *evil spirit* from God did not come on Saul, *when he joined the prophets*; but "the Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied."† But when the spirit of the Lord departed from him, an evil

\* P. ii. p. 55.

† 1 Sam. x. 6—12. xix. 20—24.

spirit from the Lord troubled him: \* and then indeed he acted *very ill*; for perhaps mimicking the agitations of the prophets when under divine impulses, he was instigated by Satan to attempt the murder of David.

A *prophet*, in Scripture, does not always denote one that predicts future events: but it means in most places a man supernaturally instructed or directed by the Lord; except when false prophets, the counterfeits of the true, are spoken of. The argument concerning predictions does not however depend on the meaning of a word: it must be decided by facts. Did not the ancient prophets foretel a variety of circumstances concerning the promised Messiah, which were exactly fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth? Did they not mark out the line whence he would spring, the place of his birth, the miracles which he would perform, the usage which he would experience, the sufferings which he would endure, his conduct under them, with that of the Jews and soldiers; his death, burial, and resurrection, and the subsequent prevalence of his cause? If this be undeniable; how absurd is it to pretend, that moderns have falsely dignified Jewish poets and musicians with the title of prophets!

Were not the predictions of the Old Testament exactly descriptive of the events, which have since taken place, respecting Egypt, Tyre, Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation? Does not the New Testament contain predictions of “Jerusalem trodden under foot of the Gentiles;” “the Jews scattered through all nations;” and the superstitions, idolatries,

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\* 1 Sam. xvi. 14, 15. xviii. 10.

usurpations, and persecutions of that church, which hath forbidden to marry, and commanded to abstain from meat, hath enjoined the worship of angels, and been drunken with the blood of christians? Were these predictions unmeaning words, or random conjectures? —Even the Romans, from a slight acquaintance with the Jewish Scriptures, had concluded that some wonderful person was about to arise in the world, when Christ was born, as Virgil's eclogue called *Pollio*, and the famed sybilline books undeniably prove.

‘ Nothing seems more suited to convince a *sensible*  
‘ *but hesitating enquirer* concerning the truth of reve-  
‘ lation, than a careful comparison of’ the twenty-eighth  
chapter of Deuteronomy ‘ with the actual history of  
‘ the Jewish nation to the present day. This appears  
‘ capable of effecting every thing that any external evi-  
‘ dence imaginable can effect: and the demonstration  
‘ thence deduced, which may be continually re-exa-  
‘ mined, at leisure and with deliberation, seems more  
‘ convincing than any miracles, which are *transient*  
‘ *acts*, and can only be reviewed in the testimony by  
‘ which they are authenticated.’\*

I have not entered particularly on the subject of *types*; because I would not rest the argument of the divine inspiration of Scripture on that ground, but on things more obvious: otherwise, to a considerate mind a very wonderful confirmation of the truth may be derived from them, as well as an illustration of it.—But I would here further observe, that there is not a single instance throughout the Scripture, in which any inti-

mation is given, that "it repented the Lord," when a *remote prophecy* was spoken of, for this expression always relates to threatening messages, when averted by reformation, or in answer to the prayers of the prophet. So that 'the Bible makes no fool' of any man; but tells him plainly what to expect in all possible cases.

If revelation were impossible, or could not be communicated; prophecy would indeed be *useless*. But if it ever pleased God to reveal himself to mankind: as miracles were more suited to impress that generation to whom the prophets were sent; so predictions, evidently accomplishing from age to age, while new predictions were still given, must be the most conclusive proof to remote generations. And did the limits of this work admit of it, the predictions, interwoven with all the separate divisions of the Scripture, might be shewn to demonstrate them severally, as well as collectively, to be the word of God. But I shall only add, that, if Mr. P. and his disciples desire to know further the use of prophecy, let this answer suffice: it enables us to shew, that the scoffs and reproaches of infidels were predicted by the sacred writers: that the very abuses of christianity, which they deem unanswerable objections to its divine original, are in every instance a fulfilment of the Scriptures; "thus it was written, and thus it must be:" and that in this respect prophecy enables us to cut off Goliath's head with his own sword.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE VOTED FOR.

MR. P. says, ‘ *They* decided by vote, which of the books—should be the word of God, and which should not.’ ‘ Those books which had the majority of votes, were voted to be the word of God. Had they voted otherwise, all the people, since calling themselves christians, had believed otherwise.’ ‘ Who the people were that did all this, we know nothing of: they called themselves—the church: and this is all we know of the matter.’\* But surely a man ought to know much more of the *time, place, and manner*, in which such an important transaction occurred, than this *ambiguous* statement contains, before he is authorized to infer any thing from it! And *some proof* is requisite to convince thinking men, that all christians have hitherto in every succeeding age taken their faith upon trust, according to this representation. Pious persons indeed have, *privately* and *collectively*, bestowed great pains, during a succession of ages, to distinguish such books, as have internal and external evidence of authenticity and divine inspiration, from

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\* P. i. p. 13.



impostures and writings of doubtful authority: and, before our time, this matter had been so thoroughly investigated, that the most competent judges deem it not dangerous to coincide in opinion with those that have gone before them; though not without enquiry, and some trivial difference of sentiment. The Old Testament evidently stood, a considerable time before Christ, nearly as we now have it. The Greek, Syriack, and Samaritan versions prove this. Our Lord and his disciples quoted the books now received, and the writers of the New Testament generally use the Septuagint. It is commonly believed, on the authority of ancient Jewish writers, that Ezra, a learned scribe in the law, with some very able associates, bestowed much labour in distinguishing the authentick books of Scripture from such as were spurious, and thus formed the canon of the Old Testament. And the more the subject is examined, the greater satisfaction will every candid person feel, in acquiescing in their determination. For all the books we now have harmonize with each other, and with the New Testament, in the grand outlines of religion, and indeed even in more minute particulars when well understood: but the apocryphal books often advance anti-scriptural doctrines, and relate most frivolous and romantick adventures. Every thing in the received Scriptures coincides, in respect of dates, customs, the manners of the times, and historical transactions, with the most authentick records of antiquity: but anachronism, confusion, and inconsistency abound in the Apocrypha.

The canon of the New Testament fluctuated for a long time: but the diversity of opinion related only to a few books; and full *discussion* and *investigation*, not *mere vote*, at length determined the christians to receive them as they now stand; while others were rejected as spurious for *the most substantial reasons*. This surely proves, that great caution was used to prevent all imposition. No reasonable man can doubt, but the christians, who lived in the primitive times, had many advantages in determining this point; and their opinion is therefore entitled to great deference: but learned men are capable of reviewing the subject, and judging of the grounds on which they decided.

It is *certainly known*, that the greatest part of the books now constituting the New Testament were quoted by the most ancient christian writers; and in a manner which shews they derived their instructions from them, and appealed to them as *of divine authority*, and thus to be distinguished from all other books which had been published among them. A vast proportion of the New Testament might be recovered from writers, who lived within the two first centuries. They formed catalogues of the books, and wrote comments on them. Both the orthodox and the hereticks made their appeal to them. Lectures on several parts of them are still extant. Nay, the enemies of christianity uniformly mention them, as the authentick books of christians; while they oppose their contents. So that there is the fullest proof that all the twenty-seven books now collected in the New Testament were received, and read in the assemblies of christians, in the second century; except the epistle to the

Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the second Epistle of Peter, the second and third of John; that of Jude, and the Revelation of John; and that most of these, if not all, were extant and well known, though not generally received as divinely inspired.

What then did Mr. P. mean by roundly asserting, 'that there was no such book as the New Testament till more than three hundred years after Christ?' This appears at first sight one of the most daring falsehoods that ever was ventured upon: but in fact it is a *mere quibble*, though too evidently intended to deceive. Because, if you prove separately every book to have existed, and all but one to have been received as the word of God: still the New Testament did not exist as a book and as it now stands. This is the only way, I confidently affirm, in which Mr. P. can exculpate himself from the charge of direct falsehood: and this is not a very creditable way of opposing other men, whom he reviles as liars and impostors.

Who doubts the authenticity of other ancient books, because the original manuscripts are not forth coming? Who could distinguish them from other ancient manuscripts if they were? He, who demands a kind of proof, which the nature of the cause renders *impossible*, is determined that no *possible* evidence shall convince him.\*

If these books had not from the first been received as genuine; they could never afterwards have obtained that character, much less have acquired the title of the

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\* P. ii. p. 89.

word of God: for that jealous and scrupulous investigation, which Mr. P. degrades under the idea of *voting*, proves the impossibility of a forgery escaping detection, and being received as a divine revelation.

Had the books, which bear the name of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, or Peter, been published after their death, when they had never before been heard of, would not the several persons and churches, to which some of them were addressed; and christians in general, as supposed to have been acquainted with them during the lives of the apostles and evangelists, have declared them to be forgeries? The claim, it is evident, would have been absurd, and the imposture manifest. The doubts that arose concerning the epistle to the Hebrews, which bears not the name of Paul; that of James, which perhaps was *then* thought, as it has *since* been, irreconcilable with Paul's doctrine; the second Epistle of Peter, which seems to have been written just before his death; and the second and third of John, in which he only calls himself the Elder, prove this. Some of these books, and perhaps the Revelation of John, might not be generally known among christians, during the life-time of their authors, or they might not be publicly acknowledged by them: and therefore, after their death, the scrupulous caution of the church long hesitated about admitting them as genuine and divine; till *internal evidence* fully convinced the most accurate judges, that they were entitled to that regard.

At what time, and in what manner, then could it

be possible to fabricate the apostolical epistles, and gain them credit as well known and received from the days of their writers? and how could histories and epistles be forged, so exactly to tally together in the most minute circumstances, without the least appearance of design? If ever books had internal marks of being *genuine*, which no rational man on diligent perusal can doubt; the Acts of the Apostles, and St. Paul's epistles have those marks: and I believe it would be impossible, for all the genius of all the knaves on earth combined together, to write an history, and a number of epistles, so manifestly open, frank, artless, and often immethodical; and yet to make the one so perfectly to confirm the other. If the priests and rulers of the church should have attempted such an imposition, would the people have unanimously consented to the fraud? And would Jews, Pagans, and Hereticks have allowed the forgeries of christians to be genuine and ancient books? A very probable story indeed is devised by our Oracle of Reason, when he supposes, that the very church which held purgatory, dispensations, and other anti-christian tenets, fabricated the epistles which predict and condemn those abuses! But 'the church could write, and therefore could fabricate 'them!' Let Mr. P. or his friends try to fabricate some epistles, and ascribe them to Luther, Calvin, Beza, Cranmer, or some of the reformers; and even allowing them the *immense advantage of saying, they were never before published*, they will soon find it much easier to *write*, than to *establish a literary forgery!*

The resurrection of Christ has been proved; and the apostles shewn to have been faithful witnesses. Two of the gospels were written by them, and have evidently been extant from their days; as all competent judges must allow: and the other two gospels were written by the companions of the apostles. These were published when the facts were recent; and no enemy, for nearly four hundred years afterwards attempted to *disprove* them. The miracles wrought by the apostles and evangelists confirmed the truth of the narrative. In these books the words of Christ are contained; and they authenticate all the rest of the Scripture.\* We have seen, that he always quoted every part of the Old Testament as the word of God; and he gave *his apostles* the keys of the kingdom; of heaven, that whatever they bound or loosed on earth, should be bound or loosed in heaven. This could only be done by their *doctrine*; and all human censures and absolutions are valid, so far as they agree with the doctrine of the apostles, and no further. But where shall we find this doctrine except in their writings? Those writings contain also internal proof both of being genuine and divine; and are confirmed to us by prophecies, which have been fulfilling ever since. Whatever men may now say of the sacred writers, they always speak of themselves and each other, as

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\* Our Lord says, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not *his writings*, how shall ye believe my words?" (John v. 46, 47.) Does not this decide that the books of Moses are *genuine*, with all that believe the testimony of Christ?

declaring the truth of God to mankind, and they demand credit and obedience as the messengers and ambassadors of Christ. On every account, therefore, we have good reason, independently of *ancient opinion*, to receive the whole Scripture as the infallible word of God.—But ‘Christ did not write his own life.’\* What then? If he had, would not its authenticity or genuineness have been as liable to be questioned, as Matthew’s or John’s life of him? This again leads to universal scepticism, and is replete with most arrogant presumption.

Upon the whole, there is not a religion in the world at this day, except christianity, that so much as pretends to be a revelation from God, demonstrated by miracles and prophecies; and rendered successful by a divine power accompanying unarmed unlettered men, preaching a holy doctrine, in the midst of potent and violent enemies, and patiently enduring all sufferings, even to death in the cause. The Jews adhere to the Old Testament; but that evidently foretels and terminates in the New. Mahomet, respecting whom Mr. P. has spoken with great incorrectness, propagated even his licentious religion by the sword, and with many advantages had very little success, till he adopted that measure: and there are no other candidates, which even Mr. P. thought worthy to be mentioned. What hath therefore been discoursed, concerning revelation, miracles, prophecy, and the

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\* P. i. p. 8.

canon of Scripture, contains such a mass of evidence in proof of christianity, as never was, nor can pretend to be, equalled by the advocates for any other religion in the world. .



## CHAPTER V.

## MYSTERY.

MR. P. allows, ‘ in one sense, that every thing is a  
 ‘ mystery to us:—that we, however, know as much  
 ‘ as is necessary for us;—and that it is better the Cre-  
 ‘ ator should perform all for us, than that we should  
 ‘ be let into the secret.’ Yet he calls ‘ mystery the an-  
 ‘ tagonist of truth,’—‘ a fog of human invention that  
 ‘ obscures truth, and represents it in distortion.’\*  
 ‘ To believe there is a God may be *easy*, or *necessa-*  
 ‘ *ry*,’ though atheists would dispute that point: but  
 to know the nature and perfections of God is another  
 matter. The pagan philosopher, who averred ‘ that  
 ‘ the more he thought of the Deity, the less he seem-  
 ‘ ed to know concerning him,’ spake far more rea-  
 sonably on this subject than modern deists. The reli-  
 gion, that has any connexion with an infinite and in-  
 comprehensible God and a boundless eternity, must  
 be in many respects mysterious: unless a *finite* mind  
 can fully understand *infinity*. But Mr. P. repeatedly  
 calls *ethicks religion*; and says ‘ *religious duties con-*

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\* P. i. p. 54, 55.

‘ sist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavour-  
‘ ing to make our fellow creatures happy.’\* Now an  
atheist may do all this: and is not that a singular defi-  
nition of *religious duties*, which admits atheists to have  
been very exemplary in them? No doubt such a reli-  
gion may be as free from mystery, as any thing in the  
world can be.

But mystery, in Scripture, signifies something re-  
lative to God, and his dealings with us, which could  
not have been discovered if it had not been revealed;  
which can only be received by crediting revelation;  
which can be known no further than God has seen  
good to discover it; and which is so connected with  
things unrevealed and incomprehensible, that it can-  
not be fully understood or explained. The believer  
therefore *understands the mystery as far as it is re-  
vealed*, provided he fully credit the whole divine tes-  
timony: but a great deal respecting it still continues  
undiscovered. He knows it not by reasoning, but by  
believing; he is still greatly in the dark, and must wait  
for fuller light till the Lord see good to afford it. In  
this sense religion must be mysterious; and even Mr.  
P.’s *revelation*, that is the *external world*, is by his  
own confession almost as mysterious as the Bible. For  
on that subject he does not confound *mystery* with  
*contradiction and absurdity*.

The Scriptures plainly ascribe divine perfections  
and operations, to the Father, to the Son, and to the  
Holy Ghost; and use the strongest language of *person*

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\* P. i. p. 4.]

*ality* respecting each of them, even in plain commands and promises: and as there can be but one infinite and eternal God, we infer, that He is revealed as subsisting in three Persons; being Three in one sense, and One in another. But *how these things are*, we cannot comprehend, and should not attempt to explain, further than the oracles of God have done it. The *doctrine* is an article of faith; the *modus* is not. We do not say that one is three, or three one, which is a contradiction: but as man consists of a material body, an animal life, and a rational soul; and is thus threefold in some sense, though strictly one individual: so the Deity is One in essence; but in some mysterious manner is Triune. This allusion is not meant as an *illustration* of the subject, for it cannot be illustrated; but it shews, that there is no contradiction in saying that the same Being may be threefold in one sense, and one in another.

A Trinity of *gods* would certainly weaken the belief of one God; but a Trinity of *persons* in the Deity cannot have this effect. Rather it helps and directs the confidence of the believer in the Father's mercy, through the mediation of the Son, and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.\*

The Deity of Christ is another view of this mystery: and Mr. P.'s testimony to this doctrine, as certainly contained in Scripture, is not unworthy attention; though his representation of it be dis-

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\* P. ii. p. 101, 102.

torted and erroneous. Even Voltaire would scarcely honour with his *hatred* such professed christians as denied it. Many other mysteries might be considered; but these alone need be mentioned in this place.

## CHAPTER VI.

## REDEMPTION.

**M**R. P.'s objections to *redemption by the blood of Christ*, constitute a plain proof that no man can help seeing this doctrine in Scripture, if he have not some previous bias on his mind respecting it.

Unless we understand the moral character of God, and the perfect holiness required by his righteous law, and are convinced of our own sinfulness and desert of wrath and condemnation; and unless we allow that "the world lieth in wickedness," and perceive the utter insufficiency of all that we or any other men can do to remedy the numberless evils which fill the earth: it is impossible we can receive, in a proper manner, the *scriptural doctrine of redemption*. But when these things are clearly discerned, and a correspondent disposition of heart is produced: the whole appears to be the plan of infinite wisdom, to display the honour of the divine law, justice, and holiness, in shewing mercy to the vilest transgressors. The Lord, in this wonderful manner, most emphatically shews his hatred of sin, and his judgment of its desert; while he pardons and saves sinners: and thus he makes way for producing in our hearts deep humiliation, dread

and hatred of sin, cheering hope of mercy, and lively love and gratitude, in entire harmony. At the same time, all intelligent beings in the universe, how many soever there are or may hereafter be, will to eternal ages learn from this subject the whole character of God; and receive such instructions concerning his harmonious perfections, as must prove a vast accession to their felicity, and redound exceedingly to his glory.

With these sublime thoughts before us, to what do Mr. P.'s objections amount? Would Satan's exhibiting himself on a cross, in the shape of a serpent, as a punishment for tempting our first parents, have displayed the evil of *our* sins, the justice of God in condemning the wicked, and his mercy in saving believers? Would it have answered one single end, for which the Scriptures inform us the Son of God was manifested? \* And in what respect does Satan now triumph; when by the death of Christ his kingdom is subverted, his cause ruined, and his eternal shame and misery increased? The whole of Mr. P.'s argument on this head implies the supposition, that sin does not deserve punishment, that man is not a sinner, or that it is not proper God should regard the glory of his justice and holiness in shewing mercy.—The shocking charge of *suicide* brought against Christ, if he willingly died for our sins, would at least equally fall on every one, who determined to die, rather than deny the truth, betray a good cause, or desert his friends and country.—The bounty of providence ought indeed to

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\* P. i. p. 12, 13.

awaken our gratitude: but unless conscious of our unworthiness, we are not apt to be very thankful; and if we know ourselves, we shall not be animated to *cheerful gratitude*, till confidence of forgiveness and salvation be inspired.

Did we think ourselves so *good*, as to be *worthy* that the Son of God should come and die for us, we should be justly chargeable with *gloomy pride*; but all true believers admire the love of God in this great transaction, *because they know themselves unworthy of the least of his mercies*.

To suffer, though sinless and in the vigour of manhood, as a condemned person, numbered with malefactors, by an ignominious and torturing execution, in the manner marked as *accursed* in the Old Testament, was far more suited to the idea of an *atoning sacrifice*, than any kind of natural death could have been. The pain and shame of crucifixion, with the anguish of spirit expressed by Christ in the garden and on the cross, far better illustrated the wrath of God he endured for us, and which we must otherwise have born for ourselves to eternity, than the common circumstances of death could have done. Being perfectly holy, he was incapable of remorse and stings of conscience; with firm expectation of the joy set before him, he was not liable to despair; and his divine nature, giving infinite value to his temporary sufferings, rendered eternal duration needless. In all other respects, it behoved him as our Surety to suffer all that *our* sins deserved, and not merely the punishment due to Adam's first transgression.

If men have abused the doctrine of the cross, and de-

duced a corrupt theory of human merits from it,\* we should learn to distinguish truth from falsehood, and not reject both together. It is absurd to suppose *one sinner can merit for another*: but not, that a holy and glorious person should submit to do and suffer many things for sinners, whose nature he had assumed, in order that it might be honourable to God, for his sake and through his intercession, to shew mercy to them. Did no prince ever favour a subject, who was obnoxious to punishment, for the sake of some near relation, who had performed great services and interposed in his behalf?

The idea of pecuniary redemption is a scriptural illustration of the atonement. No mere creature is master of his own life; no man can be found who has not forfeited it by his own sins: otherwise, he might as justly suffer pain and death, as reduce himself to poverty, by answering for another person; provided he were perfectly free in undertaking such an engagement, and the ends of justice could be answered by it. *Moral justice* is ambiguous: but *distributive justice* may and does take the innocent for the guilty, whenever the bondsman is arrested for the debt of the principal; and though it does not extend to death, it can only be thence inferred, that this is deemed inexpedient in human society. If an innocent man should suffer the loss of a shilling, or a day's liberty, for the fault of another, without *his own voluntary engagement*, it would be injustice or indiscriminate revenge, as *really*, though not in the *same degree*, as if he were put to death: and it

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\* P. i. p. 23.



would be extremely difficult to a casuist in such cases to draw the line; and, supposing a previous engagement, to shew exactly where justice ended and indiscriminate revenge began.

We suppose Christ to have been a divine person, "God manifest in the flesh;" and that he voluntarily engaged to magnify the law, and satisfy divine justice, in the stead and for the sake of his people, fully knowing the whole case. Having in our nature been perfectly obedient to the law, and not having forfeited his life by one failure: he had in all respects that right to dispose of it as he pleased, which no other man ever had or can have. The ends of the divine government were completely answered by his death upon the cross: and he most freely laid down his life for us, having power to take it again; in order by his *temporal sufferings* to save an innumerable multitude from *eternal* misery, to the everlasting glory of God. In the fulfilment of this plan, what injustice was done? Indeed the charge is wholly grounded on the false supposition, that Christ was *substituted in our place, without his own free consent.\**

After all, Mr. P.'s objections principally arise, (as every other person's do,) from this doctrine's 'representing man as an out-law, an outcast, a beggar, a mumper, &c.;" he should have said at once *an hell-deserving sinner*. No man will ever cordially acquiesce in the doctrine, with a proper view of it, till he come in that character for salvation. Then his life will neither be spent in grief, nor the affectation of it:

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\* P. i. p. 24, 25.

but he will rejoice in Christ Jesus, and both relish the comforts, and be supported under the trials, of life, far better than any other person. That doctrine, which to unbelievers appears so *gloomy*, will brighten every prospect, and fill his heart with joy and hope, and his tongue with thankful praises. That opaque cloud, which Mr. P. says the ‘person of Christ places between the understanding and the deity;’\* appears to the believer a glorious display of the divine perfections, in a manner and through a *medium* suited to his feeble conceptions, and relieving to his guilty conscience: so that “beholding as in a glass the glory of “the Lord,” (in the face or person of Christ,) “he “is changed into the same image from glory to glory, “by the Spirit of the Lord.”†

Others of us, as well as Mr. P. have had very childish thoughts of redemption:‡ but “when we became “men we put away childish things;” while he retains and retails them as highly reasonable!

‘The christian mythology has five deities; there ‘is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy ‘Ghost; the god providence, and the goddess nature!’ Surely Mr. P. knew, that christians consider the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as one God; and providence, as the superintending care of God over all his creatures. As for *Nature*, she is the Deist’s goddess: the Bible says nothing about her *agency*, nor do any of those who “speak according to the oracles “of God.”

Mr. P. is little acquainted with serious christians:

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\* P. i. p. 31.      † 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. iv. 1—6.      ‡ P. i. p. 44.

but, I believe, I may answer for most of them, that they bestow pains, as soon as their children become capable of instruction, in teaching them the doctrine of redemption by the death of Christ, as revealed in the holy Scriptures: and if men called christians teach their children only *morals* and not the *principles of the gospel*, they grievously misunderstand the Bible, and neglect their duty.

I have no objection to Mr. P.'s astronomy, or his opinion concerning a plurality of worlds, considered abstractedly. If these worlds be inhabited by rational creatures, which however probable is merely conjectural, either the inhabitants are sinners, or they are not.—If they be not sinners, they do not want a Saviour: but provided the way of man's salvation be made known to them, it may vastly enlarge their views of the Creator's harmonious perfections, and increase their admiring love and pure felicity. And it signifies not how mean or small the stage was, on which this glorious scene was exhibited; provided the whole obedient creation of God derive advantage from it, and render him eternal praises and adoration. If the supposed inhabitants of any of these worlds be sinners: we are sure that the Lord will not do them injustice: we do not say, that it is impossible for *him* to devise some other way of reconciling infinite justice with the exercise of mercy; though *we* cannot conceive how it can be done: and we do not know, but they may be left without mercy to condign punishment. All reasoning on such grounds is “intruding  
“into things not seen,” by men who are “vainly puff-

“ed up with a fleshly mind.”\* But for a philosopher, in this Age of Reason, ‘to suppose that the infinite God must have left the care of all worlds, when he came to save one,’ is so gross an idea, that one cannot but stand amazed at it! We pretend not to comprehend the Deity; we allow that “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh:” but the attributes of omnipresence and omnipotence must be inseparable from the Godhead; these absolutely exclude such notions as Mr. P. hath started; and I am persuaded they scarcely ever enter the mind of the most unlettered christian; or if they do, they are rejected as gross absurdity, or diabolical suggestions.†

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\* Col. ii. 18.

† P. i. p. 63.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE INSUFFICIENCY OF DEISM.

MR. P. enlarges on the sufficiency of Deism, and evidently considers it as his principal argument against the Scriptures. ‘The creation is the only word of God, and natural philosophy the only preaching.’ It is certain however, that numbers do not so much as believe there is a God, or that he created and governs the world: so that this *revelation* and *preaching* are not universally intelligible and convincing.

“The invisible things of God, are” indeed “clearly seen from the creation of the world being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead:” so that atheists and idolaters “are without excuse:” yet it is evident that men have almost as much neglected, misinterpreted, or differed about, this *revelation*, as that contained in the holy Scriptures. Only a very small proportion of the human race have gathered so much as deism from it: and the deists, who profess to believe in one God of infinite perfection, almost universally spring up in places where the Bible is known. They *borrow or steal*, or *imperceptibly to themselves acquire at second hand*, their glimmering light, from the very book

against which they oppose it; and in different circumstances, they might have been atheists or idolaters: for this has been the case of almost the whole human species in every age, though probably none have been wholly destitute of all remains of original revelation.

It is unreasonable, to take a very few individuals, who have free access to the Scriptures, but reject a great part of them, as a specimen of the religion men may learn from the creation by the exercise of their understandings. To judge fairly on this subject, we should take our specimen from the inhabitants of new South Wales, or the newly discovered islands in the South sea and Pacifick ocean; where the Bible has never been known: and the history of mankind from the beginning must be adverted to, before we bring in our verdict. For even the pagan moralists borrowed from the Scriptures: and after the æra of christianity, their sentiments on many subjects savour, as it were, of the New Testament.

But how are matters at present, even in Europe, among those who reject the Bible? Have they all recourse to *practical* deism? Is it not evident that they understand Mr. P.'s *revelation* almost as little, as they do that which they have renounced? This also wants *translating*, and *expounding*, or men will misunderstand it. Let the astronomer then become a preacher, and try how far science will go in making *pure deists*. He will soon find, that the husbandman, the artist, and the mechanick, with all the busy and labouring part of mankind, can never spare time, money, or attention, to gain the necessary acquaintance with his principles

and demonstrations, to enable him to begin his *practical deductions*. The bulk of the human species can never be instructed in this way: and even the few, who are not engrossed by business, or sunk in low sensuality, will find the process very tedious, indecisive, and inefficient.

But supposing moral truths, duties, and obligations could, by these or some other means, be clearly defined and established: the rules would want *authority* to enforce them; and men would remain destitute of sufficient motives to urge them forward, in a course that would require immense exertion and self-denial. What could the creation teach us decidedly concerning the moral perfections and government of God, or the *actual* immortality of the soul? This last, after all men's boasted demonstrations, can only be *known, by a discovery of the Creator's determination respecting it*: and even Mr. P. seems to think, uncertainty or doubtfulness is all that can be attained or would be useful on the subject.\* Yet he himself in another place calls *doubtfulness the opposite of belief*,† in which he both contradicts the *truth* and *himself*: for *doubtfulness* is the middle point between *believing* and *disbelieving*.—The probability or possibility of a future state is however, as he thinks, all we ought to know: without any acquaintance with the nature of it as happy or miserable, or the influence of our present conduct on our future condition. That is, we are in the dark, and it is best to be so: or in the words of Scrip-

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\* P. ii. p. 100, 101.

† P. ii. p. 69

ture, "men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." This is deism, all-sufficient deism!

What then can the creation teach a man, concerning the way of finding relief from bitter remorse of conscience? obtaining the pardon of numerous and heinous crimes? finding peace with God and the enjoyment of his favour? gaining the victory over domineering lusts and habits, or strong temptations, or escaping the pollutions and snares of the world? What can we thence learn, which will inspire a sinner's heart with calm reflecting consolation in deep scenes of distress; or enable him to meet death with exulting hope of future felicity?—A poor wretch, having fallen into a pit and broken his bones, lies languishing in agony and at the point of death, for want of assistance: and a passenger instead of helping him out, gravely teaches him how men ought to walk, and look to their steps when they travel on the road; and concludes by saying, 'This is sufficient, and all else is unnecessary!'

Man is evidently in a state of suffering and death: if he reflect at all, he forbodes a future state of retribution, and conscious of guilt he dreads the consequences. If he be so stupid as not to reflect, he wants to be warned, and made sensible of his true character and situation: if he be alarmed, he enquires what he must do to be saved? how he may escape condemnation, and obtain eternal life? Is it enough to say to such a man, All nature teaches us the being of a God: moral principles are rational and obvious: study the creation, practice morality; *possibly* there is a future state, *possibly* you may be happy in it. This is



all you ought to know? Does this fully meet the man's reasonable, important, and anxious enquiries, or at all suit his case?

But the word of God, authenticated by miracles, prophecy, and many infallible proofs, answers in the most explicit manner all the questions we can propose, on subjects so interesting to us; it gives full and express directions, encouragements, and assurances; and points out an adequate remedy and effectual refuge to the vilest of sinners. Thus "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." Let common sense now determine whether these discoveries are unnecessary and useless. Is a pardon useless to a condemned criminal? a physician and a healing medicine to the sick? relief to the indigent, liberty to the captive, or sight to the blind? "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of God." When the soul is truly humbled for sin, the gospel is more suited to its case, than any illustration can adequately represent; but the self-sufficient and self-wise always did, and always will, secretly or openly, pour contempt upon it. This the Scripture hath predicted; and the conduct and spirit of those who oppose christianity abundantly verify those predictions.—The Bible proposes an adequate remedy to the wants of sinners: and the state of the world shews it to be extremely wanted. But Deism can pretend to nothing of the kind: and it is therefore indeterminate, inefficacious, and obscure, unsuitable to man's condition and character; and though abstractedly it may be said to be good as far as it goes, yet it is *wholly insufficient for all religious purposes in the present lapsed state of human nature.*

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE NATURE AND TENDENCY OF  
CHRISTIANITY.

**MR. P.** has, *disingenuously* and *studiously* as far as a man can judge, confounded christianity with all the abuses and perversions of it; and with all the crimes that *masked* atheists have taken occasion from it to perpetrate. Let him, however, have full licence to abuse domineering churchmen and persecuting priests; let him exhaust his rhetorick in declaiming against purgatory, penances, and dispensations; or that kind of christianity which is inimical to solid learning and sober enquiry. But let not the pure religion of Scripture be blamed for those things, which are there both expressly predicted, and most severely condemned. I would not even go out of the way, to dispute for establishments, or national religions, though, when connected with an equal toleration, they do not at all cramp free enquiry; and, when properly managed, they secure to the bulk of mankind a measure of religious instruction, which would not otherwise be afforded them.

The religion of the Scriptures must be distinguished, not only from all *corruptions* but from all

*appendages; and all modes of promoting it, however expedient, which are not expressly commanded.* This religion makes known to us the one living and true God; not only in his eternal power and Deity, but also in the mysteries of his nature, and the perfections of his character, as far as we are concerned to know them. Infinite wisdom, justice, purity, faithfulness, goodness, and mercy, harmoniously displayed, are here viewed in connexion with omnipotence, omniscience, unchangeableness, omnipresence, self-existence, and incomprehensible greatness and majesty. The Lord, being thus altogether glorious and lovely, the Creator of our bodies and souls, our continual and bounteous Benefactor, and our moral Governor and Judge, commands us to love him with all our hearts, and to love our neighbour as ourselves: and these comprehensive precepts reach to all our thoughts, words, and actions, and every possible duty to God and man.

This law, universally kept, would produce universal order, peace, and felicity; and it is in all respects, “holy, just, and good.” By this all our conduct must be tried; and all the other precepts of Scripture are elucidations of it, and applications of its general requirements to our several cases and circumstances.—The Bible reveals also an eternal state of righteous retributions: and as all have broken the holy law of our God, we are no more able of ourselves to escape future condemnation, than we now are to elude the sentence of death; for, like other laws, it requires perfect obedience, and condemns every transgressor. Some information the Scriptures afford us, concerning the man-

ner, in which our race was thus involved in sin and misery: but far more concerning the method of our recovery. The description, there given of our nature and character, does not indeed accord to the soothing speculations of many philosophers: but universal history, observation, and experience prove that they answer exactly to facts; and the more any one studies his own heart, and compares his actions with the perfect law of God, the deeper will his conviction be, that the statement of Scripture is just, and his own self-flattering conclusions erroneous. The view given of the evil and demerit of sin is very offensive to our pride, and alarming to our consciences: yet deep reflection on the subject will convince us, that we cannot estimate, what degree or continuance of punishment crimes committed against God do actually deserve.

These things premised, we observe that the Scriptures especially reveal the plan of salvation for sinners, which infinite wisdom and love have formed and completed. This plan centres in the person of Christ, Emmanuel, God manifested in the flesh; in his righteousness, atonement, mediation, and grace; in his offices of Prophet, High Priest, and King; in his power to “save to the uttermost all that come to God by “him;” and in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and our renewal unto the divine image by his gracious influences.

All things having been made ready, in the obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and his appearance in the presence of God for us: christianity consists in humble repentance of sin; a believ-

ing reliance on the merits and atonement of the Son of God, and on the mercy of the Father through him; a cordial acceptance of Christ in all his characters and offices; and dependance, connected with experience, on the Holy Spirit, for divine illumination, progressive sanctification, and pure consolation, all springing from *regeneration*. Thus the sinner, being converted and reconciled to God, justified by faith, and sealed by the Spirit of adoption, expects the performance of the promises in the use of appointed means; and animated by the motives and encouragements of the gospel, he is inwardly and effectually taught by the “ grace of “ God, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to “ live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present “ world.” Thenceforth “ he walks in newness of “ life.” Love to God in Christ Jesus, and to men for his sake, becomes the temper of his heart, and the business and delight of his life. He is indeed still imperfect, and in a state of conflict: but as far as he acts according to his rule and obligations, he does no harm to any man, but all good to every one; in every way, which is in his power, and consistent with propriety. Humility, meekness, gentleness, forgiveness, benevolence, courteousness, compassion, self-denying active beneficence, sincerity, equity, fidelity, sobriety, temperance, and purity, as well as piety, are the genuine effect of his principles. Were all men true and consistent christians, wars would be impossible; fraud, oppression, slander, licentiousness, contentions, and all the crimes that mar society, would cease: the stormy ocean of the world would be hushed into a calm: men would sooner lay down their lives for their

enemies, than persecute: they would rather endure wrong, than commit it; or even contest their right, unless required by other duties.

This is assuredly the religion of the Scriptures. These have been, and still are, its effects on thousands: and could those believers, who are now scattered abroad in the world, be collected together into one society, and separated from all other men: such a scene of piety, purity, harmony, and felicity would be witnessed, as has never yet appeared on earth, except in the christian church for a short time after the day of Pentecost. Though even these persons would in many respects come short of their duty, and the genuine tendency of their principles.

Every thing, contrary to this statement, militates against the very end of christianity. No countenance is given in the Bible to persecutions, religious wars or massacres, pious frauds or imprecations: indeed all such things are condemned more severely in it than in any other book in the world. The judgments of God on his impenitent enemies, executed by men *expressly commissioned*, have nothing to do with our general conduct: but to inspire us with abhorrence of sin, which thus provokes a God of infinite goodness and mercy. The whole Scripture teaches us meekness and love of persecutors; love expressed, even by suffering or dying for them, if that could save them from destruction.—*Excommunication* denotes no more than seclusion from religious ordinances and societies, to preserve them pure, and to make the censured person ashamed, that he may be brought to repentance: for we are required not to “count him as an enemy, but

“to admonish him as a brother:” and if any *penal* consequences followed in the primitive times, they were *miraculous*, and consequently cannot be imitated by us.

The system of christianity tends to expand the heart, into the most enlarged and disinterested benevolence that can be conceived: and its effects have been prodigious, notwithstanding abuses, and declension from primitive purity, zeal, and simplicity. The gladiatorial shews, in which thousands of lives were sacrificed, to amuse Roman *ladies*, as well as more vulgar citizens, were never abolished till christianity prevailed against them. Hospitals, either wholly or in great measure, owe their origin to the same powerful cause. The humanity exercised even in war for some centuries past, compared with the savage cruelty of ancient times, is the effect of christian principles. That change of sentiments also, which has taken place in respect to the glory or disgrace due to conquerors; and the very extensive protest made against the abominable slave-trade, and the iniquity of slavery itself when not the punishment of atrocious crimes, are *wholly the result of scriptural principles*.

All therefore, which Mr. P. has alleged on this subject, owes its plausibility to his uniform method of blaming christianity for those very abuses which it most severely reprobates; and of confounding the primitive church with the corrupted churches of subsequent ages; or the *gospel with popery*, which are in most respects as opposite as light and darkness. Yet even corrupted christianity may be *slandered*; and it does not appear, that it is justly chargeable with that

declension in science, which took place after the times of Christ, and issued in barbarous ignorance. Learning was very much declined, before christianity had produced any great effects on the mass of mankind, and before it had at all influenced the Roman and Grecian scholars: and if afterwards superstition was inimical to science; churchmen almost alone preserved some remains of it, and were the chief instruments of at length effecting a revival. Vigilius and Galileo indeed were endangered by popish superstition and bigotry for their discoveries in philosophy: but *they* were professed christians, and one of them a churchman.

It is certain, that the Bible does not discountenance natural knowledge, if preserved in due subordination to revealed truth. “The works of God are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.”\* It throws no impediment in the way, to prevent improvement in any kind of useful knowledge: though it discourages presumptuous speculations; and exposes the folly of self-wisdom, insatiable curiosity, and vain reasonings about matters too deep for us. For “to man it is said, behold, the fear of the LORD that is wisdom, and to depart from evil that is understanding.”†

True christianity was never propagated by the sword.—When Peter in his impetuosity smote Malchus, our Lord reproved him, and miraculously healed the wound which he had given: and on a former occasion, when the disciples wanted to call fire from

\* Ps. cxi. 2.

† Job xxviii. 28.



heaven on the Samaritans, he rebuked them and said, “Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”—I am not concerned to vindicate all that *christians have done*, but merely *what Christ hath enjoined*: and whoever at any time hath used violent measures in promoting the gospel, let him stand condemned, as acting in diametrical opposition to his instructions. It is a certain fact, that the primitive christians prevailed without using any such methods; but if they had propagated christianity, as Mahomet did his imposture, by war and rapine, I would have maintained this distinction; that *he acted according to the principles laid down in the Koran; but they in express opposition to the precepts and principles of the gospel*. His religion therefore was justly chargeable with the conduct which it sanctioned and required: christianity would not have been answerable for the base conduct of those who acted against its plain commands; but *they* alone ought to have born the blame.

Mr. P. calls the precepts of the Scripture ‘*fragments of morality*.’\* But in what other book shall we find so complete and perfect a system of man’s duty in all respects, enforced with such authority, and such powerful sanctions? He says, ‘these fragments are irregularly and thinly scattered through these books, and make no part of revealed religion!’ But was not the law delivered in the most solemn manner from Mount Sinai? and does it not virtually contain

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\* P. ii. p. 98.

our whole duty to God and man? Is it not the *rule*, the transgression of which is called *sin*? and is not *sin* spoken of as deserving punishment, requiring repentance, and needing forgiveness? Does not the scripture speak every where of Christ, as coming to magnify the *law*, and make atonement for *sin*? Is it not promised, that this *law* shall be written in the heart of all the Lord's true people? Is not this law enforced in its various requirements as branched out into many particular precepts, on all christians, with the most earnest admonitions and exhortations? Are not the fruits of the Spirit coincident with the demands of the law? and is it not said, that, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his?" In short love to God and man is the substance of all religion: and the whole plan of redemption, the whole system of the gospel, was intended to put honour on this law; and, after a manner worthy of the divine perfections and government, to reinstate transgressors in the favour of God, and recover them to obedience, in part here, and perfectly in heaven hereafter.

Mr. P. says 'the New Testament teaches nothing new on this subject!' We allow that its dictates are also inculcated in the Old Testament, though not with equal clearness and energy: but where else shall we find them? Love of the excellency, and zeal for the honour, of God, with delight in him and gratitude to him, are not taught by pagan moralists, with any tolerable degree of precision and authority. Neither Greeks nor Romans have a word in their languages, properly expressing the scriptural idea of *humility*. The most eminent Gentile writers substitute friendship and love of

our country, which are frequently no more than a modification of self-love, in the place of disinterested and enlarged philanthropy. Even Cicero never decidedly protested against the murderous gladiatorial games, or the exposing of infants: against suicide, or revenge; nor even against unnatural crimes, though sanctioned by elegant and admired poets! even Cicero never inculcated the liberal expenditure of money, in relieving poor destitute plebeians, or alleviating the miseries of slaves and captives, out of pure compassion, without regard to personal credit or advantage. Refined self-love is the source, the centre, the object, and in most cases the rule, even *of his morality*; though he wrote far better on the subject than most of his predecessors. And if subsequent moralists have gone somewhat further, we know whence they took their materials.

We allow, that Jewish *magistrates* were directed to retaliate on certain injurious persons: but the command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” debarred Jews from private revenge, as much as the express commands of the New Testament do us. — Mr. P. objects to the precept; “If any man smite thee on the “right cheek, turn to him the other also:” that is, ‘Bear injuries and insults patiently, though that expose ‘thee to more affronts; and enter not into contention, if ‘it can be avoided without neglecting other duties.’ For proverbial expressions are not to be interpreted like mathematical theorems; and men are ready enough to make exceptions to such general rules. Yet he approves of Solomon’s maxim,\* in hopes to give the

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\* Prov. xxi. 21

Gentiles the credit of it; and does not know, that Paul has quoted it, as the substance of the duty of loving enemies.\* No man I suppose, before Mr. P. ever thought we were commanded to love enemies better than friends, and to reward their injuries: but goodwill, and acts of kindness when needed, are due to our most cruel persecutors and the vilest criminals; and we ought to pray for their conversion and salvation. This, however, does not interfere with our special love to the righteous, gratitude to benefactors, and tender affection to relatives: for the Lord sends common benefits on the unthankful and evil; but reserves his special blessings for his obedient children.

I have however something further to say to Mr. P. on this subject, in reply to his *liberal* charges against christianity as a persecuting religion. In a paroxysm of zeal and indignation he exclaims; ‘It is better, far better, that we admitted, if it were possible, a thousand devils to roam at large and to preach publicly the doctrine of devils—than that we should permit one such impostor or monster, as Moses,—and the Bible-prophets, to come with the pretended word of God in his mouth, and have credit among us.’† Now if Mr. P. could establish a government exactly to his mind, in any country where men resided who revered the Bible-prophets, and zealously preached the word of God, would this principle allow him to tolerate them? Would he lay no restraints on men, whom he deemed such mischievous monsters

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\* Rom. xii. 19—21.

† P. ii. p. 47.

and vile impostors; and in case they would not be restrained from preaching, would he not inflict penalties? and if they continued obstinate, would not their contumacy expose them to heavier punishment? and does not this principle ultimately lead to exterminating persecution of all who adhere to the Bible, under the stale pretence that they disturb the peace of the community?

I have indeed long avowed an expectation of persecution, extensive dreadful persecution of real christians carried on by men, who now talk the most about toleration, candour, and liberality of sentiment, and exclaim against the intolerance and bigotry of zealous believers: for they shew no *candour* to men strenuously maintaining the doctrines not long ago distinguished as orthodox.—Some declarations made by the late king of Prussia, concerning the difficulty he found in retaining Voltaire and several others, within the bounds which he prescribed for them; certain recent publications of French philosophers, atheists, and deists; and the strong passage just quoted from Mr. P. tend to confirm this opinion; and it is a subject well worthy the attention of all who sincerely love the Bible.

But at the same time, I avow an abhorrence of all persecution; and would have no man abridged in his civil rights, on account of his religious principles, if in *other respects* he be a peaceable member of the community. The smallest degree of persecution seems to me to contradict the *spirit of the gospel*; nay, all bitterness, contempt, or reviling in controversy; and whatever is not necessary to defend the reader against the misrepresentations of a plausible writer, and the de-

lusions to which he is exposed. On this subject let every one recollect our Lord's words, "Woe be to the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe be to that man, by whom the offence cometh!" For the most plausible argument in Mr. P.'s books, is taken from that very misconduct of christians which our Lord expressly predicted.

Lay the things together, which we have considered. Advert to man's need of revelation, and the reasonableness of expecting one; the incontestable miracles, by which both the Old and New Testaments were introduced, the prophecies contained in the scriptures, and their remarkable accomplishments; the suitability of christianity to our wants, and the distinct answers it gives to the most interesting enquiries; its evident tendency and actual effects; the sublimity of its truths and the beauty of its precepts; its existence after so many ages, though it has been assaulted most vehemently from without, and disgraced most shamefully within; and the wonderful agreement of our present copies with ancient versions, though they have been handed down to us by Jews and papists:—I say, take all these things together, and I cannot but think they amount to as *full a demonstration, as the subject admits of, that the Bible is the word of God.*

I would now observe in conclusion, that a serious mind is the grand requisite for obtaining satisfaction in an enquiry of this nature. If the reader sincerely desires to be preserved from mistake, and directed into the way of truth: let him give the Bible itself an impartial and diligent investigation. Let him act ac-

according to the dictates of his conscience without reserve, while he waits for fuller information. Let him use his understanding, and not be determined by his passions and prejudices. Let him ask himself whether he be as willing to be convinced that the Bible is true, as the contrary? And if he be conscious that he is not, let him honestly enquire after the cause of this prejudice, for if pride or love of forbidden objects bias his mind, an impartial verdict cannot be expected. Let no man who would know the will of God, pay the least regard to wit, ridicule, eloquent declamation, or virulent abuse: these suit corrupt nature, but they always tend to obscure the truth, or perplex and mislead the mind. Finally, as the belief of a God is taken for granted by all parties; and as God must in all senses, be the Fountain of knowledge and wisdom; let every enquirer beg of him to strengthen and assist his judgment, to keep his mind unbiassed to enable him to distinguish truth from error, and to guide him in the path of everlasting felicity.