The time implied by the expression after it, that is, after that day, being put in comparison with all the time that passed before it, must, in order to give any expressive signification to the passage, mean a great length of time; for example, it would have been ridiculous to have said so the next day, or the next week, or the next month, or the next year; to give, therefore, meaning to the passage, comparative with the wonder it relates and the prior time it alludes to, it must mean centuries of years; less, however, than one would be trifling, and less than two would be barely admissible.

A distant but general time is also expressed in the 8th chapter, where, after giving an account of the taking of the city of Ai, it is said, ver. 28, "And Joshua burned Ai, and made it a heap forever, even a desolation unto this day"; and again, ver. 29, where, speaking of the king of Ai, whom Joshua had hanged, and buried at the entering of the gate, it is said, "And he raised thereon a great heap of stones, which remaineth unto this day," that is, unto the day or time in which the writer of the book of Joshua lived. And again, in the 10th chapter, where, after speaking of the five kings whom Joshua had hanged on five trees, and then thrown in a cave, it is said, "And he laid great stones on the cave's mouth, which remain unto this very day."

In enumerating the several exploits of Joshua, and of the tribes, and of the places which they conquered or attempted, it is said, chap. xv., ver. 63: "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day."

The question upon this passage is, at what time did the Jebusites and the children of Judah dwell together at Jerusalem? As this matter occurs again in the first chapter of Judges, I shall reserve my observations until I come to that part.

Having thus shown from the book of Joshua itself, without any auxiliary evidence whatever, that Joshua is not the author of that book, and that it is anonymous, and consequently without authority, I proceed as before mentioned, to the book of Judges.

The book of Judges is anonymous on the face of it; and, therefore, even the pretense is wanting to call it the word of God; it has not so much as a nominal voucher; it is altogether fatherless.

This book begins with the same expression as the book of Joshua. That of Joshua begins, chap. i., verse 1, "Now after the death of Moses," etc., and this of the Judges begins, "Now after the death of Joshua," etc. This, and the similarity of style between the two books, indicate that they are the work of the same author, but who he was is altogether unknown; the only
point that the book proves, is that the author lived long after the time of Joshua; for though it begins as if it followed immediately after his death, the second chapter is an epitome or abstract of the whole book, which, according to the Bible chronology, extends its history through a space of 306 years; that is, from the death of Joshua, 1426 years before Christ, to the death of Samson, 1120 years before Christ, and only 25 years before Saul went to seek his father’s asses, and was made king. But there is good reason to believe, that it was not written till the time of David, at least, and that the book of Joshua was not written before the same time.

In the first chapter of Judges, the writer, after announcing the death of Joshua, proceeds to tell what happened between the children of Judah and the native inhabitants of the land of Canaan. In this statement, the writer, having abruptly mentioned Jerusalem in the 7th verse, says immediately after, in the 8th verse, by way of explanation, “Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem, and had taken it”; consequently this book could not have been written before Jerusalem had been taken. The reader will recollect the quotation I have just before made from the 15th chapter of Joshua, ver. 63, where it is said that the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day, meaning the time when the book of Joshua was written.

The evidence I have already produced to prove that the books I have hitherto treated of were not written by the persons to whom they were ascribed, nor till many years after their death, if such persons ever lived, is already so abundant that I can afford to admit this passage with less weight than I am entitled to draw from it. For the case is, that so far as the Bible can be credited as a history, the city of Jerusalem was not taken till the time of David; and consequently that the books of Joshua and of Judges were not written till after the commencement of the reign of David, which was 370 years after the death of Joshua.

The name of the city that was afterward called Jerusalem was originally Jebus, or Jebusi, and was the capital of the Jebusites. The account of David’s taking this city is given in II. Samuel, chap. v., ver. 4, etc.; also in I. Chron. chap. xiv., ver. 4, etc. There is no mention in any part of the Bible that it was ever taken before, nor any account that favors such an opinion. It is not said, either in Samuel or in Chronicles, that they utterly destroyed men, women and children; that they left not a soul to breathe, as is said of their other conquests; and the silence here observed implies that it was taken by capitulation, and that the Jebusites, the native inhabitants, continued to live in the place after it was taken. The account therefore, given in Joshua, that the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at
Jerusalem unto this day corresponds to no other time than after the taking of the city by David.

Having now shown that every book in the Bible, from Genesis to Judges, is without authenticity, I come to the book of Ruth, an idle, bungling story, foolishly told, nobody knows by whom, about a strolling country-girl creeping slyly to bed with her cousin Boaz. Pretty stuff indeed to be called the word of God! It is, however, one of the best books in the Bible, for it is free from murder and rapine. 

I come next to the two books of Samuel, and to show that those books were not written by Samuel, nor till a great length of time after the death of Samuel; and that they are, like all the former books, anonymous and without authority.

To be convinced that these books have been written much later than the time of Samuel, and consequently not by him, it is only necessary to read the account which the writer gives of Saul going to seek his father's ass, and of his interview with Samuel, of whom Saul went to inquire about those lost asses, as foolish people nowadays go to a conjuror to inquire after lost things.

The writer, in relating this story of Saul, Samuel and the ass, does not tell it as a thing that has just then happened, but as an ancient story in the time this writer lived; for he tells it in the language or terms used at the time that Samuel lived, which obliges the writer to explain the story in the terms or language used in the time the writer lived.

Samuel, in the account given of him, in the first of those books, chap. ix., is called the seer; and it is by this term that Saul inquires after him, ver. 11, "And as they (Saul and his servant) went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water; and they said unto them, Is the seer here?" Saul then went according to the direction of these maidens, and met Samuel without knowing him, and said unto him, ver. 18, "Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is? And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer."

As the writer of the book of Samuel relates these questions and answers, in the language or manner of speaking used in the time they are said to have been spoken, and as that manner of speaking was out of use when this author wrote, he found it necessary, in order to make the story understood, to explain the terms in which these questions and answers are spoken; and he does this in the 9th verse, when he says "Before-time, in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a Prophet, was before-time called a Seer." This proves, as I have before said, that this story of Saul, Samuel and the ass, was an ancient story at the time the book of Samuel was written, and consequently
that Samuel did not write it, and that that book is without authenticity.

But if we go further into those books the evidence is still more positive that Samuel is not the writer of them; for they relate things that did not happen till several years after the death of Samuel. _Samuel died before Saul_; for the 1st Samuel, chap. xxviii., tells that Saul and the witch of Endor conjured Samuel up after he was dead; yet the history of the matters contained in those books is extended through the remaining part of Saul's life, and to the latter end of the life of David, who succeeded Saul. The account of the death and burial of Samuel (a thing which he could not write himself) is related in the 25th chapter of the first book of Samuel, and the chronology affixed to this chapter makes this to be 1060 years before Christ; yet the history of this first book is brought down to 1056 years before Christ; that is, till the death of Saul, which was not till four years after the death of Samuel.

The second book of Samuel begins with an account of things that did not happen till four years after Samuel was dead; for it begins with the reign of David, who succeeded Saul, and it goes on to the end of David's reign, which was forty-three years after the death of Samuel; and, therefore, the books are in themselves positive evidence that they were not written by Samuel.

I have now gone through all the books in the first part of the Bible to which the names of persons are affixed, as being the authors of those books, and which the Church, styling itself the Christian Church, have imposed upon the world as the writings of Moses, Joshua and Samuel, and I have detected and proved the falsehood of this imposition. And now, ye priests of every description, who have preached and written against the former part of the Age of Reason, what have ye to say? Will ye, with all this mass of evidence against you, and staring you in the face, still have the assurance to march into your pulpits and continue to impose these books on your congregations as the works of inspired pensmen, and the word of God, when it is as evident as demonstration can make truth appear, that the persons who ye say are the authors, are not the authors, and that ye know not who the authors are. What shadow of pretence have ye now to produce for continuing the blasphemous fraud? What have ye still to offer against the pure and moral religion of Deism, in support of your system of falsehood, idolatory, and pretended revelation? Had the cruel and murderous orders with which the Bible is filled, and the numberless torturing executions of men, women and children, in consequence of those orders, been ascribed to some friend whose memory you revered, you would have glowed with satisfaction at detecting the falsehood of the charge, and
gloried in defending his injured fame. Is it because ye are sunk in the cruelty of superstition, or feel no interest in the honor of your Creator, that ye listen to the horrid tales of the Bible, or hear them with callous indifference? The evidence I have produced, and shall produce in the course of this work, to prove that the Bible is without authority, will, while it wounds the stubbornness of a priest, relieve and tranquilize the minds of millions; it will free them from all those hard thoughts of the Almighty which priestcraft and the Bible has infused into their minds, and which stood in everlasting opposition to all their ideas of his moral justice and benevolence.

I come now to the two books of Kings, and the two books on Chronicles. Those books are altogether historical, and are chiefly confined to the lives and action of the Jewish kings, who in general were a parcel of rascals; but these are matters with which we have no more concern than we have with the Roman emperors or Homer's account of the Trojan war. Besides which, as those works are anonymous, and as we know nothing of the writer, or of his character, it is impossible for us to know what degree of credit to give to the matters related therein. Like all other ancient histories, they appear to be a jumble of fable and of fact, and of probable and of improbable things; but which distance of time and place, and change of circumstances in the world, have rendered obsolete and uninteresting.

The chief use I shall make of those books will be that of comparing them with each other, and with other parts of the Bible, to show the confusion, contradiction, and cruelty in this pretended word of God.

The first book of Kings begins with the reign of Solomon, which, according to the Bible chronology, was 1015 years before Christ; and the second book ends 588 years before Christ, being a little after the reign of Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, after taking Jerusalem and conquering the Jews, carried captive to Babylon. The two books include a space of 427 years.

The two books of Chronicles are a history of the same times, and in general of the same persons, by another author; for it would be absurd to suppose that the same author wrote the history twice over. The first book of Chronicles (after giving the genealogy from Adam to Saul, which takes up the first nine chapters), begins with the reign of David; and the last book ends as in the last book of Kings, soon after the reign of Zedekiah, about 588 years before Christ. The two last verses of the last chapter bring the history forward 52 years more, that is, to 536. But these verses do not belong to the book, as I shall show when I come to speak of the book of Ezra.

The two books of Kings, besides the history of Saul, David and Solomon, who reigned over
all Israel, contain an abstract of the lives of 17 kings and one queen, who are styled kings of Judah, and of 19, who are styled kings of Israel; for the Jewish nation, immediately on the death of Solomon, split into two parties, who chose separate kings, and who carried on most rancorous wars against each other.

These two books are little more than a history of assassinations, treachery and wars. The cruelties that the Jews had accustomed themselves to practise on the Canaanites, whose country they had savagely invaded under a pretended gift from God, they afterward practised as furiously on each other. Scarcely half their kings died a natural death, and in some instances whole families were destroyed to secure possession to the successor; who, after a few years, and sometimes only a few months or less, shared the same fate. In the tenth chapter of the second book of Kings, an account given of two baskets full of children's heads, seventy in number, being exposed at the entrance of the city; they were the children of Ahab, and were murdered by the order of Jehu, whom Elisha, the pretended man of God, had anointed to be king over Israel, on purpose to commit this bloody deed, and assassinate his predecessor. And in the account of the reign of Menahem, one of the kings of Israel who had murdered Shallum, who had reigned but one month, it is said, I. Kings, chap. xv., ver. 16, that Menahem smote the city of Tiphsah, because they opened not the city to him, and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up.

Could we permit ourselves to suppose that the Almighty would distinguish any nation of people by the name of His chosen people, we must suppose that people to have been an example to all the rest of the world of the purest piety and humanity, and not such a nation of ruffians and cut-throats as the ancient Jews were; a people who, corrupted by and copying after such monsters and impostors as Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Samuel and David, had distinguished themselves above all others on the face of the known earth for barbarity and wickedness. If we will not stubbornly shut our eyes and steel our hearts, it is impossible not to see, in spite of all that long-established superstition imposes upon the mind, that the flattering appellation of His chosen people is no other than a lie which the priests and leaders of the Jews had invented to cover the baseness of their own characters, and which Christian priests, sometimes as corrupt and often as cruel, have professed to believe.

The two books of Chronicles are a repetition of the same crimes, but the history is broken in several places by the author leaving out the reign of some of their kings; and in this, as well as in that of Kings, there is such a frequent transition from kings of Judah to kings of
Israel, and from kings of Israel to kings of Judah, that the narrative is obscure in the reading. In the same book the history sometimes contradicts itself; for example, in the second book of Kings, chap. i., ver. 17, we are told, but in rather ambiguous terms, that after the death of Ahaziah, king of Israel, Jehoram, or Joram (who was of the house of Ahab), reigned in his stead, in the second year of Jehoram, or Joram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; and in chap. viii., ver. 16, of the same book, it is said, and in the fifth year of Joram, the son of Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then king of Judah, began to reign; that is, one chapter says Joram of Judah began to reign in the second year of Joram of Israel; and the other chapter says, that Joram of Israel began to reign in the fifth year of Joram of Judah.

Several of the most extraordinary matters related in one history, as having happened during the reign of such and such of their kings, are not to be found in the other, in relating the reign of the same king; for example, the two first rival kings, after the death of Solomon, were Rehoboam and Jeroboam; and in I. Kings, chap. xii and xiii, an account is given of Jeroboam making an offering of burnt incense, and that a man, who was there called a man of God, cried out against the altar, chap. xiii., ver. 2: "O altar, altar! thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee." Verse 4: "And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he put out against him dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him."

One would think that such an extraordinary case as this (which is spoken of as a judgment), happening to the chief of one of the parties, and that at the first moment of the separation of the Israelites into two nations, would, if it had been true, have been recorded in both histories. But though men in latter times have believed all that the prophets have said unto them, it does not appear that these prophets or historians believed each other; they knew each other too well.

A long account also is given in Kings about Elijah. It runs through several chapters, and concludes with telling, II. Kings, chap. ii., ver. 11, "And it came to pass, as they (Elijah and Elisha) still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Hum! this the author of Chronicles, miraculous as the story is, makes no mention of, though he mentions Elijah by name; neither does he say any-
thing of the story related in the second chapter of the same book of Kings, of a parcel of children calling Elisha 

*bald head, bald head*; and that this *man of God, verse 24, “Turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord; and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tore forty-and-two children of them.”* He also passes over in silence the story told, II. Kings, chap. xiii., that when they were burying a man in the sepulchre where Elisha had been buried, it happened that the dead man, as they were letting him down (ver. 21), touched the bones of Elisha, and he (the dead man) *revived, and stood upon his feet.*” The story does not tell us whether they buried the man, notwithstanding he revived and stood upon his feet, or drew him up again. Upon all these stories the writer of Chronicles is as silent as any writer of the present day who did not choose to be accused of *lying,* or at least of romancing, would be about stories of the same kind.

But, however these two historians may differ from each other with respect to the tales related by either, they are silent alike with respect to those men styled prophets, whose writings fill up the latter part of the Bible. Isaiah, who lived in the time of Hezekiah, is mentioned in Kings, and again in Chronicles, when these historians are speaking of that reign; but, except in one or two instances at most, and those very slightly, none of the rest are so much as spoken of, or even their existence hinted at; although, according to the Bible chronology, they lived within the time those histories were written; some of them long before. If those prophets, as they are called, were men of such importance in their day as the compilers of the Bible and priests and commentators have since represented them to be, how can it be accounted for that not one of these histories should say anything about them?

The history in the books of Kings and of Chronicles is brought forward, as I have already said, to the year 588 before Christ; it will, therefore, be proper to examine which of these prophets lived before that period.

Here follows a table of all the prophets, with the times in which they lived before Christ, according to the chronology affixed to the first chapter of each of the books of the prophets; and also of the number of years they lived before the books of Kings and Chronicles were written.

This table is either not very honorable for the Bible historians, or not very honorable for the Bible prophets; and I leave to priests and commentators, who are very learned in little things, to settle the point of *etiquette* between the two, and to assign a reason why the authors of Kings and Chronicles have treated those prophets whom, in the former part of the *Age of Reason,*
I have considered as poets, with as much degrading silence as any historian of the present day would treat Peter Pindar.

TABLE OF THE PROPHETS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names</th>
<th>Years before Christ</th>
<th>Years before Kings and Chronicles</th>
<th>Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>mentioned only in the last chap. of Chron.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezekiel</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosea</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joel</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amos</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obadiah</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonah</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>see the note.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Micah</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahum</td>
<td>713</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habakkuk</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zephaniah</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>not mentioned.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have one observation more to make on the book of Chronicles, after which I shall pass on to review the remaining books of the Bible.

In my observations on the book of Genesis, I have quoted a passage from the 36th chapter, and have already stated that the passage in Genesis refers itself for time to Chronicles; but the writer, in giving the genealogy of the descendants of David, mentions Zedekiah; and it was in the time of Zedekiah that Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem, 588 years before Christ, and consequently more than 860 years after Moses. Those who have superstitiously boasted of the antiquity of the Bible, and par-
particularly of the books ascribed to Moses, have
done it without examination, and without any
authority than that of one credulous man telling
it to another; for so far as historical and chrono-
logical evidence applies, the very first book in
the Bible is not so ancient as the book of Homer
by more than three hundred years, and is about
the same age with *Esop’s Fables.*

I am not contending for the morality of
Homer; on the contrary, I think it a book of
false glory, tending to inspire immoral and mis-
dchievous notions of honor; and with respect to
Esop, though the moral is in general just, the
fable is often cruel; and the cruelty of the fable
does more injury to the heart, especially in a
child, than the moral does to the judgment.

Having now dismissed Kings and Chronicles,
I come to the next in course, the book of Ezra.
As one proof, among others I shall produce,
to show the disorder in which this pretended
word of God, the Bible, has been put together,
and the uncertainty of who the authors were,
we have only to look at the three first verses in
Ezra, and the last two in Chronicles; for by
what kind of cutting and shuffling has it been
that the three first verses in Ezra should be the
two last verses in Chronicles, or that the two
last in Chronicles should be the three first in
Ezra? Either the authors did not know their
own works, or the compilers did not know the
authors.

The last verse in Chronicles is broken ab-
ruptly, and ends in the middle of the phrase with
the word *up,* without signifying to what place.
This abrupt break, and the appearance of the
same verses in different books, show, as I have
already said, the disorder and ignorance in
which the Bible has been put together, and that
the compilers of it had no authority for what
they were doing, nor we any authority for be-
lieving what they have done.*

*I observed, as I passed along, several broken and senseless pas-
sages in the Bible, without thinking them of consequence enough to
be introduced in the body of the work; such as that, I. Samuel, chap.
xxii. ver. 1, where it is said, ‘Saul reigned one year; and when he had
reigned two years over Israel, Saul chose him three thousand men,’
etc. The first part of the verse, that Saul reigned one year, has no
sense, since it does not tell us what Saul did, nor say anything of
what happened at the end of that one year; and it is, besides, mere
absurdity to say he reigned one year, when the very next phrase says
he had reigned two; for if he had reigned two, it was impossible not
to have reigned one.

Another instance occurs in Joshua, chap. v, where the writer tells us
a story of an angel (for such the table of contents at the head of the
chapter calls him) appearing unto Joshua; and the story ends
abruptly, and without any conclusion. The story is as follows: Verse
13, ‘And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted
up his eyes and looked, and beheld there stood a man over against
him with his sword drawn in his hand; and Joshua went unto him and
said unto him, Art thou for us or for our adversaries?’ Verse 14,
‘And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I
now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship,
and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?’ Verse 15,
‘And the captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe
from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And
Joshua did so.’ And what then? nothing, for here the story ends,
and the chapter too.

Either the story is broken off in the middle, or it is a story told
by some Jewish humorist, in ridicule of Joshua’s pretended mission
from God; and the compilers of the Bible, not perceiving the design
Two last verses of Chronicles
Ver. 22. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord, spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

23. Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me: and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? the Lord his God be with him, and let him go up.

Three first verses of Ezra
Ver. 1. Now in the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord, by the mouth of Jeremiah, might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2. Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

3. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem.

of the story, have told it as a serious matter. As a story of humor and ridicule it has a great deal of point, for it pompously introduces an angel in the figure of a man, with a drawn sword in his hand, before whom Joshua falls on his face to the earth and worships (which is contrary to their second commandment); and then this most important embassy from heaven ends in telling Joshua to pull off his shoe. It might as well have told him to pull up his breeches.

It is certain, however, that the Jews did not credit everything their leaders told them, as appears from the cavalier manner in which they speak of Moses, when he was gone into the mount. "As for this Moses," say they, "we wot not what is become of him." Exod. chap. xxxii, ver. 1.

The only thing that has any appearance of certainty in the book of Ezra, is the time in which it was written, which was immediately after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, about 536 years before Christ. Ezra (who, according to the Jewish commentators, is the same person as is called Esdras in the Apocrypha), was one of the persons who returned, and who, it is probable, wrote the account of that affair. Nehemiah, whose book follows next to Ezra, was another of the returned persons; and who, it is also probable, wrote the account of the same affair in the book that bears his name. But these accounts are nothing to us, nor to any other persons, unless it be to the Jews, as a part of the history of their nation; and there is just as much of the word God in those books as there is in any of the histories of France, or Rapin's History of England, or the history of any other country.

But even in matters of historical record, neither of these writers are to be depended upon. In the second chapter of Ezra, the writer gives a list of the tribes and families, and of the precise number of souls of each, that returned from Babylon to Jerusalem: and this enrolment of the persons so returned appears to have been one of the principal objects for writing the book; but in this there is an error that destroys the intention of the undertaking.

The writer begins his enrolment in the follow-
ing manner, chap. ii., ver. 3: "The children of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy and two." Ver. 4, "The Children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy and two." And in this manner he proceeds through all the families; and in the 64th verse, he makes a total, and says, "The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore."

But whoever will take the trouble of casting up the several particulars will find that the total is but 29,818; so that the error is 12,542.* What certainty, then, can there be in the Bible for anything?

Nehemiah, in like manner, gives a list of the returned families, and of the number of each family. He begins, as in Ezra, by saying, chap. vii., ver. 8, "The children of Parosh, two thousand a hundred seventy and two; and so on through all the families. The list differs in

* Particulars of the Families from the second Chapter of Ezra.

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several of the particulars from that of Ezra. In the 66th verse, Nehemiah makes a total, and says, as Ezra had said, "The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore." But the particulars of this list makes a total of but 31,089, so that the error here is 11,271. These writers may do well enough for Bible-makers, but not for anything where truth and exactness is necessary.

If Madame Esther thought it any honor to offer herself as a kept mistress to Ahasuerus, or as a rival to Queen Vashti, who had refused to come to a drunken king in the midst of a drunken company, to be made a show of (for the account says they had been drinking seven days and were merry), let Esther and Mordecai look to that; it is no business of ours; at least it is none of mine; besides which the story has a great deal the appearance of being fabulous, and is also anonymous. I pass on to the book of Job.

The book of Job differs in character from all the books we have hitherto passed over. Treachery and murder make no part of this book; it is the meditations of a mind strongly impressed with the vicissitudes of human life, and by turns sinking under, and struggling against the pressure. It is a highly wrought composition, between willing submission and involuntary discontent, and shows man, as he sometimes is, more disposed to be resigned than
he is capable of being. Patience has but a small share in the character of the person of whom the book treats; on the contrary, his grief is often impetuous, but he still endeavors to keep a guard upon it, and seems determined in the midst of accumulating ills, to impose upon himself the hard duty of contentment.

I have spoken in a respectful manner of the book of Job in the former part of the *Age of Reason*, but without knowing at that time what I have learned since, which is, that from all the evidence that can be collected the book of Job does not belong to the Bible.

I have seen the opinion of two Hebrew commentators, Abenezra and Spinoza, upon this subject. They both say that the book of Job carries no internal evidence of being a Hebrew book; that the genius of the composition and the drama of the piece are not Hebrew; that it has been translated from another language into Hebrew, and that the author of the book was a Gentile; that the character represented under the name of Satan (which is the first and only time this name is mentioned in the Bible) does not correspond to any Hebrew idea, and that the two convocations which the Deity is supposed to have made of those whom the poem calls sons of God, and the familiarity which this supposed Satan is stated to have with the Deity, are in the same case.

It may also be observed, that the book shows itself to be the production of a mind cultivated in science, which the Jews, so far from being famous for, were very ignorant of. The allusions to objects of natural philosophy are frequent and strong, and are of a different cast to anything in the books known to be Hebrew. The astronomical names, Pleiades, Orion, and Arcturus, are Greek and not Hebrew names, and it does not appear from anything that is to be found in the Bible, that the Jews knew anything of astronomy or that they studied it; they had no translation of those names into their own language, but adopted the names as they found them in the poem.

That the Jews did translate the literary productions of the Gentile nations into the Hebrew language, and mix them with their own, is not a matter of doubt; the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs is an evidence of this; it is there said, v. 1: "The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him." This verse stands as a preface to the Proverbs that follow, and which are not the proverbs of Solomon, but of Lemuel; and this Lemuel was not one of the kings of Israel, nor of Judah, but of some other country, and consequently a Gentile. The Jews, however, have adopted his proverbs, and as they cannot give any account who the author of the book of Job was, nor how they came by the book, and as it differs in character from the Hebrew writings, and stands totally unconnected with
every other book and chapter in the Bible, before it and after it, it has all the circumstantial evidence of being originally a book of the Gentiles.*

The Bible-makers and those regulators of time, the chronologists, appear to have been at a loss where to place and how to dispose of the book of Job; for it contains no one historical circumstance, nor allusion to any, that might determine its place in the Bible. But it would not have answered the purpose of these men to have informed the world of their ignorance, and therefore, they have affixed it to the era of 1520 years before Christ, which is during the time the Israelites were in Egypt, and for which they have just as much authority and no more than I should have for saying it was a thousand years before that period. The probability, however, is that it is older than any book in the Bible; and it is the only one that can be read without indignation or disgust.

We know nothing of what the ancient Gentile world (as it is called) was before the time of the Jews, whose practise has been to calumniate and blacken the character of all other nations; and it is from the Jewish accounts that we have learned to call them heathens. But, as far as we know to the contrary, they were just and moral people, and not addicted, like the Jews, to cruelty and revenge, but of whose profession of faith we are unacquainted. It appears to have been their custom to personify both virtue and vice by statues and images, as is done nowadays both by statuary and by painting; but it does not follow from this that they worshiped them, any more than we do.

Psalm 15 I pass on to the book of Psalms, of which it is not necessary to make much observation. Some of them are moral, and others are very revengeful; and the greater part relates to certain local circumstances of the Jewish nation at the time they were written, with which we have nothing to do. It is, however, an error or an imposition to call them the Psalms of David. They are a collection, as song-books are nowadays, from different song-writers, who lived at different times. The 137th Psalm could not have been written till more than 400 years after

* The prayer known by the name of Agur’s prayer, in the 30th chapter of Proverbs, immediately preceding the proverbs of Lemuel, and which is the only sensible, well-conceived and well-expressed prayer in the Bible, has much the appearance of being a prayer taken from the Gentiles. The name of Agur occurs on no other occasion than this; and he is introduced, together with the prayer ascribed to him, in the same manner, and nearly in the same words, that Lemuel and his proverbs are introduced in the chapter that follows. The first verse of the 30th chapter says, “The words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy.” Here the word ‘prophecy’ is used in the same application it has in the following chapter of Lemuel, unconnected with any thing of prediction. The prayer of Agur is in the 8th and 9th verses, “Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me; lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” This has not any of the marks of being a Jewish prayer, for the Jews never prayed but when they were in trouble, and never for anything but victory, vengeance and riches.
the time of David, because it was written in commemoration of an event, the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, which did not happen till that distance of time. "By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows, in the midst thereof; for there they that carried us away captive required of us a song, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion." As a man would say to an American, or to a Frenchman, or to an Englishman, "Sing us one of your American songs, or of your French songs, or of your English songs." This remark, with respect to the time this Psalm was written, is of no other use than to show (among others already mentioned) the general imposition the world has been under in respect to the authors of the Bible. No regard has been paid to time, place and circumstance, and the names of persons have been affixed to the several books, which it was as impossible they should write as that a man should walk in procession at his own funeral.

The Book of Proverbs. These, like the Psalms, are a collection, and that from authors belonging to other nations than those of the Jewish nation, as I have shown in the observations upon the book of Job; besides which some of the proverbs ascribed to Solomon did not appear till two hundred and fifty years after the death of Solomon; for it is said in the 1st verse of the 25th chapter, "These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out." It was two hundred and fifty years from the time of Solomon to the time of Hezekiah. When a man is famous and his name is abroad, he is made the putative father of things he never said or did, and this, most probably, has been the case with Solomon. It appears to have been the fashion of that day to make proverbs, as it is now to make jest-books and father them upon those who never saw them.

The book of Ecclesiastes, or the Preacher, is also ascribed to Solomon, and that with much reason, if not with truth. It is written as the solitary reflections of a worn-out debauchee, such as Solomon was, who, looking back on scenes he can no longer enjoy, cries out, "All is vanity!" A great deal of the metaphor and of the sentiment is obscure, most probably by translation; but enough is left to show they were strongly pointed in the original.* From what is transmitted to us of the character of Solomon, he was witty, ostentatious, dissolute, and at last melancholy. He lived fast, and died, tired of the world, at the age of fifty-eight years.

Seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines are worse than none, and however, it may carry with it the appearance of heightened

* Those that look out of the window shall be darkened, is an obscure figure in translation for loss of sight.
enjoyment, it defeats all the felicity of affection by leaving it no point to fix upon. Divided love is never happy. This was the case with Solomon, and if he could not, with all his pretensions to wisdom, discover it beforehand, he merited, unpitied, the mortification he afterward endured. In this point of view, his preaching is unnecessary, because, to know the consequences, it is only necessary to know the cause. Seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines would have stood in place of the whole book. It was needless, after this, to say that all was vanity and vexation of spirit; for it is impossible to derive happiness from the company of those whom we deprive of happiness.

To be happy in old age, it is necessary that we accustom ourselves to objects that can accompany the mind all the way through life, and that we take the rest as good in their day. The mere man of pleasure is miserable in old age, and the mere drudge in business is but little better; whereas, natural philosophy, mathematical and mechanical science, are a continual source of tranquil pleasure, and in spite of the gloomy dogmas of priests and of superstition, the study of these things is the true theology; it teaches man to know and to admire the Creator, for the principles of science are in the creation, and are unchangeable and of divine origin.

Those who knew Benjamin Franklin will recollect that his mind was ever young, his temper ever serene; science, that never grows gray, was always his mistress. He was never without an object, for when we cease to have an object, we become like an invalid in a hospital waiting for death.

Solomon’s songs are amorous and foolish enough, but which wrinkled fanaticism has called divine. The compilers of the Bible have placed these songs after the book of Ecclesiastes, and the chronologists have affixed to them the era of 1014 years before Christ, at which time Solomon, according to the same chronology, was nineteen years of age, and was then forming his seraglio of wives and concubines. The Bible-makers and the chronologists should have managed this matter a little better, and either have said nothing about the time, or chosen a time less inconsistent with the supposed divinity of those songs; for Solomon was then in the honeymoon of one thousand debaucheries.

It should also have occurred to them that, as he wrote, if he did write, the book of Ecclesiastes long after these songs, and in which he exclaims, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, that he included those songs in that description. This is the more probable, because he says, or somebody for him, Ecclesiastes, chap. ii., ver. 8, “I get me men singers and women singers (most probably to sing those songs), as musical instruments and that of all
sorts; and behold (ver. 11.), all was vanity and vexation of spirit.” The compilers, however, have done their work but by halves, for as they have given us the songs, they should have given us the tunes, that we might sing them.

The books (called the Books of the Prophets) fill up all the remaining parts of the Bible; they are sixteen in number, beginning with Isaiah, and ending with Malachi, of which I have given you a list in my observations upon Chronicles. Of these sixteen prophets, all of whom, except the three last, lived within the time the books of Kings and Chronicles were written, two only, Isaiah and Jeremiah, are mentioned in the history of those books. I shall begin with those two, reserving what I have to say on the general character of the men called prophets to another part of the work.

Whoever will take the trouble of reading the book ascribed to Isaiah will find it one of the most wild and disorderly compositions ever put together; it has neither beginning, middle, nor end; and, except a short historical part and a few sketches of history in two or three of the first chapters, is one continued, incoherent, bombastical rant, full of extravagant metaphor, without application, and destitute of meaning; a school-boy would scarcely have been excusable for writing such stuff; it is (at least in the translation) that kind of composition and false taste that is properly called prose run mad.

The historical part begins at the 36th chapter, and is continued to the end of the 39th chapter. It relates to some matters that are said to have passed during the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah; at which time Isaiah lived. *This fragment of history begins and ends abruptly; it has not the least connection with the chapter that precedes it, nor with that which follows it, nor with any other in the book. It is probable that Isaiah wrote this fragment himself, because he was an actor in the circumstances it treats of; but, except this part, there are scarcely two chapters that have any connection with each other; one is entitled, at the beginning of the first verse, “The burden of Babylon”; another, “The burden of Moab”; another, “The burden of Damascus”; another, “The burden of Egypt”; another, “The burden of the desert of the sea”; another, “The burden of the valley of vision”—as you would say, “The story of the Knight of the Burning Mountain,” “The story of Cinderella,” or “The Children in the Wood,” etc., etc.

* I have already shown, in the instance of the two last verses of Chronicles, and the three first in Ezra, that the compilers of the Bible mixed and confounded the writings of different authors with each other, which alone, were there no other cause, is sufficient to destroy the authenticity of any compilation, because it is

* See beginning of chapters xiii, xv, xvii, xix, xxi and xxii.
more than presumptive evidence that the compilers were ignorant who the authors were. A very glaring instance of this occurs in the book ascribed to Isaiah; the latter part of the 44th chapter and the beginning of the 45th, so far from having been written by Isaiah, could only have been written by some person who lived at least a hundred and fifty years after Isaiah was dead.

These chapters are a compliment to Cyrus, who permitted the Jews to return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, as is stated in Ezra. The last verse of the 44th chapter and the beginning of the 45th, are in the following words: "That saith of Cyrus; He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure; even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee," etc.

What audacity of church and priestly ignorance it is to impose this book upon the world as the writing of Isaiah, when Isaiah, according to their own chronology, died soon after the death of Hezekiah, which was 693 years before Christ, and the decree of Cyrus, in favor of the Jews returning to Jerusalem, was, according to the same chronology, 536 years before Christ, which is a distance of time between the two of 162 years. I do not suppose that the compilers of the Bible made these books, but rather that they picked up some loose anonymous essays, and put them together under the names of such authors as best suited their purpose. They have encouraged the imposition, which is next to inventing it, for it was impossible but they must have observed it.

When we see the studied craft of the Scripture-makers, in making every part of this romantic book of school-boy's eloquence bend to the monstrous idea of a Son of God begotten by a ghost on the body of a virgin, there is no imposition we are not justified in suspecting them of. Every phrase and circumstance is marked with the barbarous hand of superstitious torture, and forced into meanings it was impossible they could have. The head of every chapter and the top of every page are blazoned with the names of Christ and the Church, that the unwary reader might suck in the error before he began to read.

"Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," Isaiah, chap. vii., ver. 14, has been interpreted to mean the person called Jesus Christ, and his mother Mary, and has been echoed through Christendom for more than a thousand years; and such has been the rage of this opinion that scarcely a spot in it but has
been stained with blood, and marked with desolation in consequence of it. Though it is not my intention to enter into controversy on subjects of this kind, but to confine myself to show that the Bible is spurious, and thus, by taking away the foundation, to overthrow at once the whole structure of superstition raised thereon, I will, however, stop a moment to expose the fallacious application of this passage.

Whether Isaiah was playing a trick with Ahaz, king of Judah, to whom this passage is spoken, is no business of mine; I mean only to show the misapplication of the passage, and that it has no more reference to Christ and his mother than it has to me and my mother. The story is simply this: The king of Syria and the king of Israel (I have already mentioned that the Jews were split into two nations, one of which was called Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem, and the other Israel), made war jointly against Ahaz, king of Judah, and marched their armies toward Jerusalem. Ahaz and his people became alarmed, and the account says, verse 2, "And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind."

In this situation of things, Isaiah addresses himself to Ahaz, and assures him in the name of the Lord (the cant phrase of all the prophets) that these two kings should not succeed against him; and to satisfy Ahaz that this should be the case, tells him to ask a sign. This, the account says, Ahaz declined doing, giving as a reason that he would not tempt the Lord; upon which Isaiah, who is the speaker, says, ver. 14, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son"; and the 16th verse says, "For before this child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest (or dreadest, meaning Syria and the kingdom of Israel) shall be forsaken of both her kings." Here then was the sign, and the time limited for the completion of the assurance or promise, namely, before this child should know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Isaiah having committed himself thus far, it became necessary to him, in order to avoid the imputation of being a false prophet and the consequence thereof, to take measures to make this sign appear. It certainly was not a difficult thing, in any time of the world, to find a girl with child, or to make her so, and perhaps Isaiah knew of one beforehand; for I do not suppose that the prophets of that day were any more to be trusted than the priests of this. Be that, however, as it may, he says in the next chapter, ver. 2, "And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, and I went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son."
Here, then, is the whole story, foolish as it is, of this child and this virgin; and it is upon the barefaced perversion of this story, that the book of Matthew, and the impudence and sordid interests of priests in later times, have founded a theory which they call the Gospel; and have applied this story to signify the person they call Jesus Christ, begotten, they say, by a ghost, whom they call holy, on the body of a woman, engaged in marriage, and after married, whom they call a virgin, 700 years after this foolish story was told; a theory which, speaking for myself, I hesitate not to disbelieve, and to say, is as fabulous and as false as God is true.

But to show the imposition and falsehood of Isaiah, we have only to attend to the sequel of this story (which, though it is passed over in silence in the book of Isaiah) is related in the 28th chapter of the second Chronicles, and which is, that instead of these two kings failing in their attempt against Ahaz, king of Judah, as Isaiah had pretended to foretell the name of the Lord, they succeeded; Ahaz was defeated and destroyed, a hundred and twenty thousand of his people were slaughtered, Jerusalem was plundered, and two hundred thousand women, and sons and daughters, carried into captivity.

* In the 14th verse of the 7th chapter, it is said that the child should be called Immanuel; but this name was not given to either of the children otherwise than as a character which the word signifies. That of the prophetess was called Maher-shalal-hash-baz, and that of Mary was called Jesus.
would benefit them.” Here is a proviso against the other side; and, according to this plan of prophesying, a prophet could never be wrong, however mistaken the Almighty might be. This sort of absurd subterfuge, and this manner of speaking of the Almighty, as one would speak of a man, is consistent with nothing but the stupidity of the Bible.

As to the authenticity of the book, it is only necessary to read it, in order to decide positively that, though some passages recorded therein may have been spoken by Jeremiah, he is not the author of the book. The historical parts (if they can be called by that name) are in the most confused condition; the same events are several times repeated, and that in a manner different, and sometimes in contradiction to each other; and this disorder runs even to the last chapter, where the history upon which the greater part of the book has been employed begins anew, and ends abruptly. This book has all the appearance of being a medley of unconnected anecdotes respecting persons and things of that time, collected together in the same rude manner as if the various and contradictory accounts that are to be found in a bundle of newspapers respecting persons and things of the present day, were put together without date, order, or explanation. I will give two or three explanations of this kind.

It appears, from the account of the 37th chap-

ter, that the army of Nebuchadnezzar (which is called the army of the Chaldeans) had besieged Jerusalem some time, and on their hearing that the army of Pharaoh, of Egypt, was marching against them they raised the siege and retreated for a time. It may here be proper to mention, in order to understand this confused history, that Nebuchadnezzar had besieged and taken Jerusalem during the reign of Jehoiakim, the predecessor of Zedekiah; and that it was Nebuchadnezzar who had made Zedekiah king, or rather viceroy; and that this second siege, of which the book of Jeremiah treats, was in consequence of the revolt of Zedekiah against Nebuchadnezzar. This will in some measure account for the suspicion that affixes to Jeremiah of being a traitor and in the interest of Nebuchadnezzar; whom Jeremiah calls, in the 43d chapter, ver. 10, the servant of God.

The 11th verse of this chapter (the 37th) says, “And it came to pass, that, when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem, for fear of Pharoah’s army, that Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem, to go (as this account states) into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people, and when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. Then said
Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans.” Jeremiah being thus stopped and accused, was, after being examined, committed to prison on suspicion of being a traitor, where he remained, as is stated in the last verse of this chapter.

But the next chapter gives an account of the imprisonment of Jeremiah which has no connection with this account, but ascribes his imprisonment to another circumstance, and for which we must go back to the 21st chapter. It is there stated, ver. 1., that Zedekiah sent Pashur, the son of Malchiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah the priest, to Jeremiah to inquire of him concerning Nebuchadnezzar, whose army was then before Jerusalem; and Jeremiah said unto them, ver. 8 and 9, “Thus saith the Lord, Behold I set before you the way of life, and the way of death; he that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by famine, and by pestilence; but he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey."

This interview and conference breaks off abruptly at the end of the 10th verse of the 21st chapter; and such is the disorder of this book that we have to pass over sixteen chapters, upon various subjects, in order to come at the continuation and event of this conference, and this brings us to the first verse of the 38th chapter, as I have just mentioned.

The 38th chapter opens with saying, “Then Shepahiah, the son of Mattan; Gedaliah, the son of Pashur; and Jucal, the son of Shelemiah; and Pashur, the son of Malchiah (here are more persons mentioned than in the 21st chapter), heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord, He that remaineth in this city, shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live, for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live”; (which are the the words of the conference) therefore (they say to Zedekiah), “We beseech thee, let us put this man to death, for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people in speaking such words unto them; for this man seeketh not the welfare of the people, but the hurt.” And at the 6th verse it is said, “Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah.”

These two accounts are different and contradictory. The one ascribes his imprisonment to his attempt to escape out of the city; the other to his preaching and prophesying in the city; the one to his being seized by the guard at the gate; the other to his being accused before Zedekiah, by the conferees.*

*I observed two chapters, 16th and 17th, in the first book of Samuel, that contradict each other with respect to David, and the manner he became acquainted with Saul; as the 37th and 38th chap-
In the next chapter (the 39th) we have another instance of the disordered state of this book; for notwithstanding the siege of the city by Nebuchadnezzar has been the subject of several of the preceding chapters, particularly the 37th and 38th, the 39th chapter begins as if not a word had been said upon the subject; and as if the reader was to be informed of every ters of the book of Jeremiah contradict each other with respect to the cause of Jeremiah's imprisonment.

In the 16th chapter of Samuel, it is said, that an evil spirit of God troubled Saul, and that his servants advised him (as a remedy) "to seek out a man who was a cunning player upon the harp." And Saul said, [verse 17.] Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, "Send me David thy son." And [verse 21.] David came to Saul, and stood before him, and he loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. And when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul [ver. 23] that David took an harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well."

But the next chapter [17] gives an account, all different to this, of the manner that Saul and David became acquainted. Here it is ascribed to David's encounter with Goliath, when David was sent by his father to carry provision to his brethren in the camp. In the 55th verse of this chapter it is said, "And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine [Goliath], he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling is. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." These two accounts belie each other, because each of them supposes Saul and David not to have known each other before. This book, the Bible, is too ridiculous even for criticism.

particular concerning it, for it begins with saying, verse 1., "In the ninth year of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and all his army, against Jerusalem, and they besieged it," etc.

But the instance in the last chapter (the 52d) is still more glaring, for though the story has been told over and over again, this chapter still supposes the reader not to know anything of it, for it begins by saying, ver. 1., "Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem, and his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Lignah. (Ver. 4.) And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forth against it," etc.

It is not possible that any one man, and more particularly Jeremiah, could have been the writer of this book. The errors are such as could not have been committed by any person sitting down to compose a work. Were I, or any other man, to write in such a disordered manner, nobody would read what was written; and everybody would suppose that the writer was in a state of insanity. The only way, therefore, to account for this disorder is, that the book is a medley of detached, unauthenticated
anecdotes, put together by some stupid bookmaker, under the name of Jeremiah, because many of them refer to him and to the circumstances of the times he lived in.

Of the duplicity, and of the false prediction of Jeremiah, I shall mention two instances, and then proceed to review the remainder of the Bible.

It appears from the 38th chapter, that when Jeremiah was in prison, Zedekiah sent for him, and at this interview, which was private, Jeremiah pressed it strongly on Zedekiah to surrender himself to the enemy. "If," says he (ver. 17), "thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon’s princes, then thy soul shall live," etc. Zedekiah was apprehensive that what passed at this conference should be known, and he said to Jeremiah (ver. 25), "If the princes [meaning those of Judah] hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king; hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; and also what the king said unto thee; then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan’s house to die there. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all the words the king had commanded.” Thus, this man of God, as he is called, could tell a lie or very strongly prevaricate, when he supposed it would answer his purpose; for certainly he did not go to Zedekiah to make his supplication, neither did he make it; he went because he was sent for, and he employed that opportunity to advise Zedekiah to surrender himself to Nebuchadnezzar.

In the 34th chapter is a prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah, in these words (ver. 2), “Thus saith the Lord, Behold I will give this city into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah, king of Judah, Thus saith the Lord, of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odors for thee, and they will lament thee, saying, Ah, lord; for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord.”

Now, instead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the king of Babylon, and speaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, and with the burning of odors, as at the funeral of his fathers (as Jeremiah had declared the Lord himself had pronounced), the reverse, according to the 52nd chapter, was the case; it is there
said (ver. 10), "And the king of Babylon slew the son of Zedekiah before his eyes; Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death." What, then, can we say of these prophets, but that they were impostors and liars? As for Jeremiah, he experienced none of those evils. He was taken into favor by Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him in charge to the captain of the guard (chap. xxxix., ver. 12), "Take him (said he) and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee." Jeremiah joined himself afterward to Nebuchadnezzar, and went about prophesying for him against the Egyptians, who had marched to the relief of Jerusalem while it was besieged. Thus much for another of the lying prophets, and the book that bears his name.

I have been the more particular in treating of the books ascribed to Isaiah and Jeremiah, because those two are spoken of in the books of Kings and Chronicles, which the others are not. The remainder of the books ascribed to the men called prophets I shall not trouble myself much about, but take them collectively into the observations I shall offer on the character of the men styled prophets.

In the former part of the Age of Reason, I have said that the word prophet was the Bible word for poet, and that the flights and metaphors of Jewish poets have been foolishly erected into what are now called prophecies. I am sufficiently justified in this opinion, not only because the books called the prophecies are written in poetical language, but because there is no word in the Bible, except it be the word prophet, that describes what we mean by a poet. I have also said, that the word signifies a performer upon musical instruments, of which I have given some instances, such as that of a company of prophets prophesying with psaltery, with tabrets, with pipes, with harps, etc., and that Saul prophesied with them, I. Sam., chap. x., ver. 5. It appears from this passage, and from other parts in the book of Samuel, that the word prophet was confined to signify poetry and music; for the person who was supposed to have a visionary insight into concealed things, was not a prophet but a seer* (I. Sam., chap. ix., ver. 9); and it was not till after the word seer went out of use (which most probably was when Saul banished those he called wizards) that the profession of the seer, or the art of seeing, became incorporated into the word prophet.

According to the modern meaning of the word prophet and prophesying, it signifies foretelling events to a great distance of time, and it

* I know not what is the Hebrew word that corresponds to the word seer in English; but I observe it is translated into French by le voyant, from the verb voir, to see; and which means the person who sees, or the seer.
ecame necessary to the inventors of the Gospel to give it this latitude of meaning, in order to apply or to stretch what they call the prophecies of the Old Testament to the times of the New; but according to the Old Testament, the prophesying of the seer, and afterward of the prophet, so far as the meaning of the word seer incorporated into that of prophet, had reference only to things of the time then passing, or very loosely connected with it, such as the event of battle they were going to engage in, or of a journey, or of any enterprise they were going to undertake, or of any circumstance then pending, or of any difficulty they were then in; all of which had immediate reference to themselves as in the case already mentioned of Ahaz and Isaiah with respect to the expression, "Behold virgin shall conceive and bear a son," and not to any distant future time. It was that kind of prophesying that corresponds to what we call fortune-telling, such as casting nativities, predicting riches, fortunate or unfortunate marriages, conjuring for lost goods, etc.; and it is the fraud of the Christian Church, not that of the Jews, and the ignorance and the superstition of modern, not that of ancient times, that elevated those poetical, musical, conjuring, dreamers, strolling gentry into the rank they have since had.

But, besides this general character of all the prophets, they had also a particular character.

They were in parties, and they prophesied for or against, according to the party they were with, as the poetical and political writers of the present day write in defense of the party they associate with against the other.

After the Jews were divided into two nations, that of Judah and that of Israel, each party had its prophets, who abused and accused each other of being false prophets, lying prophets, impostors, etc.

The prophets of the party of Judah prophesied against the prophets of the party of Israel; and those of the party of Israel against those of Judah. This party prophesying showed itself immediately on the separation under the first two rival kings, Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The prophet that cursed or prophesied against the altar that Jeroboam had built in Bethel, was of the party of Judah, where Rehoboam was king; and he was waylaid on his return home, by a prophet of the party of Israel, who said unto him (1 Kings, chap. xiii.), "Art thou the man of God that came from Judah? and he said, I am." Then the prophet of the party of Israel said to him, "I am a prophet also, as thou art (signifying of Judah), and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water: but (says the 18th verse) he lied unto him." This event, however, according to the story, is that the prophet of Judah
never got back to Judah, for he was found dead on the road, by the contrivance of the prophet of Israel, who, no doubt, was called a true prophet by his own party, and the prophet of Judah a lying prophet.

In the third chapter of the second of Kings, a story is related of prophesying or conjuring that shows, in several particulars, the character of a prophet. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and Jehoram, king of Israel, had for a while ceased their party animosity, and entered into an alliance; and these two, together with the king of Edom, engaged in a war against the king of Moab. After uniting and marching their armies, the story says, they were in great distress for water; upon which Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him? and one of the servants of the king of Israel said, Here is Elisha." [Elisha was one of the party of Judah.] "And Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, said, The word of the Lord is with him." The story then says, that these three kings went down to Elisha; and when Elisha (who, as I have said, was a Judahite prophet) saw the king of Israel, he said unto him, "What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay, for the Lord hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab." [Meaning because of the distress they were in for water.] Upon which Elisha said, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look towards thee, nor see thee." Here is all the venom and vulgarity of a party prophet. We have now to see the performance, or manner of prophesying.

Ver. 15. "Bring me (said Elisha) a minstrel: And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him." Here is the farce of the conjurer. Now for the prophecy: "And Elisha said, [singing most probably to the tune he was playing.] Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches"; which was just telling them what every countryman could have told them, without either fiddle or farce, that the way to get water was to dig for it.

But as every conjurer is not famous alike for the same thing, so neither were those prophets; for though all of them, at least those I have spoken of, were famous for lying, some of them excelled in cursing. Elisha, whom I have just mentioned, was a chief in this branch of prophesying; it was he that cursed the forty-two children in the name of the Lord, whom the two she-bears came and devoured. We are to suppose that those children were of the party of Israel; but as those who will curse will lie,
there is just as much credit to be given to this story of Elisha’s two she-bears as there is to that of the Dragon of Wantley, of whom it is said:

"Poor children three devoured he,
That could not with him grapple;
And at one sup he ate them up,
As a man would eat an apple."

There was another description of men called prophets, that amused themselves with dreams and visions; but whether by night or by day we know not. These, if they were not quite harmless, were but little mischievous. Of this class are:

Ezekiel and Daniel; and the first question upon those books, as upon all the others, is, are they genuine? that is, were they written by Ezekiel and Daniel?

Of this there is no proof, but so far as my own opinion goes, I am more inclined to believe they were, than that they were not. My reasons for this opinion are as follows: First, Because those books do not contain internal evidence to prove they were not written by Ezekiel and Daniel, as the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, Samuel, etc., prove they were not written by Moses, Joshua, Samuel, etc.

Secondly, Because they were not written till after the Babylonian captivity began, and there is good reason to believe that not any book in the Bible was written before that period; at

least it is proveable, from the books themselves, as I have already shown, that they were not written till after the commencement of the Jewish monarchy.

Thirdly, Because the manner in which the books ascribed to Ezekiel and Daniel are written agrees with the condition these men were in at the time of writing them.

Had the numerous commentators and priests, who have foolishly employed or wasted their time in pretending to expound and unriddle those books, been carried into captivity, as Ezekiel and Daniel were, it would have greatly improved their intellects in comprehending the reason for this mode of writing, and have saved them the trouble of racking their invention, as they have done, to no purpose; for they would have found that themselves would be obliged to write whatever they had to write respecting their own affairs or those of their friends or of their country, in a concealed manner, as those men have done.

These two books differ from all the rest, for it is only these that are filled with accounts of dreams and visions; and this difference arose from the situation the writers were in as prisoners of war, or prisoners of state, in a foreign country, which obliged them to convey even the most trifling information to each other, and all their political projects or opinions, in obscure and metaphorical terms. They pretended to
have dreamed dreams and seen visions, because it was unsafe for them to speak facts or plain language. We ought, however, to suppose that the persons to whom they wrote understood what they meant, and that it was not intended anybody else should. But these busy commentators and priests have been puzzling their wits to find out what it was not intended they should know, and with which they have nothing to do.

Ezekiel and Daniel were carried prisoners to Babylon under the first captivity, in the time of Jehoiakim, nine years before the second captivity in the time of Zedekiah.

The Jews were then still numerous, and had considerable force at Jerusalem; and as it is natural to suppose that men in the situation of Ezekiel and Daniel would be meditating the recovery of their country and their own deliverance, it is reasonable to suppose that the accounts of dreams and visions with which those books are filled, are no other than a disguised mode of correspondence to facilitate those objects—it served them as a cipher or secret alphabet. If they are not this, they are tales, reveries, and nonsense; or, at least, a fanciful way of wearing off the wearisomeness of captivity; but the presumption is they were the former.

Ezekiel begins his books by speaking of a vision of cherubims and of a wheel within a wheel, which he says he saw by the river Chebar, in the land of his captivity. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that by the cherubims he meant the temple of Jerusalem, where they had figures of cherubims? and by a wheel within a wheel (which, as a figure, has always been understood to signify political contrivance) the project or means of recovering Jerusalem? In the latter part of this book, he supposes himself transported to Jerusalem and into the temple; and he refers back to the vision on the river Chebar, and says (chapter xliii., verse 3), that this last vision was like the vision on the river Chebar; which indicates that those pretended dreams and visions had for their object the recovery of Jerusalem, and nothing further.

As to the romantic interpretations and applications, wild as the dreams and visions they undertake to explain, which commentators and priests have made of those books, that of converting them into things which they call prophecies, and making them bend to times and circumstances as far remote even as the present day, it shows the fraud or the extreme folly to which credulity or priestcraft can go.

Scarce anything can be more absurd than to suppose that men situated as Ezekiel and Daniel were, whose country was overrun and in the possession of the enemy, all their friends and relations in captivity abroad, or in slavery at home, or massacred, or in continual danger of it; scarcely anything, I say, can be more
absurd, than to suppose that such men should find nothing to do but that of employing their time and their thoughts about what was to happen to other nations a thousand or two thousand years after they were dead; at the same time, nothing is more natural than that they should meditate the recovery of Jerusalem, and their own deliverance; and that this was the sole object of all the obscure and apparently frantic writings contained in those books.

In this sense, the mode of writing used in those two books, being forced by necessity, and not adopted by choice, is not irrational; but, if we are to use the books as prophecies, they are false. In the 29th chapter of Ezekiel, speaking of Egypt, it is said (ver. 11), "No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it; neither shall it be inhabited for forty years." This is what never came to pass, and consequently it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are. I here close this part of the subject.

In the former part of the Age of Reason I have spoken of Jonah, and the story of him and the whale. A fit story for ridicule, if it was written to be believed; or of laughter, if it was intended to try what credulity could swallow; for if it could swallow Jonah and the whale, it could swallow anything.

But, as is already shown in the observations on the book of Job and of Proverbs, it is not always certain which of the books in the Bible are originally Hebrew, or only translations from the books of the Gentiles into Hebrew; and as the book of Jonah, so far from treating of the affairs of the Jews, says nothing upon that subject, but treats altogether of the Gentiles, it is more probable that it is a book of the Gentiles than of the Jews, and that it has been written as a fable, to expose the nonsense and satirize the vicious and malignant character of a Bible prophet, or a predicting priest.

Jonah is represented, first, as a disobedient prophet, running away from his mission, and taking shelter aboard a vessel of the Gentiles, bound from Joppa to Tarshish; as if he ignorantly supposed, by some paltry contrivance, he could hide himself where God could not find him. The vessel is overtaken by a storm at sea, and the mariners, all of whom are Gentiles, believing it to be a judgment, on account of some one on board who had committed a crime, agreed to cast lots to discover the offender, and the lot fell upon Jonah. But, before this, they had cast all their wares and merchandise overboard to lighten the vessel, while Jonah, like a stupid fellow, was fast asleep in the hold.

After the lot had designated Jonah to be the offender, they questioned him to know who and what he was? and he told them he was a Hebrew; and the story implies that he confessed himself to be guilty. But these Gentiles, instead of
sacrificing him at once, without pity or mercy, as a company of Bible prophets or priests would have done by a Gentile in the same case, and as it is related Samuel had done by Agag and Moses by the women and children, they endeavored to save him, though at the risk of their own lives, for the account says, "Nevertheless (that is, though Jonah was a Jew and a foreigner, and the cause of all their misfortunes and the loss of their cargo), the men rowed hard to bring it (the boat) to land, but they could not for the sea wrought and was tempestuous against them." Still, they were unwilling to put the fate of the lot into execution, and they cried (says the account) unto the Lord, saying (v. 14), "We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood; for thou, O Lord, has done as it pleased thee." Meaning, thereby, that they did not presume to judge guilty, since that he might be innocent; but that they considered the lot that had fallen to him as a decree of God, or as it pleased God. The address of this prayer shows that the Gentiles worshipped one Supreme Being, and that they were not idolaters, as the Jews represented them to be. But the storm still continuing and the danger increasing, they put the fate of the lot into execution, and cast Jonah into the sea, where, according to the story, a great fish swallowed him up whole and alive.

We have now to consider Jonah securely housed from the storm in the fish's belly. Here we are told that he prayed; but the prayer is a made-up prayer, taken from various parts of the Psalms, without any connection or consistency, and adapted to the distress, but not at all to the condition that Jonah was in. It is such a prayer as a Gentile, who might know something of the Psalms, could copy out for him. This circumstance alone, were there no other, is sufficient to indicate that the whole is a made-up story. The prayer, however, is supposed to have answered the purpose, and the story goes on (taking up at the same time the cant language of a Bible prophet), saying (chap. ii., ver. 10): "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land."

Jonah then received a second mission to Nineveh, with which he sets out; and we have now to consider him as a preacher. The distress he is represented to have suffered, the remembrance of his own disobedience as the cause of it, and the miraculous escape he is supposed to have had, were sufficient, one would conceive, to have impressed him with sympathy and benevolence in the execution of his mission; but, instead of this, he enters the city with denunciation and malediction in his mouth, crying (chap. iii., ver. 4): "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown."

We have now to consider this supposed mis-
sionary in the last act of his mission; and here it is that the malevolent spirit of a Bible-prophet, or of a predicting priest, appears in all that blackness of character that men ascribe to the being they call the devil.

Having published his predictions, he withdrew, says the story, to the east side of the city. But for what? not to contemplate, in retirement, the mercy of his Creator to himself or to others, but to wait, with malignant impatience, the destruction of Nineveh. It came to pass, however, as the story relates that the Ninevites re-formed, and that God, according to the Bible phrase, repented him of the evil he had said he would do unto them, and did it not. This, saith the first verse of the last chapter, "displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." His obdurate heart would rather that all Nineveh should be destroyed, and every soul, young and old, perish in its ruins, than that his prediction should not be fulfilled. To expose the character of a prophet still more, a gourd is made to grow up in the night, that promised him an agreeable shelter from the heat of the sun, in the place to which he had retired, and the next morning it dies.

Here the rage of the prophet becomes excessive, and he is ready to destroy himself. "It is better, said he, for me to die than to live." This brings on a supposed expostulation between the Almighty and the prophet, in which the former says, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And Jonah said, I do well to be angry even unto death; Then, said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?"

Here is both the winding up of the satire and the moral of the fable. As a satire, it strikes against the character of all the Bible prophets, and against all the indiscriminate judgments upon men, women, and children, with which this lying book, the Bible, is crowded; such as Noah's flood, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the extirpation of the Canaanites, even to the sucking infants, and women with child, because the same reflection, that there are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, meaning young children, applies to all their cases. It satirizes also the supposed partiality of the Creator for one nation more than for another.

As a moral, it preaches against the malevolent spirit of prediction; for as certainly as a man predicts ill, he becomes inclined to wish it. The pride of having his judgment right hardens his heart, till at last he beholds with satisfaction,