or sees with disappointment, the accomplishment or the failure of his predictions. This book ends with the same kind of strong and well-directed point against prophets, prophecies, and indiscriminate judgment, as the chapter that Benjamin Franklin made for the Bible, about Abraham and the stranger, ends against the intolerant spirit of religious persecution. Thus much for the book of Jonah.

Of the poetical parts of the Bible, that are called prophecies, I have spoken in the former part of the Age of Reason, and already in this, where I have said that the word propheta is the Bible word for poet, and that the flights and metaphors of those poets, many of which have become obscure by the lapse of time and the change of circumstances, have been ridiculously erected into things called prophecies, and applied to purposes the writers never thought of. When a priest quotes any of those passages, he unriddles it agreeably to his own views, and imposes that explanation upon his congregation as the meaning of the writer. The whore of Babylon has been the common whore of all the priests, and each has accused the other of keeping the harlot; so well do they agree in their explanations.

There now remain only a few books, which they call books of the lesser prophets, and as I have already shown that the greater are impostors, it would be cowardice to disturb the repose of the little ones. Let them sleep, then, in the arms of their nurses, the priests, and both be forgotten together.

I have now gone through the Bible, as a man would go through a wood with an axe on his shoulder, and fell the trees. Here they lie; and the priests, if they can, may replant them. They may, perhaps, stick them in the ground, but they will never make them grow. I pass on to the books of the New Testament.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The New Testament, they tell us, is founded upon the prophecies of the Old; if so, it must follow the fate of its foundation.

As it is nothing extraordinary that a woman should be with child before she was married, and that the son she might bring forth should be executed, even unjustly, I see no reason for not believing that such a woman as Mary, and such a man as Joseph, and Jesus existed; their mere existence is a matter of indifference about which there is no ground either to believe or to disbelieve, and which comes under the common head of, It may be so; and what then? The probability, however, is that there were such persons, or at least such as resembled them in
part of the circumstances, because almost all
romantic stories have been suggested by some
actual circumstance; as the adventures of Rob-
inson Crusoe, not a word of which is true, were
suggested by the case of Alexander Selkirk.
It is not the existence, or non-existence, of
the persons that I trouble myself about; it
is the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the
New Testament, and the wild and visionary doc-
trine raised thereon, against which I contend.
The story, taking it as it is told, is blasphe-
mously obscene. It gives an account of a young
woman engaged to be married, and while under
this engagement she is, to speak plain language,
debauched by a ghost, under the impious pre-
tence (Luke, chap. i., ver. 35), that "the Holy
Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power
of the Highest shall overshadow thee." Notwith-
standing which, Joseph afterward marries her,
cohabits with her as his wife, and in his turn
rivals the ghost. This is putting the story into
intelligible language, and when told in this man-
er, there is not a priest but must be ashamed
to own it.*

Obscenity in matters of faith, however
wrapped up, is always a token of fable and im-
posture; for it is necessary to our serious belief
in God that we do not connect it with stories
that run, as this does, into ludicrous interpreta-
tions. This story is upon the face of it, the
same kind of story as that of Jupiter and Leda,
or Jupiter and Europa, or any of the amorous
adventures of Jupiter; and shows, as is already
stated in the former part of the Age of Reason,
that the Christian faith is built upon the heathen
mythology.
As the historical parts of the New Testament,
so far as concerns Jesus Christ, are confined to
a very short space of time, less than two years,
and all within the same country, and nearly to
the same spot, the discordance of time, place,
and circumstance, which detects the fallacy of
the books of the Old Testament, and proves
them to be impositions, cannot be expected to
be found here in the same abundance. The New
Testament compared with the Old, is like a farce
of one act, in which there is not room for very
numerous violations of the unities. There are,
however, some glaring contradictions, which, ex-
clusive of the fallacy of the pretended prophe-
cies are sufficient to show the story of Jesus
Christ to be false.
I lay it down as a position which cannot be
controverted, first, that the agreement of all the
parts of a story does not prove that story to be
true, because the parts may agree, and the whole
may be false; secondly, that the disagreement
of the parts of a story proves the whole cannot
be true. The agreement does not prove true, but
the disagreement proves falsehood positively.

* Mary, the supposed virgin-mother of Jesus, had several other
children, sons and daughters. See Matthew, chap. xiii, verses 35, 56.
The history of Jesus Christ is contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The first chapter of Matthew begins with giving a genealogy of Jesus Christ; and in the third chapter of Luke, there is also given a genealogy of Jesus Christ. Did those two agree, it would not prove the genealogy to be true, because it might, nevertheless, be a fabrication; but as they contradict each other in every particular, it proves falsehood absolutely. If Matthew speaks truth, Luke speaks falsehood, and if Luke speaks truth, Matthew speaks falsehood; and as there is no authority for believing one more than the other, there is no authority for believing either; and if they cannot be believed even in the very first thing they say and set out to prove, they are not entitled to be believed in any thing they say afterward. Truth is a uniform thing; and as to inspiration and revelation, were we to admit it, it is impossible to suppose it can be contradictory. Either, then, the men called apostles are impostors, or the books ascribed to them has been written by other persons and fathered upon them, as is the case with the Old Testament.

The book of Matthew gives, chap. i., ver. 6, a genealogy by name from David up through Joseph, the husband of Mary, to Christ; and makes there to be twenty-eight generations. The book of Luke gives also a genealogy by name from Christ, through Joseph, the husband of Mary, down to David, and makes there to be forty-three generations; besides which, there are only the two names of David and Joseph that are alike in the two lists. I here insert both genealogical lists, and for the sake of perspicuity and comparison, have placed them both in the same direction, that is from Joseph down to David.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genealogy according to Matthew.</th>
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<td>Christ 23 Joseph</td>
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<td>2 Joseph 24 Asa</td>
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<td>3 Jacob 25 Abia</td>
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<td>4 Matthias 26 Rabhan</td>
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<td>5 Eleazer 27 Solomon</td>
<td>5 Levi 27 Elmodam</td>
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<td>6 Eliud 28 David*</td>
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<td>7 Achim</td>
<td>7 Janna 29 Jose</td>
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<td>11 Abiud</td>
<td>11 Naum 33 Levi</td>
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<td>12 Zorobabel</td>
<td>12 Esi 34 Simeon</td>
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<td>13 Salathiel</td>
<td>13 Nagge 35 Juda</td>
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<td>14 Jeconias</td>
<td>14 Maath 36 Joseph</td>
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<td>15 Josias</td>
<td>15 Mattathias 37 Janan</td>
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<td>16 Amon</td>
<td>16 Semei 38 Eliakim</td>
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<td>17 Manasses</td>
<td>17 Joseph 39 Mele</td>
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<td>18 Ezkiel</td>
<td>18 Juda 40 Menan</td>
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<td>19 Achaz</td>
<td>19 Johanna 41 Mattath</td>
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<td>20 Jonaah</td>
<td>20 Rhesa 42 Nathan</td>
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<td>21 Osaas</td>
<td>21 Zorobabel 43 David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Joram</td>
<td>22 Salathiel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* From the birth of David to the birth of Christ is upwards of 1380 years; and as the lifetime of Christ is not included, there are but 27 full generations. To find therefore the average age of each person
Now, if these men, Matthew and Luke, set out with a falsehood between them (as these two accounts show they do) in the very commencement of their history of Jesus Christ, and of whom and of what he was, what authority (as I have before asked) is there left for believing the strange things they tell us afterward? If they cannot be believed in their account of his natural genealogy, how are we to believe them when they tell us he was the son of God begotten by a ghost, and that an angel announced this in secret to his mother? If they lied in one genealogy, why are we to believe them in the other? If his natural genealogy be manufactured, which it certainly is, why are we not to suppose that his celestial genealogy is manufactured also, and that the whole is fabulous? Can any man of serious reflection hazard his future happiness upon the belief of a story naturally impossible, repugnant to every idea of decency, and related by persons already detected of falsehood? Is it not more safe that we stop ourselves at the plain, pure, and unmentioned in the list, at the time his first son was born, it is only necessary to divide 1080 years by 27, which gives 40 years for each person. As the lifetime of man was then but of the same extent it is now, it is an absurdity to suppose that 27 following generations should all be old bachelors, before they married; and the more so, when we are told, that Solomon, the next in succession to David, had a house full of wives and mistresses before he was twenty-one years of age. So far from this genealogy being a solemn truth, it is not even a reasonable lie. This list of Luke gives about twenty-six years for the average age, and this is too much.

mixed belief of one God, which is Deism, than that we commit ourselves on an ocean of improbable, irrational, indecent and contradictory tales?

The first question, however, upon the books of the New Testament, as upon those of the Old, 'Are they genuine? Were they written by the persons to whom they are ascribed? for it is upon this ground only that the strange things related therein have been credited. Upon this point there is no direct proof for or against, and all that this state of a case proves is doubtfulness, and doubtfulness is the opposite of belief. The state, therefore, that the books are in, proves against themselves as far as this kind of proof can go.

But exclusive of this, the presumption is that the books called the Evangelists, and ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were not written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and that they are impositions. The disordered state of the history in those four books, the silence of one book upon matters related in the other, and the disagreement that is to be found among them, implies that they are the production of some unconnected individuals, many years after the things they pretend to relate, each of whom made his own legend; and not the writings of men living intimately together, as the men called the apostles are supposed to have done—in fine, that they have been manufactured, as
the books of the Old Testament have been, by
other persons than those whose names they bear.

The story of the angel announcing what the
church called the immaculate conception is not
so much as mentioned in the books ascribed to
Mark and John; and is differently related in
Matthew and Luke. The former says the angel
appeared to Joseph; the latter says it was to
Mary; but either Joseph or Mary was the worst
evidence that could have been thought of, for
it was others that should have testified for them,
and not they for themselves. Were any girl
that is now with child to say, and even swear
it, that she was gotten with child by a ghost, and
that an angel told her so, would she be believed?
Certainly she would not. Why, then, are we
to believe the same thing of another girl, whom
we never saw, told by nobody knows who, nor
when, nor where? How strange and incon-
sistent it is, that the same circumstance that
would weaken the belief even of a probable
story, should be given as a motive for believing
this one, that has upon the face of it every token
of absolute impossibility and imposture!

The story of Herod destroying all the children
under two years old, belongs altogether to the
book of Matthew; not one of the rest mentions
anything about it. Had such a circumstance
been true, the universality of it must have made
it known to all the writers, and the thing would
have been too striking to have been omitted by
any. This writer tells us, that Jesus escaped
this slaughter because Joseph and Mary were
warned by an angel to flee with him unto
Egypt; but he forgot to make any provision for
John, who was then under two years of age.
John, however, who stayed behind, fared as well
as Jesus, who fled; and, therefore, the story cir-
cumstantially belies itself.

Not any two of these writers agree in reciting,

exactly in the same words, the written inscrip-
tion, short as it is, which they tell us was put
over Christ when he was crucified; and besides
this, Mark says: He was crucified at the third
hour (nine in the morning), and John says it
was the sixth hour (twelve at noon).

The inscription is thus stated in these books:

Matthew. This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.
Mark. The king of the Jews.
Luke. This is the king of the Jews.

We may infer from these circumstances,
trivial as they are, that those writers, whoever
they were, and in whatever time they lived, were
not present at the scene. The only one of the
men called apostles who appears to have been

* According to John, the sentence was not passed till about the
sixth hour (noon), and, consequently, the execution could not be till
the afternoon; but Mark says expressly, that he was crucified at the
third hour (nine in the morning), chap. xv, verse 25. John, chap.
xix, verse 14.
of the book of Luke is silent also upon the same points. And as to the writer of the book of John, though he details all the circumstances of the crucifixion down to the burial of Christ, he says nothing about either the darkness—the veil of the temple—the earthquake—the rocks—the graves—nor the dead men.

Now, if it had been true that those things had happened, and if the writers of those books had lived at the time they did happen, and had been the persons they are said to be, namely, the four men called apostles, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, it was not possible for them, as true historians, even without the aid of inspiration, not to have recorded them. The things, supposing them to have been facts, were of too much notoriety not to have been known, and of too much importance not to have been told. All these supposed apostles must have been witnesses of the earthquake, if there had been any; for it was not possible for them to have been absent from it; the opening of the graves and the resurrection of the dead men, and their walking about the city, is of greater importance than the earthquake. An earthquake is always possible and natural, and proves nothing; but this opening of the graves is supernatural, and directly in point to their doctrine, their cause, and their apostleship. Had it been true, it would have filled up whole chapters of

near the spot was Peter, and when he was accused of being one of Jesus' followers, it is said (Matthew, chap. xxvi., ver. 74), "Then he [Peter] began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man!" yet we are now called upon to believe the same Peter, convicted by their own account, of perjury. For what reason, or on what authority, shall we do this?

The accounts that are given of the circumstances that they tell us attended the crucifixion are differently related in these four books.

The book ascribed to Matthew says, chap. xxvii., v. 45, "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." Ver. 51, 52, 53, "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many." Such is the account which this dashing writer of the book of Matthew gives, but in which he is not supported by the writers of the other books.

The writer of the book ascribed to Mark, in detailing the circumstances of the crucifixion, makes no mention of any earthquake, nor of the rocks rending, nor of the graves opening, nor of the dead men walking out. The writer
those books, and been the chosen theme and general chorus of all the writers; but instead of this, little trivial things, and mere prattling conversations of, he said this, and he said that, are often tediously detailed, while this, most important of all, had it been true, is passed off in a slovenly manner by a single dash of the pen, and that by one writer only, and not so much as hinted at by the rest.

It is an easy thing to tell a lie, but it is difficult to support the lie after it is told. The writer of the book of Matthew should have told us who the saints were that came to life again, and went into the city, and what became of them afterward, and who it was that saw them—for he is not hardy enough to say he saw them himself; whether they came out naked, and all in natural buff, he-saints and she-saints; or whether they came full dressed, and where they got their dresses; whether they went to their former habitations, and reclaimed their wives, their husbands, and their property, and how they were received; whether they entered ejectments for the recovery of their possessions, or brought actions of crim. con. against the rival interlopers; whether they remained on earth, and followed their former occupation of preaching or working; or whether they died again, or went back to their graves alive, and buried themselves.

Strange, indeed, that an army of saints should return to life, and nobody know who they were, nor who it was that saw them, and that not a word more should be said upon the subject, nor these saints have anything to tell us! Had it been the prophets who (as we are told) had formerly prophesied of these things, they must have had a great deal to say. They could have told us everything and we should have had posthumous prophecies, with notes and commentaries upon the first, a little better at least than we have now. Had it been Moses and Aaron and Joshua and Samuel and David, not an unconverted Jew had remained in all Jerusalem. Had it been John the Baptist, and the saints of the time then present, everybody would have known them, and they would have out-preached and out-famed all the other apostles. But, instead of this, these saints were made to pop up, like Jonah’s gourd in the night, for no purpose at all but to wither in the morning. Thus much for this part of the story.

The tale of the resurrection follows that of the crucifixion, and in this as well as in that, the writers, whoever they were, disagree so much as to make it evident that none of them were there.

The book of Matthew states that when Christ was put in the sepulchre, the Jews applied to Pilate for a watch or a guard to be placed over
the sepulchre, to prevent the body being stolen by the disciples; and that, in consequence of this request, the sepulchre was made sure, sealing the stone that covered the mouth, and setting a watch. But the other books say nothing about this application, nor about the sealing, nor the guard, nor the watch; and according to their accounts, there were none. Matthew, however, follows up this part of the story of the guard or the watch with a second part, that I shall notice in the conclusion, as it serves to detect the fallacy of these books.

The book of Matthew continues its account, and says (chap. xxvii., ver. 1), that at the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn, toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. Mark says it was sun-rising, and John says it was dark. Luke says it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, and other women, that came to the sepulchre; and John states that Mary Magdalene came alone. So well do they agree about their first evidence! they all, however, appear to have known most about Mary Magdalene; she was a woman of a large acquaintance, and it was not an ill conjecture that she might be upon the stroll.

The book of Matthew goes on to say (ver. 2), “And behold there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.” But the other books say nothing about any earthquake, nor about the angel rolling back the stone and sitting upon it, and according to their account, there was no angel sitting there. Mark says the angel was within the sepulchre, sitting on the right side. Luke says there were two, and they were both standing up; and John says they were both sitting down, one at the head and the other at the feet.

Matthew says that the angel that was sitting upon the stone on the outside of the sepulchre told the two Marys that Christ was risen, and that the women went away quickly. Mark says that the women, upon seeing the stone rolled away, and wondering at it, went into the sepulchre, and that it was the angel that was sitting within on the right side, that told them so. Luke says it was the two angels that were standing up; and John says it was Jesus Christ himself that told it to Mary Magdalene, and that she did not go into the sepulchre, but only stooped down and looked in.

Now, if the writer of those four books had gone into a court of justice to prove an alibi (for it is of the nature of an alibi that is here attempted to be proved, namely, the absence of a dead body by supernatural means), and had they given their evidence in the same contra-
dictory manner as it is here given, they would have been in danger of having their ears cropped for perjury, and would have justly deserved it. Yet this is the evidence, and these are the books that have been imposed upon the world, as being given by divine inspiration, and as the unchangeable word of God.

The writer of the book of Matthew, after giving this account, relates a story that is not to be found in any of the other books, and which is the same I have just before alluded to.

"Now," says he (that is, after the conversation the women had with the angel sitting upon the stone), "Behold some of the watch [meaning the watch that he had said had been placed over the sepulchre] came into the city, showed unto the chief priests all the things that were done; and when they were assembled with the elders and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept; and if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying [that his disciples stole him away] is commonly reported among the Jews until this day."

The expression, _until this day_, is an evidence that the book ascribed to Matthew was not written by Matthew, and that it had been manufac-
tured long after the time and things of which it pretends to treat; for the expression implies a great length of intervening time. It would be inconsistent in us to speak in this manner of anything happening in our own time. To give therefore, intelligible meaning to the expression, we must suppose a lapse of some generations at least, for this manner of speaking carries the mind back to ancient time.

The absurdity also of the story is worth noticing; for it shows the writer of the book of Matthew to have been an exceedingly weak and foolish man. He tells a story that contradicts itself in point of possibility; for though the guard, if there were any, might be made to say that the body was taken away while they were _asleep_, and to give that as a reason for their not having prevented it, that same sleep must also have prevented their knowing how and by whom it was done, and yet they are made to say, that it was the disciples who did it. Were a man to tender his evidence of something that he should say was done, and of the manner of doing it, and of the person who did it, while he was asleep, and could know nothing of the matter, such evidence could not be received; it will do well enough for Testament evidence, but not for anything where truth is concerned.

I come now to that part of the evidence in those books, that respects the pretended appear-
The writer of the book of Luke contradicts that of Matthew more pointedly than John does; for he says expressly that the meeting was in Jerusalem the evening of the same day that he [Christ] rose, and that the eleven were there. See Luke, chap. xxiv., ver. 13, 33.

Now, it is not possible, unless we admit these supposed disciples the right of willful lying, that the writer of those books could be any of the eleven persons called disciples; for if, according to Matthew, the eleven went into Galilee to meet Jesus in a mountain by his own appointment, on the same day that he is said to have risen, Luke and John must have been two of that eleven; yet the writer of Luke says expressly, and John implies as much, that the meeting was that same day, in a house in Jerusalem; and, on the other hand, if, according to Luke and John, the eleven were assembled in a house in Jerusalem, Matthew must have been one of that eleven; yet Matthew says the meeting was in a mountain in Galilee, and consequently the evidence given in those books destroys each other.

The writer of the book of Mark says nothing about any meeting in Galilee; but he says, chap. xvi., ver. 12, that Christ, after his resurrection, appeared in another form to two of them as they walked into the country, and that these two told it to the residue, who would not believe them. Luke also tells a story in which he keeps
Christ employed the whole day of this pretended resurrection, until the evening, and which totally invalidates the account of going to the mountain in Galilee. He says that two of them, without saying which two, went that same day to a village called Emmaus, three score furlongs (seven miles and a half) from Jerusalem, and that Christ, in disguise, went with them, and stayed with them unto the evening, and supped with them, and then vanished out of their sight, and re-appeared that same evening at the meeting of the eleven in Jerusalem.

This is the contradictory manner in which the evidence of this pretended re-appearance of Christ is stated; the only point in which the writers agree, is the skulking privacy of that re-appearance; for whether it was in the recess of a mountain in Galilee, or a shut-up house in Jerusalem, it was still skulking. To what cause, then, are we to assign this skulking? On the one hand it is directly repugnant to the supposed or pretended end—that of convincing the world that Christ had risen; and on the other hand, to have asserted the publicity of it would have exposed the writers of those books to public detection, and, therefore, they have been under the necessity of making it a private affair.

As to the account of Christ being seen by more than five hundred at once, it is Paul only who says it, and not the five hundred who say it for themselves. It is, therefore, the testimony of but one man, and that, too, of a man who did not, according to the same account, believe a word of the matter himself at the time it is said to have happened. His evidence, supposing him to have been the writer of the 16th chapter of Corinthians, where this account is given, is like that of a man who comes into a court of justice to swear that what he had sworn before is false. A man may often see reason, and he has, too, always the right of changing his opinion; but this liberty does not extend to matters of fact.

I now come to the last scene, that of the ascension into heaven. Here all fear of the Jews, and of everything else, must necessarily have been out of the question: it was that which, if true, was to seal the whole, and upon which the reality of the future mission of the disciples was to rest for proof. Words, whether declarations or promises, that passed in private, either in the recess of a mountain in Galilee or in a shut-up house in Jerusalem, even supposing them to have been spoken, could not be evidence in public; it was therefore necessary that this last scene should preclude the possibility of denial and dispute, and that it should be, as I have stated in the former part of the Age of Reason, as public and as visible as the sun at
Monday; at least it ought to have been as public as the crucifixion is reported to have been. But to come to the point.

In the first place, the writer of the book of Matthew does not say a syllable about it; neither does the writer on the book of John. This being the case, it is not possible to suppose that those writers, who effect to be even minute in other matters, would have been silent upon this, had it been true? The writer of the book of Mark passes it off in a careless, slovenly manner, with a single dash of the pen, as if he was tired of romancing or ashamed of the story. So also does the writer of Luke. And even between these two, there is not an apparent agreement as to the place where his final parting is said to have been.

The book of Mark says that Christ appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, alluding to the meeting of the eleven at Jerusalem; he then states the conversation that he says passed at that meeting; and immediately after says (as a school-boy would finish a dull story), "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God." But the writer of Luke says, that the ascension was from Bethany; that he [Christ] led them out as far as Bethany, and was parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. So also was Mahomet; and as to Moses, the apostle Jude says, ver. 9, "that Michael and the devil disputed about his body." While we believe such fables as these, or either of them, we believe unworthily of the Almighty.

I have now gone through the examination of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; and when it is considered that the whole space of time from the crucifixion to what is called the ascension is but a few days, apparently not more than three or four, and that all the circumstances are said to have happened nearly about the same spot, Jerusalem, it is, I believe, impossible to find in any story upon record so many and such glaring absurdities, contradictions and falsehoods as are in those books. They are more numerous and striking than I had any expectation of finding when I began this examination, and far more so than I had any idea of when I wrote the former part of the Age of Reason. I had then neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, nor could I procure any. My own situation, even as to existence, was becoming every day more precarious, and as I was willing to leave something behind me on the subject, I was obliged to be quick and concise. The quotations I then made were from memory only, but they are correct; and the opinions I have advanced in that work are the effect of the most clear and long-established conviction that the Bible and the Testament are
impositions upon the world, that the fall of
man, the account of Jesus Christ being the Son
of God, and of his dying to appease the wrath
of God, and of salvation by that strange means,
are all fabulous inventions, dishonorable to the
wisdom and power of the Almighty; that the
only true religion is Deism, by which I then
meant, and mean now, the belief of one God,
and an imitation of his moral character, or the
practice of what are called moral virtues—and
that it was upon this only (so far as religion is
cconcerned) that I rested all my hopes of happy-
ness hereafter. So say I now—and so help me
God.

But to return to the subject. Though it is
impossible, at this distance of time, to ascertain
as a fact who were the writers of those four
books (and this alone is sufficient to hold them
in doubt, and where we doubt we do not be-
lieve), it is not difficult to ascertain negatively
that they were not written by the persons to
whom they are ascribed. The contradictions in
those books demonstrate two things:

First, that the writers could not have been
eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of the matters
they relate, or they would have related them
without those contradictions; and consequently,
that the books have not been written by the per-
sons called apostles, who are supposed to have
been witnesses of this kind.

Secondly, that the writers, whoever they were,
have not acted in concerted imposition; but each
writer separately and individually for himself,
and without the knowledge of the other.

The same evidence that applies to prove the
one, applies equally to prove both cases; that is,
that the books were not written by the men
called apostles, and also that they are not a
contorted imposition. As to inspiration, it is
altogether out of the question; we may as well
try to unite truth and falsehood, as inspira-
tion and contradiction.

If four men are eye-witnesses and ear-wit-
nesses to a scene, they will, without any concert
between them, agree as to time and place when
and where that scene happen. Their individ-
ual knowledge of the thing, each one knowing
it for himself, renders concert totally unneces-
sary; the one will not say it was in a mountain
in the country, and the other at a house in town:
the one will not say it was at sunrise, and the
other that it was dark. For in whatever place
it was, at whatever time it was, they know it
equally alike.

And, on the other hand, if four men concert
a story, they will make their separate relations
of that story agree and corroborate with each
other to support the whole. That concert sup-
plies the want of fact in the one case, as the
knowledge of the fact supersedes, in the other
case, the necessity of a concert. The same contradictions, therefore, that prove that there has been no concert, prove also that the reporters had no knowledge of the fact (or rather of that which they relate as a fact), and detect also the falsehood of their reports. Those books, therefore, have neither been written by the men called apostles, nor by impostors in concert. How then have they been written?

I am not one of those who are fond of believing there is much of that which is called willful lying, or lying originally, except in the case of men setting up to be prophets, as in the Old Testament; for prophesying is lying professionally. In almost all other cases, it is not difficult to discover the progress by which even simple supposition, with the aid of credulity, will, in time, grow into a lie, and at last be told as a fact; and whenever we can find a charitable reason for a thing of this kind, we ought not to indulge a severe one.

The story of Jesus Christ appearing after he was dead is the story of an apparition, such as timid imaginations can always create in vision, and credulity believe. Stories of this kind had been told of the assassination of Julius Cæsar, not many years before; and they generally have their origin in violent deaths, or in the execution of innocent persons. In cases of this kind, compassion lends its aid and benevolently stretches the story. It goes on a little and a little further till it becomes a most certain truth. Once start a ghost and credulity fills up the history of its life, and assigns the cause of its appearance! one tells it one way, another another way, till there are as many stories about the ghost and about the proprietor of the ghost, as there are about Jesus Christ in these four books.

The story of the appearance of Jesus Christ is told with that strange mixture of the natural and impossible that distinguishes legendary tale from fact. He is represented as suddenly coming in and going out when the doors were shut, and of vanishing out of sight and appearing again, as one would conceive of an unsubstantial vision; then again he is hungry, sits down to meat, and eats his supper. But as those who tell stories of this kind never provide for all the cases, so it is here; they have told us that when he arose he left his grave clothes behind him; but they have forgotten to provide other clothes for him to appear in afterward, or to tell us what he did with them when he ascended—whether he stripped all off, or went up clothes and all. In the case of Elijah, they have been careful enough to make him throw down his mantle; how it happened not to be burned in the chariot of fire they also have not told us. But as imagination supplies all defi-
ciencies of this kind, we may suppose, if we please, that it was made of salamander's wool.

Those who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history may suppose that the book called the New Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ, as they suppose that the books ascribed to Moses have existed ever since the time of Moses. But the fact is historically otherwise. There was no such book as the New Testament till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived.

At what time the books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John began to appear is altogether a matter of uncertainty. There is not the least shadow of evidence of who the persons were that wrote them, nor at what time they were written; and they might as well have been called by the names of any of the other supposed apostles, as by the names they are now called. The originals are not in the possession of any Christian Church existing, any more than the two tables of stone written on, they pretend, by the finger of God, upon Mount Sinai, and given to Moses, are in the possession of the Jews. And even if they were, there is no possibility of proving the handwriting in either case. At the time those books were written there was no printing, and consequently there could be no publication, otherwise than by written copies, which any man might make or alter at pleasure, and call them originals.* Can we suppose it is consistent with the wisdom of the Almighty, to commit himself and his will to man upon such precarious means as these, or that it is consistent we should pin our faith upon such uncertainties? We cannot make, nor alter, nor even imitate so much as one blade of grass that he has made, and yet we can make or alter words of God as easily as words of man.

About three hundred and fifty years after the time that Christ is said to have lived, several writings of the kind I am speaking of were scattered in the hands of divers individuals; and as the church had began to form itself into a hierarchy, or church government, with temporal powers, it set itself about collecting them into a code, as we now see them, called The New Testament. They decided by vote, as I have

* The former part of the Age of Reason has not been published two years, and there is already an expression in it that is not mine. The expression is, *The book of Luke was carried by a majority of one voice only.* It may be true, but it is not I that have said it. Some person, who might know of the circumstance, has added it in a note at the bottom of the page of some of the editions, printed either in England or in America; and the printers, after that, have placed it into the body of the work, and made me the author of it. If this has happened within such a short space of time, notwithstanding the aid of printing, which prevents the alteration of copies individually, what may not have happened in a much greater length of time, when there was no printing, and when any man who could write could make a written copy, and call it an original by Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John†.
And in another place, addressing himself to the advocates of those books, as being the word of God, he says, 'It is thus that your predecessors have inserted many things which the scriptures of our Lord agree not with his doctrines. This is not surprisin, since that we have often proved that these things have not been written by himself, nor by his apostles, but that they are founded upon tales, upon vague reports, and put together by I know not what half-Jews, made up of the names of the apostles of our Lord, and have thus attributed to them their own errors and their faults.'
church, with the assistance of the fagot, bore down the opposition, and at last suppressed all investigation. Miracles followed upon miracles, if we will believe them, and men were taught to say they believed whether they believed or not. But (by way of throwing in a thought) the French Revolution has excommunicated the church from the power of working miracles; she has not been able, with the assistance of all her saints, to work one miracle since the revolution began; and as she never stood in greater need than now, we may, without the aid of divination, conclude that all her former miracles were tricks and lies.

When we consider the lapse of more than three hundred years intervening between the numerous sects at the commencement of Christianity, rejected as false all the New Testament, and showed other writings quite different that they gave for authentic. The Cerinthis, like the Marcionists, admitted not the Acts of the Apostles. The Eutychians, and the Severians, adopted neither the Acts nor the Epistles of Paul. Chrysostom, in a homily which he made upon the Acts of the Apostles, says that in his time, about the year 400, many people knew nothing either of the author or of the book. St. Irene, who lived before that time, reports that the Valentinians, like several other sects of Christians, accused the scriptures of being filled with imperfections, errors, and contradictions. The Ebionites, or Nazarines, who were the first Christians, rejected all the Epistles of Paul and regarded him as an impostor. They report, among other things, that he was originally a pagan, that he came to Jerusalem, where he lived some time; and that having a mind to marry the daughter of the high priest, he caused himself to be circumcised; but that not being able to obtain her, he quarreled with the Jews and wrote against circumcision, and against the observance of the sabbath, and against all the legal ordinances.

time that Christ is said to have lived and the time the New Testament was formed into a book, we must see, even without the assistance of historical evidence, the exceeding uncertainty there is of its authenticity. The authenticity of the book of Homer, so far as regards the authorship, is much better established than that of the New Testament, though Homer is a thousand years the most ancient. It is only an exceedingly good poet that could have written the book of Homer, and therefore few men only could have attempted it; and a man capable of doing it would not have thrown away his own fame by giving it to another. In like manner, there were but few that could have composed Euclid's Elements, because none but an exceedingly good geometrician could have been the author of that work.

But with respect to the books of the New Testament, particularly such parts as tell us of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, any person who could tell a story of an apparition, or of a man's walking, could have made such books; for the story is most wretchedly told. The chance, therefore, of forgery in the Testament, is millions to one greater than in the case of Homer or Euclid. Of the numerous priests or parsons of the present day, bishops and all, every one of them can make a sermon, or translate a scrap of Latin. especially if it had been
translated a thousand times before; but is there any among them that can write poetry like Homer, or science like Euclid? The sum total of a person’s learning, with very few exceptions, is a b ab, and hie, hae, hoc; and their knowledge of science is three times one is three; and this is more than sufficient to have enabled them, had they lived at the time, to have written all the books of the New Testament.

As the opportunities of forgeries were greater, so also was the inducement. A man could gain no advantage by writing under the name of Homer or Euclid; if he could write equal to them, it would be better that he wrote under his own name; if inferior, he could not succeed. Pride would prevent the former, and impossibility the latter. But with respect to such books as compose the New Testament, all the inducements were on the side of forgery. The best imagined history that could have been made, at the distance of two or three hundred years after the time, could not have passed for an original under the name of the real writer; the only chance of success lay in forgery, for the church wanted pretence for its new doctrine, and truth and talents were out of the question.

But as is not uncommon (as before observed) to relate stories of persons walking after they are dead, and of ghosts and apparitions of such as have fallen by some violent or extraordinary means; and as the people of that day were in the habit of believing such things, and of the appearance of angels, and also of devils, and of their getting into people’s insides and shaking them like a fit of an ague, and of their being cast out again as if by an emetic—(Mary Magdalene, the book of Mark tells us, has brought up, or been brought to bed of seven devils)—it was nothing extraordinary that some story of this kind should get abroad of the person called Jesus Christ, and become afterward the foundation of the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each writer told the tale as he heard it, or thereabouts, and gave to his book the name of the saint or the apostle whom tradition had given as the eye-witness. It is only upon this ground that the contradiction in those books can be accounted for; and if this be not the case, they are downright impositions, lies and forgeries, without even the apology of credulity.

That they have been written by a sort of half Jews, as the foregoing quotations mention, is discernable enough. The frequent references made to that chief assassin and impostor, Moses, and to the men called prophets, establish this point; and, on the other hand, the church has complimented the fraud by admitting the Bible and the Testament to reply to each other. Between the Christian Jew and the Christian
Gentile, the thing called a prophecy and the thing prophesied, the type and the thing typified, the sign and the thing signified, have been industriously rummaged up and fitted together, like old locks and pick-lock keys. The story foolishly enough told of Eve and the serpent, and naturally enough as to the enmity between men and serpents (for the serpent always bites about the heel, because it cannot reach higher; and the man always knocks the serpent about the head, as the most effectual way to prevent its biting*) this foolish story, I say, has been made into a prophecy, a type, and a promise to begin with; and the lying imposition of Isaiah to Ahaz, That a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, as a sign that Ahaz should conquer, when the event was that he was defeated (as already noticed in the observations on the book of Isaiah), has been perverted and made to serve as a winder up.

Jonah and the whale are also made into a sign or a type. Jonah is Jesus, and the whale is the grave; for it is said (and they have made Christ to say of it himself), Matt. chap. xii., ver. 40, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” But it happens, awkwardly enough, that Christ, according to their own account, was but one day and two nights in the grave; about 36 hours, instead of 72; that is, the Friday night, the Saturday, and the Saturday night; for they say he was up on the Sunday morning by sunrise, or before. But as this fits quite as well as the bite and the kick in Genesis, or the virgin and her son in Isaiah, it will pass in the lump of orthodox things. Thus much for the historical part of the Testament and its evidences.

Epistles of Paul.—The epistles ascribed to Paul, being fourteen in number, almost fill up the remaining part of the Testament. Whether those epistles were written by the person to whom they are ascribed is a matter of no great importance, since the writer, whoever he was, attempts to prove his doctrine by argument. He does not pretend to have been witness to any of the scenes told of the resurrection and the ascension, and he declares that he had not believed them.

The story of his being struck to the ground as he was journeying to Damascus has nothing in it miraculous or extraordinary; he escaped with life, and that is more than many others have done, who have been struck with lightning; and that he should lose his sight for three days, and be unable to eat or drink during that time, is nothing more than is common in such condi-

* It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.—Genesis, chap. iii., verse 15.
tions. His companions that were with him appear not to have suffered in the same manner, for they were well enough to lead him the remainder of the journey; neither did they pretend to have seen any vision.

The character of the person called Paul, according to the accounts given of him, has in it a great deal of violence and fanaticism; he had persecuted with as much heat as he preached afterward; the stroke he had received had changed his thinking, without altering his constitution; and either as a Jew or a Christian, he was the same zealot. Such men are never good moral evidences of any doctrine they preach. They are always in extremes, as well of actions as of belief.

The doctrine he sets out to prove by argument is the resurrection of the same body, and he advances this as an evidence of immortality. But so much will men differ in their manner of thinking, and in the conclusions they draw from the same premises, that this doctrine of the resurrection of the same body, so far from being an evidence of immortality, appears to me to furnish an evidence against it; for if I have already died in this body, and am raised again in the same body in which I have lived, it is a presumptive evidence that I shall die again. That resurrection no more secures me against the repetition of dying, than an ague-fit, when passed, secures me against another. To believe, therefore, in immortality, I must have a more elevated idea than is contained in the gloomy doctrine of the resurrection.

Besides, as a matter of choice, as well as of hope, I had rather have a better body and a more convenient form than the present. Every animal in the creation excels us in something. The winged insects, without mentioning doves or eagles, can pass over more space and with greater ease in a few minutes than man can in an hour. The glide of the smallest fish, in proportion to its bulk, exceeds us in motion almost beyond comparison, and without weariness. Even the sluggish snail can ascend from the bottom of a dungeon, where a man, by the want of that ability, would perish; and a spider can launch itself from the top, as a playful amusement. The personal powers of man are so limited, and his heavy frame so little constructed to extensive enjoyment, that there is nothing to induce us to wish the opinion of Paul to be true. It is too little for the magnitude of the scene—too mean for the sublimity of the subject.

But all other arguments apart, the consciousness of existence is the only conceivable idea we can have of another life, and the continuance of that consciousness is immortality. The consciousness of existence, or the knowing that we exist, is not necessarily confined to the same
form, nor to the same matter, even in this life. We have not in all cases the same form, nor in any case the same matter that composed our bodies twenty or thirty years ago; and yet we are conscious of being the same persons. Even legs and arms, which make up almost half the human frame, are not necessary to the consciousness of existence. These may be lost or taken away, and the full consciousness of existence remain; and were their place supplied by wings, or other appendages, we cannot conceive that it would alter our consciousness of existence. In short, we know not how much, or rather how little, of our composition it is, and how exquisitely fine that little is, that creates in us this consciousness of existence; and all beyond that is like the pulp of a peach, distinct and separate from the vegetative speck in the kernel.

Who can say by what exceedingly fine action of fine matter it is that a thought is produced in what we call the mind? and yet that thought when produced, as I now produce the thought I am writing, is capable of becoming immortal, and is the only production of man that has that capacity.

Statues of brass or marble will perish; and statues made in imitation of them are not the same statues, nor the same workmanship, any more than the copy of a picture is the same picture. But print and reprint a thought a thousand times over, and that with materials of any kind—carve it in wood and engrave it on stone, the thought is eternally and identically the same thought in every case. It has a capacity of unimpaired existence, unaffected by change of matter, and is essentially distinct and of a nature different from everything else that we know or can conceive. If, then, the thing produced has in itself a capacity of being immortal, it is more than a token that the power that produced it, which is the self-same thing as a consciousness of existence, can be immortal also; and that as independently of the matter it was first connected with, as the thought is of the printing or writing it first appeared in. The one idea is not more difficult to believe than the other, and we can see that one is true.

That the consciousness of the existence is not dependent on the same form or the same matter is demonstrated to our senses in the works of the creation, as far as our senses are capable of receiving that demonstration. A very numerous part of the animal creation preaches to us, far better than Paul, the belief of a life hereafter. Their little life resembles an earth and a heaven—a present and a future state, and comprises, if it may be so expressed, immortality in minature.

The most beautiful parts of the creation to
our eye are the winged insects, and they are not so originally. They acquire that form and that inimitable brilliancy by progressive changes. The slow and creeping caterpillar-worm of to-day passes in a few days to a torpid figure and a state resembling death; and in the next change comes forth in all the miniature magnificence of life, a splendid butterfly. No resemblance of the former creature remains; everything is changed; all his powers are new, and life is to him another thing. We cannot conceive that the consciousness of existence is not the same in this state of the animal as before; why then must I believe that the resurrection of the same body is necessary to continue to me the consciousness of existence hereafter?

In the former part of the Age of Reason I have called the creation the only true and real word of God; and this instance, or this text, in the book of creation, not only shows to us that this thing may be so, but that it is so; and that the belief of a future state is a rational belief, founded upon facts visible in the creation; for it is not more difficult to believe that we shall exist hereafter in a better state and form than at present, than that a worm should become a butterfly, and quit the dunghill for the atmosphere, if we did not know it as a fact.

As to the doubtful jargon ascribed to Paul in the 15th chapter of 1. Corinthians, which makes part of the burial service of some Christian sectaries, it is as destitute of meaning as the tolling of a bell at a funeral; it explains nothing to the understanding—it illustrates nothing to the imagination, but leaves the reader to find any meaning if he can. "All flesh (says he) is not the same flesh. There is one flesh of men; another of beast; another of fishes; and another of birds." And what then?—nothing. A cook could have said as much. "There are also (says he) bodies celestial, and bodies terrestrial; the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." And what then?—nothing. And what is the difference? nothing that he has told. "There is (says he) one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars." And what then?—nothing; except that he says that one star differeth from another star in glory, instead of distance; and he might as well have told us that the moon did not shine so bright as the sun. All this is nothing better than the jargon of a conjuror, who picks up phrases he does not understand, to confound the credulous people who have come to have their fortunes told. Priests and conjurors are of the same trade.

Sometimes Paul affects to be a naturalist and to prove his system of resurrection from the principles of vegetation. "Thou fool (says he), that which thou sowest is not quickened, except
it die.” To which one might reply in his own language and say, “Thou fool, Paul, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die not; for the grain that dies in the ground never does, nor can vegetate. It is only the living grains that produce the next crop.” But the metaphor, in any point of view, is no simile. It is succession, and not resurrection.

The progress of an animal from one state of being to another, as from a worm to a butterfly, applies to the case; but this of a grain does not, and shows Paul to have been what he says of others, a fool.

Whether the fourteen epistles ascribed to Paul were written by him or not, is a matter of indifference; they are either argumentative or dogmatical; and as the argument is defective and the dogmatical part is merely presumptive, it signifies not who wrote them. And the same may be said for the remaining parts of the Testament. It is not upon the epistles, but upon what is called the Gospel, contained in the four books ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and upon the pretended prophecies, that the theory of the church calling itself the Christian Church is founded. The epistles are dependent upon those, and must follow their fate; for if the story of Jesus Christ be fabulous, all reasoning founded upon it as a supposed truth must fall with it.

We know from history that one of the principal leaders of this church, Athanasius, lived at the time the New Testament was formed;* and we know also, from the absurd jargon he left us under the name of a creed, the character of the men who formed the New Testament; and we know also from the same history that the authenticity of the books of which it is composed was denied at the time. It was upon the vote of such as Athanasius, that the Testament was decreed to be the word of God; and nothing can present to us a more strange idea than that of decreeing the word of God by vote. Those who rest their faith upon such authority put man in the place of God, and have no foundation for future happiness; credulity, however, is not a crime, but it becomes criminal by resisting conviction. It is strangling in the womb of the conscience the efforts it makes to ascertain truth. We should never force belief upon ourselves in anything.

I here close the subject of the Old Testament and the New. The evidence I have produced to prove them forgeries is extracted from the books themselves, and acts, like a two-edged sword, either way. If the evidence be denied, the authenticity of the scriptures is denied with it; for it is scripture evidence; and if the evi-

* Athanasius died, according to the Church chronology, in the year 371.
idence be admitted, the authenticity of the books is disproved. The contradictory impossibilities contained in the Old Testament and the New, put them in the case of a man who swears for and against. Either evidence convicts him of perjury, and equally destroys reputation.

Should the Bible and the New Testament hereafter fall, it is not I that have been the occasion. I have done no more than extracted the evidence from the confused mass of matter with which it is mixed, and arranged that evidence in a point of light to be clearly seen and easily comprehended; and, having done this, I leave the reader to judge for himself, as I have judged for myself.

CONCLUSION.

In the former part of the Age of Reason I have spoken of the three frauds, mystery, miracle, and prophecy; and as I have seen nothing in any of the answers to that work that in the least affects what I have there said upon those subjects, I shall not encumber this Second Part with additions that are not necessary.

I have spoken also in the same work upon what is called revelation, and have shown the absurd misapplication of that term to the books of the Old Testament and the New; for certainly revelation is out of the question in reciting anything of which man has been the actor or the witness. That which a man has done or seen, needs no revelation to tell him he had done it or seen it, for he knows it already; nor to enable him to tell it or to write it. It is ignorance or imposition to apply the term revelation in such cases: yet the Bible and Testament are classed under this fraudulent description of being all revelation.

Revelation then, so far as the term has relation between God and man, can only be applied to something which God reveals of his will to man; but though the power of the Almighty to make such a communication is necessarily admitted, because to that power all things are possible, yet the thing so revealed (if anything ever was revealed, and which, by the bye, it is impossible to prove), is revelation to the person only to whom it is made. His account of it to another person is not revelation; and whoever puts faith in that account, puts it in the man from whom the account comes; and that man may have been deceived, or may have dreamed it, or he may be an impostor and may lie. There is no possible criterion whereby to judge of the truth of what he tells, for even the morality of it would be no proof of revelation. In all such cases the proper answer would be, "When it is revealed to me, I will believe it to be a revela-
tion; but it is not, and cannot be incumbent upon me to believe it to be revelation before; neither is it proper that I should take the word of a man as the word of God, and put man in the place of God.” This is the manner in which I have spoken of revelation in the former part of the *Age of Reason*; and which, while it reverently admits revelation as a possible thing, because, as before said, to the Almighty all things are possible, it prevents the imposition of one man upon another, and precludes the wicked use of pretended revelation.

But though, speaking for myself, I thus admit the possibility of revelation, I totally disbelieve that the Almighty ever did communicate anything to man, by any mode of speech, in any language, or by any kind of vision, or appearance, or by any means which our senses are capable of receiving, otherwise than by the universal display of himself in the works of the creation, and by that repugnance we feel in ourselves to bad actions, and the disposition to do good ones.

The most detestable wickedness, the most horrid cruelties, and the greatest miseries that have afflicted the human race have had their origin in this thing called revelation, or revealed religion. It has been the most dishonorable belief against the character of the Divinity, the most destructive to morality and the peace and happiness of man, that ever was propagated since man began to exist. It is better, far better, that we admitted, if it were possible, a thousand devils to roam at large, and to preach publicly the doctrine of devils, if there were any such, than that we permitted one such impostor and monster as Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and the Bible prophets, to come with the pretended word of God in his mouth, and have credit among us.

Whence arose all the horrid assassinations of whole nations of men, women, and infants, with which the Bible is filled, and the bloody persecutions and tortures unto death, and religious wars, that since that time have laid Europe in blood and ashes—whence rose they but from this impious thing called revealed religion, and this monstrous belief that God has spoken to man? The lies of the Bible have been the cause of the one, and the lies of the Testament of the other.

Some Christians pretend that Christianity was not established by the sword; but of what period of time do they speak? It was impossible that twelve men could begin with the sword; they had not the power; but no sooner were the professors of Christianity sufficiently powerful to employ the sword, than they did so, and the stake and fagot, too; and Mahomet could not do it sooner. By the same spirit that Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant
(if the story be true), he would have cut off his head, and the head of his master, had he been able. Besides this, Christianity grounds itself originally upon the Bible, and the Bible was established altogether by the sword, and that in the worst use of it—not to terrify, but to extirpate. The Jews made no converts; they butchered all. The Bible is the sire of the Testa-
ment, and both are called the word of God. The Christians read both books; the ministers preach from both books; and this thing called Christianity is made up of both. It is then false to say that Christianity was not established by the sword.

The only sect that has not persecuted are the Quakers; and the only reason that can be given for it, is, that they are rather Deists than Christians. They do not believe much about Jesus Christ, and they call the scriptures a dead letter. Had they called them by a worse name, they had been nearer the truth.

It is incumbent on every man who reverences the character of the Creator, and who wishes to lessen the catalogue of artificial miseries, and remove the cause that has sown persecutions thick among mankind, to expel all ideas of revealed religion, as a dangerous heresy and an impious fraud. What is that we have learned from this pretended thing called revealed religion? Nothing that is useful to man, and everything that is dishonorable to his maker. What is it the Bible teaches us?—rapine, cruelty, and murder. What is it the Testament teaches us?—to believe that the Almighty committed debauchery with a woman engaged to be married, and the belief of this debauchery is called faith.

As to the fragments of morality that are irregularly and thinly scattered in these books, they make no part of this pretended thing, revealed religion. They are the natural dictates of conscience, and the bonds by which society is held together, and without which it cannot exist, and are nearly the same in all religions and in all societies. The Testament teaches nothing new upon this subject, and where it attempts to exceed, it becomes mean and ridiculous. The doctrine of not retaliating injuries is much better expressed in Proverbs, which is a collection as well from the Gentiles as the Jews, than it is in the Testament. It is there said, Proverbs xxv., ver. 21, "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink";* but when it

* According to what is called Christ’s sermon on the mount, in the book of Matthew, where, among some other good things, a great deal of this feigned morality is introduced, it is there expressly said, that the doctrine of forbearance, or of not retaliating injuries, was not any part of the doctrine of the Jews; but as this doctrine is found in Proverbs it must, according to that statement, have been copied from the Gentiles, from whom Christ had learned it. Those men, whom
is said, as in the Testament, "If a man smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also"; it is assassinating the dignity of forbearance, and sinking man into a spaniel.

 Loving enemies is another dogma of feigned morality, and has besides no meaning. It is incumbent on man, as a moralist, that he does not revenge an injury; and it is equally as good in a political sense, for there is no end to retaliation, each retaliates on the other, and calls it justice; but to love in proportion to the injury, if it could be done, would be to offer a premium for crime. Besides the word enemies is too vague and general to be used in a moral maxim, which ought always to be clear and defined, like a proverb. If a man be the enemy of another from mistake and prejudice, as in the case of religious opinions, and sometimes in politics, that man is different to an enemy at heart with a criminal intention; and it is incumbent upon us, and it contributes also to our own tranquility, that we put the best construction upon a thing that it will bear. But even this erroneous

Jewish and Christian idolaters have abusively called heathens, had much better and clearer ideas of justice and morality than are to be found in the Old Testament, so far as it is Jewish; or in the New. The answer of Solon on the question, Which is the most perfect popular government has never been exceeded by any one since his time, as containing a maxim of political morality. "That," says he, "where the least injury done to the meanest individual, is considered as an insult on the whole constitution." Solon lived about 500 years before Christ.

motive in him makes no motive for love on the other part; and to say that we can love voluntarily, and without a motive, is morally and physically impossible.

Morality is injured by prescribing to it duties that, in the first place, are impossible to be performed; and, if they could be, would be productive of evil; or, as before said, be premiums for crime. The maxim of doing as we would be done unto does not include this strange doctrine of loving enemies; for no man expects to be loved himself for his crime or for his enmity.

Those who preach this doctrine of loving their enemies are in general the greatest persecutors, and they act consistently by so doing; for the doctrine is hypocritical, and it is natural that hypocrisy should act the reverse of what it preaches. For my own part I disown the doctrine, and consider it as a feigned or fabulous morality; yet the man does not exist that can say I have persecuted him, or any man, or any set of men, either in the American Revolution, or in the French Revolution; or that I have, in any case, returned evil for evil. But it is not incumbent on man to reward a bad action with a good one, or to return good for evil; and whenever it is done, it is a voluntary act, and not a duty. It is also absurd to suppose that such doctrine can make any part of a revealed religion. We imitate the moral character of the
Creator by forbearing with each other for he
forbears with all; but this doctrine would imply
that he loved man, not in proportion as he was
good, but as he was bad.

If we consider the nature of our condition
here, we must see there is no occasion for such
a thing as revealed religion. What is it we want
to know? Does not the creation, the universe
we behold, preach to us the existence of an
Almighty Power that governs and regulates the
whole? And is not the evidence that this crea-
tion holds out to our senses infinitely stronger
than anything we can read in a book that any
impostor might make and call the word of God?
As for morality, the knowledge of it exists in
every man's conscience.

Here we are. The existence of an Almighty
Power is sufficiently demonstrated to us, though
we cannot conceive, as it is impossible we should,
the nature and manner of its existence. We
cannot conceive how we came here ourselves,
and yet we know for a fact that we are here.
We must know also that the power that called
us into being, can, if he please, and when he
pleases, call us to account for the manner in
which we have lived here; and, therefore, with-
out seeking any other motive for the belief, it
is rational to believe that he will, for we know
beforehand that he can. The probability or
even possibility of the thing is all that we ought
to know; for if we knew it as a fact, we should
be the mere slaves of terror; our belief would
have no merit, and our best actions no virtue.

Deism, then, teaches us, without the possi-
bility of being deceived, all that is necessary or
proper to be known. The creation is the Bible
of the Deist. He there reads, in the handwrit-
ing of the Creator himself, the certainty of his
existence and the immutability of his power,
and all other Bibles and Testaments are to him
forgeries. The probability that we may be
called to account hereafter will, to a reflecting
mind, have the influence of belief; for it is not
our belief or disbelief that can make or unmake
the fact. As this is the state we are in, and
which it is proper we should be in, as free
agents, it is the fool only, and not the philoso-
pher, or even the prudent man, that would live
as if there were no God.

But the belief of a God is so weakened by
being mixed with the strange fable of the Chris-
tian creed, and with the wild adventures related
in the Bible, and of the obscurity and obscene
nonsense of the Testament, that the mind of
'man is bewildered as in a fog. Viewing all
these things in a confused mass, he confounds
fact with fable; and as he cannot believe all, he
feels a disposition to reject all. But the belief
of a God is a belief distinct from all other
things, and ought not to be confounded with
The notion of a Trinity of Gods has enfeebled the belief of one God. A multiplication of beliefs acts as a division of belief; and in proportion as anything is divided it is weakened.

Religion, by such means, becomes a thing of form, instead of fact—of notion, instead of principles; morality is banished to make room for an imaginary thing called faith, and this faith has its origin in a supposed debauchery; a man is preached instead of God; an execution is an object for gratitude; the preachers daub themselves with the blood, like a troop of assassins, and pretend to admire the brilliancy it gives them; they preach a humdrum sermon on the merits of the execution; then praise Jesus Christ for being executed, and condemn the Jews for doing it. A man, by hearing all this nonsense lumped and preached together, confounds the God of the creation with the imagined God of the Christians, and lives as if there were none.

Of all the systems of religion that ever were invented, there is none more derogatory to the Almighty, more unedifying to man, more repugnant to reason, and more contradictory in itself, than this thing called Christianity. Too absurd for belief, too impossible to convince, and too inconsistent for practice, it renders the heart torpid, or produces only atheists and fanatics.

As an engine of power, it serves the purpose of deotism; and as a means of wealth, the avarice of priests; but so far as respects the good of man in general, it leads to nothing here or hereafter.

The only religion that has not been invented, and that has in it every evidence of divine originality, is pure and simple Deism. It must have been the first, and will probably be the last, that man believes. But pure and simple Deism does not answer the purpose of despotic governments. They cannot lay hold of religion as an engine, but by mixing it with human inventions, and making their own authority a part; neither does it answer the avarice of priests, but by incorporating themselves and their functions with it, and becoming, like the government, a party in the system. It is this that forms the otherwise mysterious connection of church and state; the church humane, and the state tyrannic.

Were man impressed as fully and as strongly as he ought to be with the belief of a God, his moral life would be regulated by the force of that belief; he would stand in awe of God and of himself, and would not do the thing that could not be concealed from either. To give this belief the full opportunity of force, it is necessary that it acts alone. This is Deism. But when, according to the Christian Trinitarian scheme, one part of God is represented by a
dying man, and another part called the Holy Ghost, by a flying pigeon, it is impossible that belief can attach itself to such wild conceits.*

It has been the scheme of the Christian church, and of all the other invented systems of religion, to hold man in ignorance of the Creator, as it is of Government to hold man in ignorance of his rights. The systems of the one are as false as those of the other, and are calculated for mutual support. The study of theology, as it stands in Christian churches, is the study of nothing; it is founded on nothing; it rests on no principles; it proceeds by no authorities; it has no data; it can demonstrate nothing; and it admits of no conclusion. Not any thing can be studied as a science, without our being in possession of the principles upon which it is founded; and as this is not the case with Christian theology, it is therefore the study of nothing.

Instead then, of studying theology, as is now done, out of the Bible and Testament, the meanings of which books are always controverted and the authenticity of which is disproved, it is

necessary that we refer to the Bible of the creation. The principles we discover there are eternal and of divine origin; they are the foundation of all the science that exists in the world, and must be the foundation of theology.

We can know God only through his works. We cannot have a conception of any one attribute but by following some principle that leads to it. We have only a confused idea of his power, if we have not the means of comprehending something of its immensity. We can have no idea of his wisdom, but by knowing the order and manner in which it acts. The principles of science lead to this knowledge; for the Creator of man is the Creator of science; and it is through that medium that man can see God, as it were, face to face.

Could a man be placed in a situation, and endowed with the power of vision, to behold at one view, and to contemplate deliberately, the structure of the universe; to mark the movements of the several planets, the cause of their varying appearances, the unerring order in which they revolve, even to the remotest comet; their connection and dependence on each other, and to know the system of laws established by the Creator, that governs and regulates the whole, he would then conceive, far beyond what any church theology can teach him, the power, the wisdom, the vastness, the munificence of

* The book called the book of Matthew says, chap. iii, verse 10, that the Holy Ghost descended in the shape of a dove. It might as well have said a goose; the creatures are equally harmless, and the one is as much of a nonsensical lie as the other. The second of Acts, ver. 2, 3, says that it descended in a mighty rushing wind, in the shape of cloven tongues, perhaps it was cloven feet. Such absurd stuff is only fit for tales of witches and wizards.
the Creator; he would then see, that all the knowledge man has of science, and that all the mechanical arts by which he renders his situation comfortable here, are derived from that source; his mind, exalted by the scene, and convinced by the fact, would increase in gratitude as it increased in knowledge; his religion or his worship would become united with his improvement as a man; any employment he followed, that had any connection with the principles of the creation, as everything of agriculture, of science and of the mechanical arts has, would teach him more of God, and of the gratitude he owes to him, than any theological Christian sermon he now hears. Great objects inspire great thoughts; great munificence excites great gratitude; but the groveling tales and doctrines of the Bible and the Testament are fit only to excite contempt.

Though man cannot arrive, at least in this life, at the actual scene I have described, he can demonstrate it, because he has a knowledge of the principles upon which the creation is constructed.* We know that the greatest works

* The Bible-makers have undertaken to give us, in the first chapter of Genesis, an account of the creation; and in doing this, they have demonstrated nothing but their ignorance. They make there to have been three days and three nights, evenings and mornings, before there was a sun; when it is the presence or absence of the sun that is the cause of day and night, and what is called his rising and setting that of morning and evening. Besides, it is a puerile and pitiful idea, to can be represented in model, and that the universe can be represented by the same means. The same principles by which we measure an inch, or an acre of ground, will measure to millions in extent. A circle of an inch diameter has the same geometrical properties as a circle that would circumscribe the universe. The same properties of a triangle that will demonstrate upon paper the course of a ship, will do it on the ocean; and when applied to what are called the heavenly bodies, will ascertain to a minute the time of an eclipse, though these bodies are millions of miles from us. This knowledge is of divine origin, and it is from the Bible of the creation that man has learned it, and not from the stupid Bible of the church, that teacheth man nothing.

All the knowledge man has of science and of machinery, by the aid of which his existence is rendered comfortable upon earth, and without which he would be scarcely distinguishable in suppose the Almighty to say, Let there be light. It is the imperative manner of speaking that a conjurer uses when he says to his cups and balls, Presto, be gone, and most probably has been taken from it; as Moses and his rod are a conjurer and his wand. Longinus calls this expression the sublime; and, by the same rule, the conjurer is sublime too, for the manner of speaking is expressively and grammatically the same. When authors and critics talk of the sublime, they see not how nearly it borders on the ridiculous. The sublime of the critics, like some parts of Edmund Burke's Sublime and Beautiful, is like a windmill just visible in a fog, which imagination might distort into a flying mountain, or an archangel, or a flock of wild geese.
appearance and condition from a common animal, comes from the great machine and structure of the universe. The constant and unwearied observations of our ancestors upon the movements and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, in what are supposed to have been the early ages of the world, have brought this knowledge upon earth. It is not Moses and the prophets, nor Jesus Christ, nor his apostles, that have done it. The Almighty is the great mechanic of the creation; the first philosopher and original teacher of all science. Let us, then, learn to reverence our master, and let us not forget the labors of our ancestors.

Had we, at this day, no knowledge of machinery, and were it possible that man could have a view, as I have before described, of the structure and machinery of the universe, he would soon conceive the idea of constructing some at least of the mechanical works we now have; and the idea so conceived would progressively advance in practice. Or could a model of the universe, such as is called an orrery, be presented before him and put in motion, his mind would arrive at the same idea. Such an object and such a subject would, while it improved him in knowledge useful to himself as a man and a member of society, as well as entertaining, afford far better matter for impressing him with a knowledge of, and a belief in, the Creator, and of the reverence and gratitude that man owes to him, than the stupid texts of the Bible and of the Testament, from which, be the talents of the preacher what they may, only stupid sermons can be preached. If man must preach, let him preach something that is edifying, and from texts that are known to be true.

The Bible of the creation is inexhaustible in texts. Every part of science, whether connected with the geometry of the universe, with the systems of animal and vegetable life, or with the properties of inanimate matter, is a text as well for devotion as for philosophy—for gratitude as for human improvement. It will perhaps be said, that if such a revolution in the system of religion takes place, every preacher ought to be a philosopher. Most certainly; and every house of devotion a school of science.

It has been by wandering from the immutable laws of science, and the right use of reason, and setting up an invented thing called revealed religion, that so many wild and blasphemous conceits have been formed of the Almighty. The Jews have made him the assassin of the human species to make room for the religion of the Jews. The Christians have made him the murderer of himself and the founder of a new religion, to supersede and expel the Jewish religion. And to find pretence and admission for
these things, they must have supposed his power or his wisdom imperfect, or his will changeable; and the changeableness of the will is imperfection of the judgment. The philosopher knows that the laws of the Creator has never changed with respect either to the principles of science, or the properties of matter. Why, then, is it supposed they have changed with respect to man?

I here close the subject. I have shown in all the foregoing parts of this work, that the Bible and Testament are impositions and forgeries; and I leave the evidence I have produced in proof of it, to be refuted, if any one can do it: and I leave the ideas that are suggested in the conclusion of the work, to rest on the mind of the reader; certain as I am, that when opinions are free, either in matters of government or religion, truth will finally and powerfully prevail.

THE END.