mon Sense the latter end of the year 1775, and published it the first of January, 1776. Independence was declared the fourth of July following.

Any person who has made observations on the state and progress of the human mind, by observing his own, cannot but have observed that there are two distinct classes of what are called thoughts—those that we produce in ourselves by reflection and the act of thinking, and those that bolt into the mind of their own accord. I have always made it a rule to treat those voluntary visitors with civility, taking care to examine, as well as I was able, if they were worth entertaining, and it is from them I have acquired almost all the knowledge that I have. As to the learning that any person gains from school education, it serves only, like a small capital, to put him in a way of beginning learning for himself afterward. Every person of learning is finally his own teacher, the reason of which is that principles, being a distinct quality to circumstances, cannot be impressed upon the memory; their place of mental residence is the understanding and they are never so lasting as when they begin by conception. Thus much for the introductory part.

From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea and acting upon it by reflection, I either doubted the truth of the Christian system or thought it to be a strange affair; I scarcely knew which it was, but I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine, who was a great devotee of the Church, upon the subject of what is called redemption by the death of the Son of God. After the sermon was ended, I went into the garden, and as I was going down the garden steps (for I perfectly recollect the spot) I revolted at the recollection of what I had heard, and thought to myself that it was making God Almighty act like a passionate man, that killed his son when he could not revenge himself in any other way, and as I was sure a man would be hanged that did such a thing, I could not see for what purpose they preached such sermons. This was not one of that kind of thoughts that had anything in it of childish levity; it was to me a serious reflection, arising from the idea I had that God was too good to do such an action, and also too almighty to be under any necessity of doing it. I believe in the same manner at this moment; and I moreover believe, that any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child, cannot be a true system.

It seems as if parents of the Christian profession were ashamed to tell their children anything about the principles of their religion. They sometimes instruct them in morals, and talk to them of the goodness of what they call Providence, for the Christian mythology has
five deities there is God the Father, God the
Son, God the Holy Ghost, the God Providence,
and the Goddess Nature. But the Christian
story of God the Father putting his son to death,
or employing people to do it (for that is the
plain language of the story) cannot be told by
a parent to a child; and to tell him that it was
done to make mankind happier and better is
making the story still worse—as if mankind
could be improved by the example of murder;
and to tell him that all this is a mystery is only
making an excuse for the incredibility of it.

How different is this to the pure and simple
profession of Deism! The true Deist has but
one Deity, and his religion consists in contemplating
the power, wisdom, and benignity of
the Deity in his works, and in endeavoring to
imitate him in everything moral, scientific, and
mechanical.

The religion that approaches the nearest of
all others to true Deism, in the moral and ben-
ign part thereof, is that professed by the
Quakers; but they have contracted themselves
too much, by leaving the works of God out of
their system. Though I reverence their philan-
thropy, I cannot help smiling at the conceit, that
if the taste of a Quaker could have been con-
sulted at the creation, what a silent and drab-
colored creation it would have been! Not a
flower would have blossomed its gayeties, nor a
bird been permitted to sing.

Quitting these reflections, I proceed to other
matters. After I had made myself master of
the use of the globes and of the orrery,* and
conceived an idea of the infinity of space, and
the eternal divisibility of matter, and obtained
at least a general knowledge of what is called
natural philosophy, I began to compare, or, as
I have before said, to confront the eternal evi-
dence those things afford with the Christian
system of faith.

Though it is not a direct article of the Chris-
tian system, that this world that we inhabit is
the whole of the habitable creation, yet it is so
worked up therewith, from what is called the
Mosaic account of the Creation, the story of Eve
and the apple, and the counterpart of that story,
the death of the Son of God, that to believe
otherwise, that is, to believe that God created
a plurality of worlds, at least as numerous as
what we call stars, renders the Christian system
of faith at once little and ridiculous, and scat-
ters it in the mind like feathers in the air. The
two beliefs cannot be held together in the same

* As this book may fall into the hands of persons who do not know
what an orrery is, it is for their information I add this note, as the
name gives no idea of the uses of the thing. The orrery has its name
from the person who invented it. It is a machinery of clock-work,
representing the universe in miniature, and in which the revolution of
the earth round itself and round the sun, the revolution of the moon
round the earth, the revolution of the planets round the sun, their
relative distances from the sun, as the centre of the whole system,
their relative distances from each other, and their different magni-
tudes, are represented as they really exist in what we call the heavens.
mind, and he who thinks that he believes both, has thought but little of either. Though the belief of a plurality of worlds was familiar to the ancients, it is only within the last three centuries that the extent and dimensions of this globe that we inhabit have been ascertained. Several vessels, following the tract of the ocean, have sailed entirely round the world, as a man may march in a circle, and come round by the contrary side of the circle to the spot he set out from. The circular dimensions of our world, in the widest part, as a man would measure the widest round of an apple or ball, is only twenty-five thousand and twenty English miles, reckoning sixty-nine miles and a half to an equatorial degree, and may be sailed round in the space of about three years.*

A world of this extent may, at first thought, appear to us to be great; but if we compare it with the immensity of space in which it is suspended, like a bubble or balloon in the air, it is infinitely less in proportion than the smallest rain of sand is to the size of the world, or the nest particle of dew to the whole ocean, and therefore but small; and, as will be hereafter shown, is only one of a system of worlds of which the universal creation is composed.

It is not difficult to gain some faint idea of

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* Allowing a ship to sail, on an average, three miles in an hour, a ship would sail entirely around the world in less than one year, if she could sail in a direct circle; but she is obliged to follow the course of an ocean.

the immensity of space in which this and all the other worlds are suspended, if we follow a progression of ideas. When we think of the size of dimensions of a room, our ideas limit themselves to the walls, and there they stop; but when our eye or our imagination darts into space, that is, when it looks upward into what we call the open air, we cannot conceive any walls or boundaries it can have, and if for the sake of resting our ideas, we suppose a boundary, the question immediately renews itself, and asks, what is beyond that boundary? and in the same manner, what is beyond the next boundary? and so on till the fatigued imagination returns and says, There is no end. Certainly, then, the Creator was not pent for room when he made this world no larger than it is, and we have to seek the reason in something else.

If we take a survey of our own world, or rather of this, of which the Creator has given us the use as our portion in the immense system of creation, we find every part of it—the earth, the waters, and the air that surrounds it—filled and, as it were, crowded with life, down from the largest animals that we know of to the smallest insects the naked eye can behold, and from thence to others still smaller, and totally invisible without the assistance of the microscope. Every tree, every plant, every leaf, serves not only as a habitation but as a world to some numerous race, till animal existence be-
comes so exceedingly refined that the effluvia of
a blade of grass would be food for thousands.

Since, then, no part of our earth is left unoc-
cupied, why is it to be supposed that the im-
mensity of space is a naked void, lying in eternal
waste? There is room for millions of worlds
as large or larger than ours, and each of them
millions of miles apart from each other.

Having now arrived at this point, if we carry
our ideas only one thought further, we shall see,
perhaps, the true reason, at least a very good
reason, for our happiness, why the Creator, in-
stead of making one immense world extending
over an immense quantity of space, has pre-
ferred dividing that quantity of matter into
several distinct and separate worlds, which we
call planets, of which our earth is one. But be-
fore I explain my ideas upon this subject, it is
necessary (not for the sake of those who already
know, but for those who do not) to show what
the system of the universe is.

That part of the universe that is called the
solar system (meaning the system of worlds to
which our earth belongs, and of which Sol, or in
English language, the sun, is the centre) con-
sists, besides the Sun, of six distinct orbs, or
planets, or worlds, besides the secondary bodies,
called the satellites or moons, of which our earth
has one that attends her in her annual revolu-
tion around the Sun, in like manner as the other
satellites or moons attend the planets or worlds
to which they severally belong, as may be seen
by the assistance of the telescope.

The Sun is the centre, round which those six
worlds or planets revolve at different distances
therefrom, and in circles concentrate to each
other. Each worlds keeps constantly in nearly
the same track round the Sun, and continues,
at the same time, turning round itself in nearly
an upright position, as a top turns round itself
when it is spinning on the ground, and leans a
little sideways.

It is this leaning of the earth (23 1/2 degrees)
that occasions summer and winter, and the dif-
ferent length of days and nights. If the earth
turned round itself in a position perpendicular
to the plane or level of the circle it moves in
around the Sun, as a top turns round when it
stands erect on the ground, the days and nights
would be always of the same length, twelve
hours day and twelve hours night, and the sea-
sons would be uniformly the same throughout
the year.

Every time that a planet (our earth for ex-
ample) turns round itself, it makes what we call
day and night; and every time it goes entirely
round the Sun it makes what we call a year;
consequently our world turns three hundred and
sixty-five times round itself, in going once round
the Sun.*

* Those who supposed that the sun went round the earth every 24
hours made the same mistake in idea that a cook would do in fact,
The names that the ancients gave to those six worlds, and which are still called by the same names, are Mercury, Venus, this world we call ours, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. They appear larger to the eye than the stars, being many million miles nearer to our earth than any of the stars are. The planet Venus is that which is called the evening star, and sometimes the morning star, as she happens to set after or rise before the Sun, which in either case is never more than three hours.

The Sun, before said, being the centre, the planet or world nearest the Sun is Mercury; his distance from the Sun is thirty-four million miles, and he moves round in a circle always at that distance from the Sun, as a top may be supposed to spin round in the track in which a horse goes in a mill. The second world is Venus; she is fifty-seven million miles distant from the Sun, and consequently moves round in a circle much greater than that of Mercury. The third world is this that we inhabit, and which is eighty-eight million miles distant from the Sun, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Venus. The fourth world is Mars; he is distant from the Sun one hundred and thirty-four million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of our earth. The fifth is Jupiter; he is distant from the Sun five hundred and fifty-seven million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle greater than that of Mars. The sixth world is Saturn; he is distant from the Sun seven hundred and sixty-three million miles, and consequently moves round in a circle that surrounds the circles, or orbits, of all the other worlds or planets.

The space, therefore, in the air, or in the immensity of space, that our solar system takes up for the several worlds to perform their revolutions in round the Sun, is of the extent in a straight line of the whole diameter of the orbit or circle, in which Saturn moves round the Sun, which being double his distance from the Sun, is fifteen hundred and twenty-six million miles and its circular extent is nearly five thousand million, and its globular contents is almost three thousand five hundred million times three thousand five hundred million square miles.*

* If it should be asked, how can man know these things? I have one plain answer to give, which is, that man knows how to calculate an eclipse, and also how to calculate to a minute of time when the planet Venus, in making her revolutions around the sun will come in a straight line between our earth and the sun, and will appear to us about the size of a large pea passing across the face of the sun. This happens but twice in about a hundred years, at the distance of about eight years from each other, and has happened twice in our time, both of which were foreknown by calculation. It can also be known when they will happen again for a thousand years to come, or to any other portion of time. As, therefore, man could not be able to do these things if he did not understand the solar system, and the manner in which the revolutions of the several planets or worlds are performed, the fact of calculating an eclipse, or a transit of Venus, is a proof in
But this, immense as it is, is only one system of worlds. Beyond this, at a vast distance into space, far beyond all power of calculation, are the stars called the fixed stars. They are called fixed because they have no revolutionary motion, as the six worlds or planets have that I have been describing. Those fixed stars continue always at the same distance from each other, and always in the same place, as the Sun does in the centre of our system. The probability, therefore, is, that each of those fixed stars is also a Sun, round which another system of worlds or planets, though too remote for us to discover, performs its revolutions, as our system of worlds does round our central Sun.

By this easy progression of ideas, the immensity of space will appear to us to be filled with systems of worlds, and that no part of space lies at waste, any more than any part of the globe of earth and water is left unoccupied.

Having thus endeavored to convey, in a familiar and easy manner, some idea of the structure of the universe, I return to explain what I before alluded to, namely, the great benefits arising to man in consequence of the Creator having made a plurality of worlds, such as our system is, consisting of a central Sun and six worlds, besides satellites, in preference to that of creating one world only of a vast extent.

It is an idea I have never lost sight of, that all our knowledge of science is derived from the revolutions (exhibited to our eye and from thence to our understanding) which those several planets or worlds of which our system is composed make in their circuit round the Sun.

Had, then, the quantity of matter which these six worlds contain been blended into one solitary globe, the consequence to us would have been, that either no revolutionary motion would have existed, or not a sufficiency of it to give to us the idea and the knowledge of science we now have; and it is from the sciences that all the mechanical arts that contribute so much to our earthly felicity and comfort are derived.

As, therefore, the Creator made nothing in vain, so also must it be believed that he organized the structure of the universe in the most advantageous manner for the benefit of man; and as we see, and from experience feel, the benefits we derive from the structure of the universe formed as it is, which benefits we should not have had the opportunity of enjoying, if the structure, so far as relates to our system, had been a solitary globe— we can discover at least one reason why a plurality of worlds has been made, and that reason calls forth the devotional gratitude of man, as well as his admiration.

But it is not to us, the inhabitants of this globe, only, that the benefits arising from a plurality of worlds are limited. The inhabitants
of each of the worlds of which our system is composed enjoy the same opportunities of knowledge as we do. They behold the revolutionary motions of our earth, as we behold theirs. All the planets revolve in sight of each other, and, therefore, the same universal school of science presents itself to all.

Neither does the knowledge stop here. The system of worlds next to us exhibits, in its revolutions, the same principles and school of science to the inhabitants of their system, as our system does to us, and in like manner throughout the immensity of space.

Our ideas, not only of the almightiness of the Creator, but of his wisdom and his beneficence, become enlarged in proportion as we contemplate the extent and the structure of the universe. The solitary idea of a solitary world, rolling or at rest in the immense ocean of space, gives place to the cheerful idea of a society of worlds, so happily contrived as to administer, even by their motion, instruction to man. We see our own earth filled with abundance, but we forget to consider how much of that abundance is owing to the scientific knowledge the vast machinery of the universe has unfolded.

But, in the midst of those reflections, what are we to think of the Christian system of faith, that forms itself upon the idea of only one world, and that of no greater extent, as is before shown, than twenty-five thousand miles? An extent which a man walking at the rate of three miles an hour, for twelve hours in the day, could he keep on in a circular direction, would walk entirely round in less than two years. Alas! what is this to the mighty ocean of space, and the almighty power of the Creator?

From whence, then, could arise the solitary and strange conceit that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds equally dependent on his protection, should quit the care of all the rest, and come to die in our world, because, they say, one man and one woman had eaten an apple? And, on the other hand, are we to suppose that every world in the boundless creation had an Eve, an apple, a serpent, and a redeemer? In this case, the person who is irreverently called the Son of God, and sometimes God himself, would have nothing else to do than to travel from world to world, in an endless succession of deaths, with scarcely a momentary interval of life.

It has been by rejecting the evidence that the word or works of God, in the creation afford to our senses, and the action of our reason upon that evidence, that so many wild and whimsical systems of faith and of religion have been fabricated and set up. There may be many systems of religion that, so far from being morally bad, are in many respects morally good; but there can be but one that is true; and that one necessarily must, as it ever will, be in all things consistent with the ever-existing word of God that
we behold in his works. But such is the strange construction of the Christian system of faith that every evidence the Heavens afford to man either directly contradicts it or renders it absurd.

It is possible to believe, and I always feel pleasure in encouraging myself to believe it, that there have been men in the world who persuade themselves that what is called a pious fraud might, at least under particular circumstances, be productive of some good. But the fraud being once established, could not afterward be explained, for it is with a pious fraud as with a bad action, it begets a calamitous necessity of going on.

The persons who first preached the Christian system of faith, and in some measure combined it with the morality preached by Jesus Christ, might persuade themselves that it was better than the heathen mythology that then prevailed. From the first preachers the fraud went on to the second, and to the third, till the idea of its being a pious fraud became lost in the belief of its being true; and that belief became again encouraged by the interests of those who made a livelihood by preaching it.

But though such a belief might by such means be rendered almost general among the laity, it is next to impossible to account for the continual persecution carried on by the Church, for several hundred years, against the sciences and against the professors of science, if the Church had not some record or tradition that it was originally no other than a pious fraud, or did not foresee that it could not be maintained against the evidence that the structure of the universe afforded.

Having thus shown the irreconcilable inconsistencies between the real word of God existing in the universe; and that which is called the Word of God, as shown to us in a printed book that any man might make, I proceed to speak of the three principal means that have been employed in all ages, and perhaps in all countries, to impose upon mankind.

Those three means are Mystery, Miracle, and Prophecy. The two first are incompatible with true religion, and the third ought always to be suspected.

With respect to mystery, everything we behold is, in one sense, a mystery to us. Our own existence is a mystery; the whole vegetable world is a mystery. We cannot account how it is that an acorn, when put into the ground, is made to develop itself, and become an oak. We know not how it is that the seed we sow unfolds and multiplies itself, and returns to us such an abundant interest for so small a capital.

The fact, however, as distinct from the operating cause, is not a mystery, because we see it, and we know also the means we are to use, which is no other than putting the seed into the
ground. We know, therefore, as much as is necessary for us to know; and that part of the operation that we do not know, and which, if we did, we could not perform, the Creator takes upon himself and performs it for us. We are, therefore, better off than if we had been let into the secret, and let to do it for ourselves.

But though every created thing is, in this sense, a mystery, the word mystery cannot be applied to moral truth, any more than obscurity can be applied to light. The God in whom we believe is a God of moral truth, and not a God of mystery or obscurity. Mystery is the antagonist of truth. It is a fog of human invention, that obscures truth, and represents it in distortion. Truth never envelops itself in mystery, and the mystery in which it is at any time enveloped is the work of its antagonist, and never of itself.

Religion, therefore, being the belief of a God and the practice of moral truth, cannot have connection with mystery. The belief of a God, so far from having anything of mystery in it, is of all beliefs the most easy, because it arises to us, as is before observed, out of necessity. And the practice of moral truth, or, in other words, a practical imitation of the moral goodness of God, is no other than our acting toward each other as he acts benignly toward all. We cannot serve God in the manner we serve those who cannot do without such service; and, therefore, the only idea we can have of serving God, is that of contributing to the happiness of the living creation that God has made. This cannot be done by retiring ourselves from the society of the world and spending a recluse life in selfish devotion.

The very nature and design of religion, if I may so express it, prove even to demonstration that it must be free from everything of mystery, and unencumbered with everything that is mysterious. Religion, considered as a duty, is incumbent upon every living soul alike, and, therefore, must be on a level with the understanding and comprehension of all. Man does not learn religion as he learns the secrets and mysteries of a trade. He learns the theory of religion by reflection. It arises out of the action of his own mind upon the things which he sees, or upon what he may happen to hear or to read, and the practice joins itself thereto.

When men, whether from policy or pious fraud, set up systems of religion incompatible with the word or works of God in the creation, and not only above, but repugnant to human comprehension, they were under the necessity of inventing or adopting a word that should serve as a bar to all questions, inquiries and speculation. The word mystery answered this purpose, and thus it has happened that religion, which is in itself without mystery, has been corrupted into a fog of mysteries.
As *mystery* answered all general purposes, *miracle* followed as an occasional auxiliary. The former served to bewilder the mind, the latter to puzzle the senses. The one was the *lingo*, the other the *legerdemain*. But before going further into this subject, it will be proper to inquire what is to be understood by a miracle.

In the same sense that everything may be said to be a mystery, so also may it be said that everything is a miracle, and that no one thing is a greater miracle than another. The elephant, though larger, is not a greater miracle than a mite, nor a mountain a greater miracle than an atom. To an almighty power, it is no more difficult to make the one than the other, and no more difficult to make millions of worlds than to make one. Everything, therefore, is a miracle, in one sense, whilst in the other sense, there is no such thing as a miracle. It is a miracle when compared to our power and to our comprehension, it is not a miracle compared to the power that performs it; but as nothing in this description conveys the idea that is affixed to the word *mystery*, it is necessary to carry the inquiry further.

Mankind have conceived to themselves certain laws, by which what they call *nature* is supposed to act; and that a miracle is something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws; but unless we know the whole extent of those laws,
when known are thought nothing of. And besides these, there are mechanical and optical de-
ceptions. There is now an exhibition in Paris
of ghosts or spectres, which, though it is not imposed upon the spectators as a fact, has an
astonishing appearance. As, therefore, we know not the extent to which either nature or art can
go, there is no positive criterion to determine what a miracle is, and mankind, in giving credit
to appearances, under the idea of there being miracles, are subject to be continually imposed
upon.

Since, then, appearances are so capable of de-
ceiving, and things not real have a strong re-
similarity to things that are, nothing can be more inconsistent than to suppose that the
Almighty would make use of means such as are called miracles, that would subject the person
who performed them to the suspicion of being an impostor, and the person who related them to
be suspected of lying; and the doctrine intended
to be supported thereby to be suspected as a
fabulous invention.

Of all the modes of evidence that ever were
invented to obtain belief to any system or
opinion to which the name of religion has been
given, that of miracle, however successful the
imposition may have been, is the most in-
consistent. For, in the first place, whenever
recourse is had to show, for the purpose of pro-
guring that belief, (for a miracle, under any
idea of the word, is a show), it implies a lame-
ness or weakness in the doctrine that is preached.
And, in the second place, it is degrading the
Almighty into the character of a showman,
playing tricks to amuse and make the people
stare and wonder. It is also the most equivocal
sort of evidence that can be set up; for the be-
lief is not to depend upon the thing called a
miracle, but upon the credit of the reporter who
says that he saw it; and, therefore, the thing,
were it true, would have no better chance of
being believed than if it were a lie.

Suppose I were to say, that when I sat down
to write this book, a hand presented itself in the
air, took up the pen, and wrote every word that
is herein written; would anybody believe me?
Certainly they would not. Would they believe
me a whit the more if the thing had been a fact?
Certainly they would not. Since, then, a real
miracle, were it to happen, would be subject to
the same fate as the falsehood, the inconsistency
becomes the greater of supposing the Almighty
would make use of means that would not answer
the purpose for which they were intended, even
if they were real.

If we are to suppose a miracle to be something
so entirely out of the course of what is called
nature, that she must go out of that course to
accomplish it, and we see an account given of
such miracle by the person who said he saw it,
it raises a question in the mind very easily de-
cided, which is, is it more probable that nature should go out of her course, or that a man should tell a lie? We have never seen, in our time, nature go out of her course; but we have good reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time; it is, therefore, at least millions to one, that the reporter of a miracle tells a lie.

The story of the whale swallowing Jonah, though a whale is large enough to do it, borders greatly on the marvelous; but it would have approached nearer to the idea of a miracle, if Jonah had swallowed the whale. In this, which may serve for all cases of miracles, the matter would decide itself, as before stated, namely, is it more probable that a man should have swallowed a whale or told a lie?

But suppose that Jonah had really swallowed the whale, and gone with it in his belly to Nineveh, and, to convince the people that it was true, had cast it up in their sight, of the full length and size of a whale, would they not have believed him to have been the devil, instead of a prophet? Or, if the whale had carried Jonah to Nineveh, and cast him up in the same public manner, would they not have believed the whale to have been the devil, and Jonah one of his imps? But the

The most extraordinary of all the things called miracles, related in the New Testament, is that of the devil flying away with Jesus Christ, and carrying him to the top of a high mountain, and to the top of the highest pinnacle of the temple, and showing him and promising to him all the kingdoms of the World. How happened it that he did not discover America, or is it only with kingdoms that his sooty highness has any interest?

I have too much respect for the moral character of Christ to believe that he told this whale of a miracle himself; neither is it easy to account for what purpose it could have been fabricated, unless it were to impose upon the connoisseurs of miracles, as is sometimes practised upon the connoisseurs of Queen Anne's farthings and collectors of relics and antiquities; or to render the belief of miracles ridiculous, by outdoing miracles, as Don Quixote outdid chivalry; or to embarrass the belief of miracles, by making it doubtful by what power, whether of God or of the devil, anything called a miracle was performed. It requires, however, a great deal of faith in the devil to believe this miracle.

In every point of view in which those things called miracles can be placed and considered, the reality of them is improbable and their existence unnecessary. They would not, as before observed, answer any useful purpose, even if they were true; for it is more difficult to obtain belief to a miracle, than to a principle evidently moral without any miracle. Moral principle speaks universally for itself. Miracle could be
but a thing of the moment, and seen but by a few; after this it requires a transfer of faith from God to man to believe a miracle upon man's report. Instead, therefore, of admitting the recitals of miracles as evidences of any system of religion being true, they ought to be considered as symptoms of its being fabulous. It is necessary to the full and upright character of truth that it rejects the crutch, and it is consistent with the character of fable to seek the aid that truths rejects. Thus much for mystery and miracle.

As mystery and miracle took charge of the past and the present, prophecy took charge of the future and rounded the tenses of faith. It was not sufficient to know what had been done, but what would be done. The supposed prophet was the supposed historian of times to come; and if he happened, in shooting with a long bow of a thousand years, to strike within a thousand niles of a mark, the ingenuity of posterity could make it point-blank; and if he happened to be directly wrong, it was only to suppose, as in the case of Jonah and Nineveh, that God had re-ented himself and changed his mind. What a fool do fabulous systems make of man!

It has been shown, in a former part of this work, that the original meaning of the words prophet and prophesying has been changed, and hat a prophet, in the sense of the word as now sed, is a creature of modern invention; and it is owing to this change in the meaning of the words, that the flights and metaphors of the Jewish poets, and phrases and expressions now rendered obscure by our not being acquainted with the local circumstances to which they applied at the time they were used, have been erected into prophecies; and made to bend to explanations at the will and whimsical conceits of sectaries, expounders, and commentators. Everything unintelligible was prophetic, and everything insignificant was typical. A blunder would have served for a prophecy, and a disclout for a type.

If by a prophet we are to suppose a man to whom the Almighty communicated some event that would take place in future, either there were such men or there were not. If there were, it is consistent to believe that the event so communicated would be told in terms that could be understood, and not related in such a loose and obscure manner as to be out of the comprehension of those that heard it, and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that may happen afterward. It is conceiving very irreverently of the Almighty, to suppose that he would deal in this jesting manner with mankind, yet all the things called prophecies in the book called the Bible come under this description.

But it is with prophecy as it is with miracle; it could not answer the purpose even if it were real. Those to whom a prophecy should be told,
could not tell whether the man prophesied or
lied, or whether it had been revealed to him,
or whether he conceived it; and if the thing that
he prophesied, or intended to prophesy, should
happen, or something like it, among the multi-
tude of things that are daily happening, nobody
could again know whether he foreknew it, or
guessed at it, or whether it was accidental. A
prophet, therefore, is a character useless and
unnecessary; and the safe side of the case is to
guard against being imposed upon by not giving
credit to such relations.

Upon the whole, mystery, miracle, and
prophecy are appendages that belong to fabu-
loous and not to true religion. They are the
means by which so many, Lo, heres! and Lo,
theres! have been spread about the world, and
religion been made into a trade. The success of
one impostor gave encouragement to another,
and the quieting salvo of doing some good by
keeping up a pious fraud protected them from
remorse.

Having now extended the subject to a greater
length than I first intended, I shall bring it to
a close by abstracting a summary from the
whole.

First—that the idea or belief of a word of
God existing in print, or in writing, or in speech,
is inconsistent in itself for reasons already as-
signed. These reasons, among many others, are

the want of a universal language; the mutability
of language; the errors to which translations
are subject; the possibility of totally suppress-
ing such a word; the probability of altering it,
or of fabricating the whole, and imposing it
upon the world.

Secondly—that the Creation we behold is the
real and ever-existing word of God, in which we
cannot be deceived. It proclaims his power, it
demonstrates his wisdom, it manifests his good-
ness and beneficence.

Thirdly—that the moral duty of man con-
sists in imitating the moral goodness and
beneficence of God, manifested in the creation
toward all his creatures. That seeing, as we
daily do, the goodness of God to all men, it is
an example calling upon all men to practise the
same toward each other; and, consequently, that
everything of persecution and revenge between
man and man, and everything of cruelty to an-
mals, is a violation of moral duty.

I trouble not myself about the manner of
future existence. I content myself with believ-
ing, even to positive conviction, that the Power
that gave me existence is able to continue it, in
any form and manner he pleases, either with or
without this body; and it appears more prob-
able to me that I shall continue to exist here-
after, than that I should have had existence, as
I now have, before that existence began.
AGE OF REASON

It is certain that, in one point, all nations of the earth and all religions agree—all believe in God; the things in which they disagree, are redundancies annexed to that belief; and, therefore, if ever a universal religion should ever exist, it will not be by believing anything new, but in getting rid of redundancies, and believing man believed at first. Adam, if ever there were such a man, was created a Deist; but in the meantime, let every man follow, as he has right to do, the religion and the worship he prefers.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

PREFACE TO PART II.

I HAVE mentioned in the former part of the Age of Reason that it had long been my intention to publish my thoughts upon religion; but that I had originally reserved it to a later period in life, intending it to be the last work I should undertake. The circumstances, however, which existed in France in the latter end of the year 1793, determined me to delay it no longer. The just and human principles of the revolution, which philosophy had first diffused, had been departed from. The idea, always dangerous to society, as it is derogatory to the Almighty, that priests could forgive sins, though it seemed to exist no longer, had blunted the feelings of humanity, and prepared men for the commission of all manner of crimes. The intolerant spirit of Church persecutions had transferred itself into politics; the tribunal styled revolutionary, supplied the place of an inquisition; and the guillotine and the stake outdid the fire and fagot of the Church. I saw many of my most intimate friends destroyed, others daily carried to prison, and I had reason to believe, and had also intimations given
me, that the same danger was approaching myself.

Under these disadvantages, I began the former part of the *Age of Reason*; I had, besides, neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both; nor could I procure any: notwithstanding which, I have produced a work that no Bible believer, though writing at his ease, and with a library of Church books about him, can refute.

Toward the latter end of December of that year, a motion was made and carried, to exclude foreigners from the convention. There were but two in it, *Anacharsis Cloots* and myself; and I saw I was particularly pointed at by Bourdon de l'Oise, in his speech on that motion.

Conceiving, after this, that I had but a few days of liberty, I sat down and brought the work to a close as speedily as possible; and I had not finished it more than six hours, in the state it has since appeared, before a guard came there, about three in the morning, with an order signed by the two Committees of public Safety and Surety-General for putting me in arrestation as a foreigner, and conveyed me to the prison of the Luxembourg. I contrived, on my way there, to call on Joel Barlow, and I put the manuscript of the work into his hands, as more safe than in my possession in prison; and not knowing what might be the fate in France either of the writer or the work, I addressed it to the protection of the citizens of the United States. It is with justice that I say that the guard who executed this order, and the interpreter of the *Committee of General Surety* who accompanied them to examine my papers, treated me not only with civility, but with respect. The keeper of the Luxembourg, Bennoit, a man of a good heart, showed to me every friendship in his power, as did also all his family, while he continued in that station. He was removed from it, put into arrestation, and carried before the tribunal upon a malignant accusation, but acquitted.

After I had been in the Luxembourg about three weeks, the Americans then in Paris went in a body to the convention to reclaim me as their countryman and friend; but were answered by the President, Vadier, who was also President of the Committee of Surety-General, and had signed the order for my arrestation, that I was born in England. I heard no more, after this, from any person out of the walls of the prison till the fall of Robespierre, on the 9th of Thermidor—July 27, 1794.

About two months before this event I was seized with a fever, that in its progress had every symptom of becoming mortal, and from the effects of which I am not recovered. It was then that I remembered with renewed satisfaction, and congratulated myself most sincerely, on having written the former part of the *Age*
of Reason. I had then but little expectation of surviving, and those about me had less. I know, therefore, by experience, the conscientious trial of my own principles.

I was then with three chamber comrades, Joseph Vanhuele, of Bruges; Charles Bastini, and Michael Rubyns, of Louvain. The unceasing and anxious attention of these three friends to me, by night and by day, I remember with gratitude and mention with pleasure. It happened that a physician (Dr. Graham) and a surgeon (Mr. Bond), part of the suite of General O'Hara, were then in the Luxembourg. I ask not myself whether it be convenient to them, as men under the English government, that I express my thanks, but I should reproach myself if I did not; and also to the physician of the Luxembourg, Dr. Markoski.

I have some reason to believe, because I cannot discover any other cause, that this illness preserved me in existence. Among the papers of Robespierre that were examined and reported upon to the Convention by a Committee of Deputies, is a note in the hand-writing of Robespierre, in the following words:

"Demander que Thomas Paine soit décréet d'accusation, pour l'intérêt de l'Amérique autant que de la France."

From what cause it was that the intention was not put in execution I know not, and cannot in-

form myself, and therefore I ascribe it to impossibility, on account of that illness.

The Convention, to repair as much as lay in their power the injustice I had sustained, invited me publicly and unanimously to return into the Convention, and which I accepted, to show I could bear an injury without permitting it to injure my principles or my disposition. It is not because right principles have been violated that they are to be abandoned.

I have seen, since I have been at liberty, several publications written, some in America and some in England, as answers to the former part of the Age of Reason. If the authors of these can amuse themselves by so doing, I shall not interrupt them. They may write against the work, and against me, as much as they please; they do me more service than they intend, and I can have no objection that they write on. They will find, however, by this second part, without its being written as an answer to them, that they must return to their work, and spin their cobweb over again. The first is brushed away by accident.

They will now find that I have furnished myself with a Bible and Testament; and I can say also that I have found them to be much worse books than I had conceived. If I have erred in anything in the former part of the Age of Reason, it has been by speaking better of some parts of those books than they have deserved.
PREFACE

I observe that all my opponents resort, more or less, to what they call Scripture evidence and Bible authority to help them out. They are so little masters of the subject, as to confound a dispute about authenticity with a dispute about doctrines; I will, however, put them right, that if they should be disposed to write any more, they may know how to begin.

THOMAS PAINE.

October, 1795.

AGE OF REASON

PART SECOND

It has often been said, that anything may be proved from the Bible, but before anything can be admitted as proved by the Bible, the Bible itself must be proved to be true; for if the Bible be not true, or the truth of it be doubtful, it ceases to have authority, and cannot be admitted as proof of anything.

It has been the practice of all Christian commentators on the Bible, and of all Christian priests and preachers, to impose the Bible on the world as a mass of truth and as the word of God; they have disputed and wrangled, and anathematized each other about the supposed meaning of particular parts and passages therein; one has said and insisted that such a passage meant such a thing; another that it meant directly the contrary; and a third, that it meant neither one nor the other, but something different from both; and this they call understanding the Bible.

It has happened that all the answers which I have seen to the former part of the Age of
Reason have been written by priests; and these pious men, like their predecessors, contend and wrangle, and pretend to understand the Bible; each understands it differently, but each understands it best; and they have agreed in nothing but in telling their readers that Thomas Paine understands it not.

Now, instead of wasting their time, and heating themselves in fractious disputations about doctrinal points drawn from the Bible, these men ought to know, and if they do not, it is civility to inform them, that the first thing to be understood is, whether there is sufficient authority for believing the Bible to be the word of God, or whether there is not.

There are matters in that book, said to be done by the express command of God, that are as shocking to humanity and to every idea we have of moral justice as anything done by Robespierre, by Carrier, by Joseph le Bon, in France, by the English government in the East Indies, or by any other assassin in modern times. When we read in the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, etc., that they (the Israelites) came by stealth upon whole nations of people, who, as history itself shows, had given them no offence; that they put all those nations to the sword; that they spared neither age nor infancy; that they utterly destroyed men, women, and children; that they left not a soul to breathe—expressions that are repeated over and over again in those books, and that, too, with exulting ferocity—are we sure these things are facts? are we sure that the Creator of man commissioned these things to be done? and are we sure that the books that tell us so were written by his authority?

It is not the antiquity of a tale that is any evidence of its truth; on the contrary, it is a symptom of its being fabulous; for the more ancient any history pretends to be, the more it has the resemblance of a fable. The origin of every nation is buried in fabulous tradition, and that of the Jews is as much to be suspected as any other. To charge the commission of acts upon the Almighty, which, in their own nature, and by every rule of moral justice, are crimes, as all assassination is, and more especially the assassination of infants, is matter of serious concern. The Bible tells us, that those assassinations were done by the express command of God. To believe, therefore, the Bible to be true, we must unbelieve all our belief in the moral justice of God; for wherein could crying or smiling infants offend? And to read the Bible without horror, we must undo everything that is tender, sympathizing, and benevolent in the heart of man. Speaking for myself, if I had no other evidence that the Bible is fabulous than the sacrifice I must make to believe it to be true, that alone would be sufficient to determine my choice.

But in addition to all the moral evidence
against the Bible, I will in the progress of this work produce such other evidence as even a priest cannot deny, and show, from that evidence, that the Bible is not entitled to credit as being the word of God.

But, before I proceed to this examination, I will show wherein the Bible differs from all other ancient writings with respect to the nature of the evidence necessary to establish its authenticity; and this is the more proper to be done, because the advocates of the Bible, in their answers to the former part of the Age of Reason, undertake to say, and they put some stress thereon, that the authenticity of the Bible is as well established as that of any other ancient book; as if our belief of the one could become any rule for our belief of the other.

I know, however, but of one ancient book that authoritatively challenges universal consent and belief, and that is Euclid’s Elements of Geometry,* and the reason is, because it is a book of self-evident demonstration, entirely independent of its author, and of everything relating to time, place, and circumstance. The matters contained in that book would have the same authority they now have, had they been written by any other person, or had the work been anonymous, or had the author never been known; for the identical certainty of who was the author, makes no part of our belief of the matters contained in the book. But it is quite otherwise with respect to the books ascribed to Moses, to Joshua, to Samuel, etc.; those are books of testimony, and they testify of things naturally incredible; and, therefore, the whole of our belief as to the authenticity of those books rests, in the first place, upon the certainty that they were written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel; secondly, upon the credit we give to their testimony. We may believe the first, that is, we may believe the certainty of the authorship, and yet not the testimony; in the same manner that we may believe that a certain person gave evidence upon a case and yet not believe the evidence that he gave. But if it should be found that the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, every part of the authority and authenticity of those books is gone at once; for there can be no such thing as forged or invented testimony; neither can there be anonymous testimony, more especially as to things naturally incredible, such as that of talking with God face to face, or that of the sun and moon standing still at the command of a man. The greatest part of the other ancient books are works of genius; of which kind are those ascribed to Homer, to Plato, to Aristotle, to Demosthenes, to Cicero, etc. Here, again, the author is not

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* Euclid, according to chronological history, lived three hundred years before Christ, and about one hundred before Archimedes; he was of the city of Alexandria, in Egypt.
essential in the credit we give to any of those works, for, as works of genius, they would have the same merit they have now, were they anonymous. Nobody believes the Trojan story, as related by Homer, to be true—for it is the poet only that is admired, and the merit of the poet will remain, though the story be fabulous. But if we disbelieve the matters related by the Bible authors, (Moses for instance), as we disbelieve the things related by Homer, there remains nothing of Moses in our estimation, but an impostor. As to the ancient historians, from Herodotus to Tacitus, we credit them as far as they relate things probable and credible, and no farther; for if we do, we must believe the two miracles which Tacitus relates were performed by Vespasian, that of curing a lame man and a blind man, in just the same manner as the same things are told of Jesus Christ by his historians. We must also believe the miracle cited by Josephus, that of the sea of Pamphilia opening to let Alexander and his army pass, as is related of the Red Sea in Exodus. These miracles are quite as well authenticated as the Bible miracles, and yet we do not believe them; consequently the degree of evidence necessary to establish our belief of things naturally incredible, whether in the Bible or elsewhere, is far greater than that which obtains our belief to natural and probable things; and therefore the advocates for the Bible have no claim to our

belief of the Bible, because that we believe things stated in other ancient writings; since we believe the things stated in these writings no further than they are probable and credible, or because they are self-evident, like Euclid; or admire them because they are elegant, like Homer; or approve of them because they are sedate, like Plato; or judicious, like Aristotle.

Having premised these things, I proceed to examine the authenticity of the Bible, and I begin with what are called the five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. My intention is to show that those books are spurious, and that Moses is not the author of them; and still further, that they were not written in the time of Moses, nor till several hundred years afterward; that they are no other than an attempted history of the life of Moses, and of the times in which he is said to have lived, and also of the times prior thereto, written by some very ignorant and stupid pretenders to authorship, several hundred years after the death of Moses, as men now write histories of things that happened, or are supposed to have happened, several hundred or several thousand years ago.

The evidence that I shall produce in this case is from the books themselves, and I shall confine myself to this evidence only. Were I to refer for proof to any of the ancient authors whom the advocates of the Bible call profane
authors, they would controvert that authority, as I controvert theirs; I will therefore meet them on their own ground, and oppose them with their own weapon, the Bible.

In the first place, there is no affirmative evidence that Moses is the author of those books; and that he is the author, is altogether an unfounded opinion, got abroad nobody knows how. The style and manner in which those books are written give no room to believe, or even to suppose, they were written by Moses, for it is altogether the style and manner of another person speaking of Moses. In Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers (for everything in Genesis is prior to the times of Moses, and not the least allusion is made to him therein), the whole, I say, of these books is in the third person; it is always, the Lord said unto Moses, or Moses said unto the Lord, or Moses said unto the people, or the people said unto Moses; and this is the style and manner that historians use in speaking of the persons whose lives and actions they are writing. It may be said that a man may speak of himself in the third person, and therefore it may be supposed that Moses did; but supposition proves nothing; and if the advocates for the belief that Moses wrote those books himself have nothing better to advance than supposition, they may as well be silent.

But granting the grammatical right that Moses might speak of himself in the third per-

son, because any man might speak of himself in that manner, it cannot be admitted as a fact in those books that it is Moses who speaks, without rendering Moses truly ridiculous and absurd. For example, Numbers, chap. xii. ver. 3. Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth. If Moses said this of himself, instead of being the meekest of men, he was one of the most vain and arrogant of coxcombs; and the advocates for those books may now take which side they please, for both sides are against them; if Moses was not the author, the books are without authority; and if he was the author, the author is without credit, because to boast of meekness is the reverse of meekness, and is a lie in sentiment.

In Deuteronomy, the style and manner of writing marks more evidently than in the former books that Moses is not the writer. The manner here used is dramatical; the writer opens the subject by a short introductory discourse, and then introduces Moses in the act of speaking, and when he has made Moses finish his harangue, he (the writer) resumes his own part, and speaks till he brings Moses forward again, and at last closes the scene with an account of the death, funeral, and character of Moses.

This interchange of speakers occurs four times in this book; from the first verse of the
first chapter to the end of the fifth verse, it is the writer who speaks; he then introduces Moses as in the act of making his harangue, and this continues to the end of the 40th verse of the fourth chapter; here the writer drops Moses, and speaks historically of what was done in consequence of what Moses, when living, is supposed to have said, and which the writer has dramatically rehearsed.

The writer opens the subject again in the first verse of the fifth chapter, though it is only by saying, that Moses called the people of Israel together; he then introduces Moses as before, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 26th chapter. He does the same thing at the beginning of the 27th chapter; and continues Moses, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 28th chapter. At the 29th chapter the writer speaks again through the whole of the first verse and the first line of the second verse, where he introduces Moses for the last time, and continues him, as in the act of speaking, to the end of the 33rd chapter.

The writer having now finished the rehearsal on the part of Moses, comes forward, and speaks through the whole of the last chapter; he begins by telling the reader that Moses went to the top of Pisgah; that he saw from thence the land which (the writer says) had been promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that he, Moses, died there, in the land of Moab, but that no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day; that is, unto the time in which the writer lived who wrote the book of Deuteronomy. The writer then tells us, that Moses was 110 years of age when he died—that his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated; and he concludes by saying that there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom, says this anonymous writer, the Lord knew face to face.

Having thus shown, as far as grammatical evidence applies, that Moses was not the writer of those books, I will, after making a few observations on the inconsistencies of the writer of the book of Deuteronomy, proceed to show from the historical and chronological evidence contained in those books, that Moses was not, because he could not be, the writer of them, and consequently that there is no authority for believing that the inhuman and horrid butcheries of men, women, and children, told of in those books, were done, as those books say they were, at the command of God. It is a duty incumbent on every true Deist, that he vindicate the moral justice of God against the calumnies of the Bible.

The writer of the book of Deuteronomy, whoever he was, (for it is an anonymous work), is obscure, and also in contradiction with himself, in the account he has given of Moses.

After telling that Moses went to the top of Pisgah (and it does not appear from any ac-
count that he ever came down again), he tells us that Moses died *there in the land of Moab*, and that *he* buried him in a valley in the land of Moab; but as there is no antecedent to the pronoun *he*, there is no knowing who *he* was that did bury him. If the writer meant that *he* (God) buried him, how should *he* (the writer) know it? or why should we (the readers) believe him? since we know not who the writer was that tells us so, for certainly Moses could not himself tell where he was buried.

The writer also tells us, that no man knoweth where the sepulchre of Moses is *unto this day*, meaning the time in which this writer lived; how then should he know that Moses was buried in a valley in the land of Moab? for as the writer lived long after the time of Moses, as is evident from his using the expression of *unto this day*, meaning a great length of time after the death of Moses, he certainly was not at his funeral; and on the other hand, it is impossible that Moses himself could say that *no man knoweth where the sepulchre is unto this day*. To make Moses the speaker, would be an improvement on the play of a child that hides himself and cries *nobody can find me; nobody can find Moses*!

This writer has nowhere told us how he came by the speeches which he has put into the mouth of Moses to speak, and therefore we have a right to conclude, that he either composed them himself, or wrote them from oral tradition. One

or the other of these is the more probable, since he has given in the fifth chapter a table of commandments, in which that called the fourth commandment is different from the fourth commandment in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. In that of Exodus, the reason given for keeping the seventh day is, "because (says the commandment) God made the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested on the seventh"; but in that of Deuteronomy, the reason given is that it was the day on which the children of Israel came out of Egypt, and *therefore*, says this commandment, *the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day*. This makes no mention of the creation, nor *that* of the coming out of Egypt. There are also many things given as laws of Moses in this book that are not to be found in any of the other books; among which is that inhuman and brutal law, chapter xxii., verses 18, 19, 20, and 21, which authorizes parents, the father and the mother, to bring their own children to have them stoned to death, for what it is pleased to call stubbornness. But priests have always been fond of preaching up Deuteronomy, for Deuteronomy preaches up tithes; and it is from this book, chap. xxv., ver. 4, that they have taken the phrase, and applied it to tithing, that *thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn*; and that this might not escape observation, they have noted it in the table of contents at the head of the chapter, though it
is only a single verse of less than two lines. Oh, priests! priests! ye are willing to be compared to an ox, for the sake of tithes. Though it is impossible for us to know **identically** who the writer of Deuteronomy was, it is not difficult to discover him **professionally**, that he was some Jewish priest, who lived, as I shall show in the course of this work, at least three hundred and fifty years after the time of Moses.

I come now to speak of the historical and chronological evidence. The chronology that I shall use is the Bible chronology, for I mean not to go out of the Bible for evidence of anything, but to make the Bible itself prove, historically and chronologically, that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him. It is, therefore, proper that I inform the reader (such a one at least as may not have the opportunity of knowing it), that in the larger Bibles, and also in some smaller ones, there is a series of chronology printed in the margin of every page, for the purpose of showing how long the historical matters stated in each page happened, or are supposed to have happened, before Christ, and, consequently, the distance of time between one historical circumstance and another.

I begin with the book of Genesis. In the 14th chapter of Genesis, the writer gives an account of Lot being taken prisoner in a battle between the four kings against five, and carried off; and that when the account of Lot being taken, came to Abraham, he armed all his household and marched to rescue Lot from the captors, and that he pursued them unto Dan (ver. 14).

To show in what manner this expression of **pursuing them unto Dan** applies to the case in question, I will refer to two circumstances, the one in America, the other in France. The city now called New York, in America, was originally New Amsterdam; and the town in France, lately called Havre Marat, was before called Havre de Grace. New Amsterdam was changed to New York in the year 1664; Havre de Grace to Havre Marat in 1793. Should, therefore, any writing be found, though without date, in which the name of New York should be mentioned, it would be certain evidence that such a writing could not have been written before, but must have been written after New Amsterdam was changed to New York, and consequently, not till after the year 1664, or at least during the course of that year. And, in like manner, any dateless writing with the name of Havre Marat would be certain evidence that such a writing must have been written after Havre de Grace became Havre Marat, and consequently not till the year 1793, or at least during the course of that year.

I now come to the application of those cases, and to show that there was no such place as **Dan**, till many years after the death of Moses, and consequently, that Moses could not be the writer of the book of **Genesis**, where this account of
pursuing them unto Dan is given. The place that is called Dan in the Bible was originally a town of the Gentiles called Laish; and when the tribe of Dan seized upon this town, they changed its name to Dan, in commemoration of Dan, who was the father of that tribe, and the great grandson of Abraham.

To establish this in proof, it is necessary to refer from Genesis, to the 18th chapter of the book called the Book of Judges. It is there said (ver. 27) that they (the Danites) came unto Laish to a people that were quiet and secure, and they smote them with the edge of the sword (the Bible is filled with murder), and burned the city with fire; and they built a city (ver. 28), and dwelt therein, and they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan, their father, howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first.

This account of the Danites taking possession of Laish and changing it to Dan, is placed in the Book of Judges immediately after the death of Sampson. The death of Sampson is said to have happened 1120 years before Christ, and that of Moses 1451 before Christ; and, therefore, according to the historical arrangement, the place was not called Dan till 331 years after the death of Moses.

There is a striking confusion between the historical and the chronological arrangement in the book of Judges. The five last chapters, as they stand in the book, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, are put chronologically before all the preceding chapters; they are made to be 28 years before the 16th chapter, 266 before the 15th, 245 before the 13th, 195 before the 9th, 90 before the 4th, and 15 years before the 1st chapter. This shows the uncertain and fabulous state of the Bible. According to the chronological arrangement, the taking of Laish and giving it the name of Dan is made to be 20 years after the death of Joshua, who was the successor of Moses; and by the historical order as it stands in the book, it is made to be 306 years after the death of Joshua, and 331 after that of Moses; but they both exclude Moses from being the writer of Genesis, because, according to each of the statements, no such place as Dan existed in the time of Moses; and therefore the writer of Genesis must have been some person who lived after the town of Laish had the name of Dan; and who that person was nobody knows, and consequently the book of Genesis is anonymous and without authority.

I proceed now to state another point of historical and chronological evidence, and to show therefrom, as in the preceding case, that Moses is not the author of the book of Genesis.

In the 36th chapter of Genesis there is given a genealogy of the sons and descendants of Esau, who are called Edomites, and also a list, by name, of the kings of Edom, in enumerating of which, it is said (verse 31), And these are the
kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel.

Now, were any dateless writings to be found in which, speaking of any past events, the writer should say, These things happened before there was any Congress in America, or before there was any Convention in France, it would be evidence that such writing could not have been written before, and could only be written after there was a Congress in America, or a Convention in France, as the case might be; and, consequently, that it could not be written by any person who died before there was a Congress in the one country or a Convention in the other.

Nothing is more frequent, as well in history as in conversation, than to refer to a fact in the room of a date; it is most natural so to do, first, because a fact fixes itself in the memory better than a date; secondly, because the fact includes the date, and serves to excite two ideas at once: and this manner of speaking by circumstances implies as positively that the fact alluded to is past as if it were so expressed. When a person speaking upon any matter, says, it was before I was married, or before my son was born, or before I went to America, or before I went to France, it is absolutely understood, and intended to be understood, that he had been married, that he has had a son, that he has been in America, or been in France. Language does not admit of using this mode of expression in any other sense; and whenever such an expression is found anywhere, it can only be understood in the sense in which it only could have been used.

The passage, therefore, that I have quoted—

"that these are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel"—could only have been written after the first king began to reign over them; and, consequently, that the book of Genesis, so far from having been written by Moses, could not have been written till the time of Saul at least. This is the positive sense of the passage; but the expression, any king, implies more kings than one, at least it implies two, and this will carry it to the time of David; and if taken in a general sense, it carries it through all the time of the Jewish monarchy.

Had we met with this verse in any part of the Bible that professed to have been written after kings began to reign in Israel, it would have been impossible not to have seen the application of it. It happens then that this is the case; the two books of Chronicles, which gave a history of all the kings of Israel, are professedly, as well as in fact, written after the Jewish monarchy began; and this verse that I have quoted, and all the remaining verses of the 36th chapter of Genesis, are word for word in the first chapter of Chronicles, beginning at the 43d verse.

It was with consistency that the writer of the
Chronicles could say, as he has said, 1st Chron., chap. i., ver. 43, These are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the children of Israel, because he was going to give; and has given, a list of the kings that had reigned in Israel; but as it is impossible that the same expression could have been used before that period, it is as certain as anything that can be proved from historical language that this part of Genesis is taken from Chronicles, and that Genesis is not so old as Chronicles, and probably not so old as the book of Homer, or as Æsop’s Fables, admitting Homer to have been, as the tables of Chronology state, contemporary with David or Solomon, and Æsop to have lived about the end of the Jewish monarchy.

Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange belief that it is the word of God has stood, and there remains nothing of Genesis but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities, or of downright lies. The story of Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his ark, drops to a level with the Arabian tales, without the merit of being entertaining; and the account of men living to eight and nine hundred years becomes as fabulous as the immortality of the giants of the Mythology.

Besides, the character of Moses, as stated in the Bible, is the most horrid that can be imagined. If those accounts be true, he was the wretch that first began and carried on wars on the score or on the pretence of religion; and under that mask, or that infatuation, committed the most unexampled atrocities that are to be found in the history of any nation, of which I will state only one instance.

When the Jewish army returned from one of their plundering and murdering excursions, the account goes on as follows: Numbers, chap. xxxi., ver. 13:

“And Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them without the camp; and Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle; and Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the council of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now, therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known a man by lying with him; but all the women-children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.”

Among the detestable villains that in any period of the world have disgraced the name of man, it is impossible to find a greater than
Moses, if this account be true. Here is an order to butcher the boys, to massacre the mothers, and debase the daughters.

Let any mother put herself in the situation of those mothers; one child murdered, another destined to violation, and herself in the hands of an executioner; let any daughter put herself in the situation of those daughters, destined as a prey to the murderers of a mother and a brother, and what will be their feelings? It is in vain that we attempt to impose upon nature, for nature will have her course, and the religion that tortures all her social ties is a false religion.

After this detestable order, follows an account of the plunder taken, and the manner of dividing it; and here it is that the profaneness of priestly hypocrisy increases the catalogue of crimes. Ver. 37 to 40, "And the Lord's tribute of the sheep was six hundred and three score and fifteen; and the beeves were thirty and six thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was three score and twelve; and the asses were thirty thousand and five hundred, of which the Lord's tribute was three score and one; and the persons were sixteen thousand, of which the Lord's tribute was thirty and two persons." In short, matters contained in this chapter, as well as in many other parts of the Bible, are too horrid for humanity to read or for decency to hear, for it appears, from the 35th verse of this chapter, that the number of women-children consigned to debauchery by the order of Moses was thirty-two thousand.

People in general do not know what wickedness there is in this pretended word of God. Brought up in habits of superstition, they take it for granted that the Bible is true, and that it is good; they permit themselves not to doubt of it, and they carry the ideas they form of the benevolence of the Almighty to the book which they have been taught to believe was written by his authority. Good heavens! it is quite another thing; it is a book of lies, wickedness, and blasphemy; for what can be greater blasphemy than to ascribe the wickedness of man to the orders of the Almighty?

But to return to my subject, that of showing that Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him, and that the Bible is spurious. The two instances I have already given would be sufficient without any additional evidence, to invalidate the authenticity of any book that pretended to be four or five hundred years more ancient than the matters it speaks of, or refers to, as facts; for in the case of pursuing them unto Dan, and of the kings that reigned over the children of Israel, not even the flimsy pretence of prophecy can be pleaded. The expressions are in the preter tense, and it would be downright idolatry to say that a man could prophecy in the preter tense.

But there are many other passages scattered
throughout those books that unite in the same point of evidence. It is said in Exodus (another of the books ascribed to Moses), chap. xvi. verse 34, "And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan."

Whether the children of Israel ate manna or not, or what manna was, or whether it was anything more than a kind of fungus or small mushroom, or other vegetable substance common to that part of the country, makes nothing to my argument; all that I mean to show is, that it is not Moses that could write this account, because the account extends itself beyond the life and time of Moses. Moses, according to the Bible (but it is such a book of lies and contradictions there is no knowing which part to believe, or whether any), died in the wilderness and never came upon the borders of the land of Canaan; and consequently it could not be he that said what the children of Israel did, or what they ate when they came there. This account of eating manna, which they tell us was written by Moses, extends itself to the time of Joshua, the successor of Moses; as appears by the account given in the book of Joshua, after the children of Israel had passed the river Jordan, and came unto the borders of the land of Canaan. Joshua, chap. v., verse 12. "And the manna ceased on the morrow, after they had eaten of

the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more, but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year."

But a more remarkable instance than this occurs in Deuteronomy, which, while it shows that Moses could not be the writer of that book, shows also the fabulous notions that prevailed at that time about giants. In the third chapter of Deuteronomy, among the conquests said to be made by Moses, is an account of the taking of Og, king of Bashan, v. 11, "For only Og, king of Bashan, remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? Nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man." A cubit is 1 foot 9 888-1000ths inches; the length, therefore, of the bed was 16 feet 4 inches, and the breadth 7 feet 4 inches; thus much for this giant's bed. Now for the historical part, which, though the evidence is not so direct and positive as in the former cases, it is nevertheless very presumable and corroborating evidence, and is better that the best evidence on the contrary side.

The writer, by way of proving the existence of this giant, refers to his bed as an ancient relic, and says, Is it not in Rabbath (or Rabbah) of the children of Ammon? meaning that it is; for such is frequently the Bible method of affirming a thing. But it could not be Moses that said
this, because Moses could know nothing about Rabbah, nor of what was in it. Rabbah was not a city belonging to this giant king, nor was it one of the cities that Moses took. The knowledge, therefore, that this bed was at Rabbah, and of the particulars of its dimensions, must be referred to the time when Rabbah was taken, and this was not till four hundred years after the death of Moses; for which see II. Sam. chap. xii., ver. 26. "And Joab (David's general) fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city."

As I am not undertaking to point out all the contradictions in time, place, and circumstance that abound in the books ascribed to Moses, and which prove to a demonstration that those books could not have been written by Moses, nor in the time of Moses, I proceed to the book of Joshua, and to show that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous and without authority. The evidence I shall produce is contained in the book itself; I will not go out of the Bible for proof against the supposed authenticity of the Bible. False testimony is always good against itself.

Joshua, according to the first chapter of Joshua, was the immediate successor of Moses; he was, moreover, a military man, which Moses was not, and he continued as chief of the people of Israel 25 years, that is, from the time that Moses died, which, according to the Bible chronology, was 1451 years before Christ, until 1426 years before Christ, when, according to the same chronology, Joshua died. If, therefore, we find in this book, said to have been written by Joshua, reference to facts done after the death of Joshua, it is evidence that Joshua could not be the author; and also that the book could not have been written till after the time of the latest fact which it records. As to the character of the book, it is horrid; it is a military history of rapine and murder, as savage and brutal as those recorded of his predecessor in villainy and hypocrisy, Moses; and the blasphemy consists, as in the former books, in ascribing those deeds to the orders of the Almighty.

In the first place, the book of Joshua, as is the case in the preceding books, is written in the third person; it is the historian of Joshua that speaks, for it would have been absurd and vain-glory that Joshua should say of himself, as is said of him in the last verse of the sixth chapter, that "his fame was noise throughout all the country." I now come more immediately to the proof.

In the 24th chapter, ver. 31, it is said, "And Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua." Now, in the name of common sense, can it be Joshua that relates what people had done after he was dead? This account must not
only have been written by some historian that lived after Joshua, but that lived also after the elders that outlived Joshua.

There are several passages of a general meaning with respect to time scattered throughout the book of Joshua, that carries the time in which the book was written to a distance from the time of Joshua, but without marking by exclusion any particular time, as in the passage above quoted. In that passage, the time that intervened between the death of Joshua and the death of the elders is excluded descriptively and absolutely, and the evidence substantiates that the book could not have been written till after the death of the last.

But though the passages to which I allude, and which I am going to quote, do not designate any particular time by exclusion, they imply a time far more distant from the days of Joshua than is contained between the death of Joshua and the death of the elders. Such is the passage, chap. x., ver. 14, where, after giving an account that the sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, at the command of Joshua (a tale only fit to amuse children), the passage says, “And there was no day like that, before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man.”

This tale of the sun standing still upon mount Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, is one of those fables that detects itself. Such a circumstance could not have happened without being known all over the world. One half would have wondered why the sun did not rise, and the other why it did not set; and the tradition of it would be universal, whereas there is not a nation in the world that knows anything about it. But why must the moon stand still? What occasion could there be for moonlight in the daytime, and that too while the sun shone? As a poetical figure, the whole is well enough; it is akin to that in the song of Deborah and Barak, *The stars in their courses fought against Sisera;* but it is inferior to the figurative declaration of Mahomet to the persons who came to expostulate with him on his goings on: “*Wert thou,*” said he, “*to come to me with the sun in thy right hand and the moon in thy left, it should not alter my career.*” For Joshua to have exceeded Mahomet, he should have put the sun and moon one in each pocket, and carried them as Guy Fawkes carried his dark lantern, and taken them out to shine as he might happen to want them.

The sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime makes the ridiculous, and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again; the account, however, abstracted from the poetical fancy, shows the ignorance of Joshua, for he should have commanded the earth to have stood still.