

A NEW AND CANDID

INVESTIGATION OF THE QUESTION

IS REVELATION TRUE ?

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OF LEXINGTON.

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*Revelation!* That awful word, awakes the mind, and inspires ideas unknown before: it points to Heaven, and shews man where he fails.

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## APOLOGY.

**I**N appearing before the publick as an Author, some excuse may be thought requisite. I, however, hesitate in making one.—If the following pages do not apologise, I can scarcely hope for indulgence by asking it.

In assuming the present attitude, I am well aware, that I become a publick mark, to be shot at. The indiscriminate batteries of Infidelity, and many of the teachers of Christianity, will be played upon me. However sharpened their shafts, and furious their onsets may be, I conjure them to examine well the ground on which they stand, and their means of annoyance. They are particularly cautioned against taking for granted, as self-evident truths, opinions, which are neither self-evident nor true. If I have committed this error, I am ignorant of it, and shall deem it an act of candour in any one to point it out.

Whether I am right or wrong; in my *proof of Revelation*, I at least evince to a candid publick, the sincerity of my belief, by publishing the reasons of it, in the examination of which I solicit candour.

The Christian Religion, in the eyes of many, is only worthy of the bigot and fanatick. I once thought so, and deemed it quite out of character for a mind ennobled by science, and exalted by philosophy, to profess a creed composed of such superstitious dogmas.

Much less censure than is bestowed generally upon men of such sentiments, is deserved at the hands of our religious instructors; for, unless I am more

mistaken than I have any conception of, our religious preachers, for the most part, and academical teachers, have conduced, to an enormous degree, in swelling the overwhelming torrent of infidelity, which, however strange, I think will appear in the following investigation. Truth may be injured, but not destroyed—It possesses in itself its own preservation. Although it may be brought low by the suffering of its advocates, it will, it must rise, with the power and majesty of its celestial author, extorting from its adversaries the exclamation of the apostate Julian—*Thou hast conquered, oh Galilean!*

Whether I shall be successful or not, is yet to be learnt. My intention, however, in this publication, is to prove the truth of Revelation, by philosophical demonstration. It is very natural to suppose, that those reasons which convince our own minds, will produce a similar effect on others—In this we are often mistaken.

A truly pious person, when hearing the sublime and eloquent discourses of Davis, Whitfield, or Waddle, would be entirely at a loss to conceive how the most sophisticated mind, could resist the truths of the Gospel, while the Deist would be lamenting that such talents should be lost to the world, by *sermonising*, instead of being displayed on the stage with Garrick. Does this diversity of mind, proceed from an original difference in the conformation of men, or from adventitious circumstances, such as education? I believe the latter, for this plain reason—that all the *essential characteristics* of man are alike (anomalies excepted.) They have the same physical structure, and intellectual faculties, differing only in degree—from which it follows, that a difference in religious sentiments, and on other subjects, can only proceed from different views taken of them, which are very much regulated by the habits and customs of those who are instructors.

This contrariety can only be obviated by carefully examining the ground upon which they rest.

It must be viewed from the same point—the investigation, to be correct, must commence with first principles; beginning with self-evident, and advancing to remoter truths, in which every successive proposition, is intuitively connected with the preceding, till in the end, the conclusion becomes intuitive. By proceeding in this way, we shall see with clearness the true merits of each religious opinion, and at the same time feel the assimilating influence of truth, and in the end, unanimity. Having reached the ultimate conclusion, (viz.) the truth of Revelation, the point proposed, by reviewing the subject with an analytical eye, we shall be able to ascertain the sources of those innumerable errors and mischiefs, to which the different ramifications led, and understand their relations to truth.

The style is a simple one, and as nearly corresponds with the ideas which it communicates, and by which it was suggested, as I could make it. Instead of harmony of numbers, flowing sentences, and laboured periods, I have been desirous of perspicuity—My over solicitude for that, often produced repetition.

It may not be amiss, to apologise for the didactic manner in which I have written—In this I have only obeyed the dictates of reason and truth.

I have ever despised a temporising disposition, and upon a subject like this, sycophancy would be doubly disgraceful. At the same time that I would treat the aged with profound regard, I am far from believing that age sanctifies error, or that it is always the repository of truth.

Infidelity and dissipation, with their concomitants, have attained such gigantic growth, that every effort to impede them in their ruinous course, in the eyes of candour, must be justifiable. Even the grey hairs of venerable age, do not afford an uniform protection to

the hallowed principles of the Christian Religion, against the impertinences of sophism, or the insulting prattle of our infidel bantlings.

If mankind *believed Revelation true*, would those causes of complaint continue? I think not; because it would afford a paramount motive of action—It is unbelief, that is at the bottom, and the fruitful source of all our evils. Have the evidences been properly presented to the publick mind, proving the genuineness of the Scriptures? I have never seen them.—until this is proven, the preacher may preach in vain.

In the foregoing detail, I shall describe the operations of my own mind, by which I arrived at the conviction of Scriptural truth; believing that to be the best way to produce a similar effect upon the minds of others.

## IS REVELATION TRUE ?

**I**NTRODUCTORY to the subject, I will observe, that anterior to my *enquiry*, I acquired and used all the arguments that are generally employed against Christianity, with assiduity, and often with *insulting severity*. This, however, I conceive did not proceed so much from an original untowardness of mind, as from an error in the ground work of my religious education, which is doubtless the case with many others placed in my situation. I do not mean that I was irreligiously taught, very far from it—from my infancy I was accustomed to pious instruction, both by precept, and parental example.

After arriving at years of discretion, and often meeting with sharp philippics against the principles and profession of Christianity, which its advocates could not repel agreeably to what I conceived to be the right rule of reasoning, and finding this incapacity on their part to produce conviction, frequently attributed to a want of regeneration in their adversaries, I was often led to believe the whole system as the work of priestcraft, designed to impose upon mankind; or the growth of ignorance and superstition, disavowing any claim to rational demonstration. For if regeneration is first necessary to believing revelation true, the investigation and study of it previous to that acquisition, must be fruitless and vain.

I had been in the habit of thinking that all truths important for men to know, are ascertainable in such a way, by the *proper* use of the faculties of the mind,

under circumstances the most favourable, as to leave no doubt of their correctness. That this kind of proof did not exist amongst us upon the subject of religion, I inferred from the variety of opinions embracing christianity, deism, and atheism, that existed.

Having been frequently reproached for my sarcastic invectives against every denomination of christians, and uniting with the hackneyed opinion, that questions involving religious matters, should never be admitted into serious discussion, I had almost settled down into a state of contemptuous silence, pitying many, on account of their delusions, bigotry, and fanaticism, and despising others for their sanctimonious cant, and hypocritical airs, affecting to have pierced the veil which hangs over the natural mind, and to be in the full fruition of supernatural light, from which the whole world was shut out, who did not see with the same eyes that they possessed.

I however determined to make a *fundamental* enquiry into the subject for myself, excluding all authorities for and against—taking nothing for granted but what is self-evident, I determined to go where truth would carry me regardless of consequences.

I set out with this conviction, that if the Scriptures are true—are what they profess to be, and what they must be—if the Christian religion is true, (viz. of supernatural origin) that this course would enable me with certainty to ascertain it; the proof of which would consist, *not of human and natural, but of divine and supernatural evidence, addressed directly to my own mind.*

The course which I pursued, the means employed, and the result of the investigation, I will now detail.

In order to fix the boundaries of human knowledge, or the limits, which from the very organization and mental faculties of man, mark the point where human or natural knowledge must end, and supernatural or re-

vealed begin, (if indeed we have such) I deemed it necessary to close the bible, and lay it aside; to open the book of nature, and to attend to every circumstance and condition that it affords, of which I am conscious.

In pursuing this plan, I found my acquaintance with the sensible world, to be acquired through five different channels or mediums, (viz.) the senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling: that through these, a principle resident within me, which we call mind, perceived not only the properties and operations of external things, but also noticed its own actions, and the conditions upon which they depend.

Having perceived objects, I found, after the lapse of some time, I could revive, or call them up again in my mind. This power or faculty, we call memory. Another operation of mind, somewhat different from this, I could exercise, by which I transposed, altered, enlarged and diminished, and variously modified the objects and order of things which perception brought me acquainted with, and memory revived—As, for instance, I could recollect having seen two distinct objects, which we call a man and a horse, and this transposing and combining faculty united them, and formed the object called a centaur—This faculty we name the imagination.

I find a fourth operation of the mind, by which I compare two or more things together, and draw a conclusion with respect to their agreement or disagreement—This faculty we call the judgment, or the reasoning power.

None of those faculties of the mind can be employed, unless upon objects of sense, or its own operations and capacities.

My animal frame, from its very organization and economy, feels pleasure in the enjoyment of some things, and pain from the use of others. These sensations are learnt by experiment; my mind recollects



this, and endeavours to cultivate the one and avoid the other—my judgment has an eye to this distinction, in discriminating between objects and propositions, if they relate to my own interest, or if called upon for my opinion concerning them.

I judge these faculties to be capacities of the same mind, and when exercised, to be operations of the same mind, because I cannot consciously exercise more than one at the same time distinctly.

I feel other mental sensations, which we call passions and emotions—the former appear in love and hatred; the latter in joy and fear—they are different degrees of mental sensation produced by the properties or qualities of external objects in their relations to us, together with the manner in which they are presented.

In my philosophical enquiries, I have found laid down by the greatest logicians, and most profound investigators of mind and matter, certain axioms or first principals, designed to avoid error in investigation, and lead to truth. Some of these are, perhaps, not quite self evident at the first blush, but become so by a little examination. Some of these are the following, (*viz.*) Never to employ more causes in explaining an effect, than are obvious and sufficient, and never to attempt the explanation of an effect, until you are sure it has been produced—to take nothing for granted that ought to be proven—to concede no point in a disputed subject, but what is to both sides, self-evident—and, lastly, never to draw a conclusion but what is just, and fairly contained in the premises.

To these principles, I found no difficulty in acquiescing; and having recognized them as rules for my government, I felt myself prepared to investigate the subject of Religion, which I had often heard mentioned by christians and deists, as a thing *natural* to the human mind.

They all agree, that the origin of it, is in the belief

of a God, and our relation to him. As it is deemed a system purely natural and intuitive, and not of elaborate deduction, I expected to find this cardinal point of natural religion, with as much ease and clearness, as the mariner's needle points to the northern pole in the heavens.

In opening my eyes upon the face of nature, I beheld no other than natural existence—Wonderful order and harmony pervading the universal system—governed by regular and definite laws. In directing my view to the solar system, my mind was struck with awful majesty—I discovered the revolutions of the planetary world accomplished with such minute uniformity, that astronomers could tell me the periods of their revolutions with the greatest possible certainty, and Sir Isaac Newton could instruct me in the principles by which their motions were governed and regulated; I found this knowledge composing a part of the education acquired in the different academies of science all over the civilized globe. I then attended to the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, in which I beheld innumerable operations and vicissitudes, appearing to reciprocate their influences with each other, having some appearances in common, and some peculiar distinguishing characteristics. Those three kingdoms were divided and subdivided into orders, genera, and species, and thus classed out into general and particular families. In essaying their compositions, I found a few elementary principles out of which the whole were formed, governed by different laws and circumstances, which regulated the affinities of aggregation, compositions, decompositions and new combinations. Such were their regularity of action, all things being equal, that the whole united in suggesting the rule, that the same causes, under the same circumstances, would produce the same effects. I frequently observed the death of one animal or plant, the birth and germination of others—I per-

ceived that the latter was through the instrumentality of parents in the animal of the viviparous or oviparous kind, and of the root, slip or kernel in the vegetable kingdoms. From these facts, united with the experience of every age and nation, for time immemorial, what ought I to conclude, or agreeable to the rule expressed, (*viz* ) to draw no conclusion but what is fairly contained in the premises, what should be my inference? I answer, that the present order of things has ever been, and will continue to be the same, sustaining only those changes and modifications, which the laws of nature produce. I conceive, that by running along the course of nature, both from fact and analogy, that we could have had no other thought, the mind losing itself in the perpetual succession of time and sense.

Despairing of instruction, or even an intimation, from this view of the subject of the being of a God, I determined to turn in upon my own mind, having frequently heard that it possessed a creative power, and try how far its operations would conduct me to this fundamental point, upon which natural religion, in its common acceptation, hangs—In this I entirely failed, and concluded, that atheism was indeed the religion of nature. The method I pursued was the following: Agreeably to the before mentioned faculties of the mind, (*viz.*) perception, memory, imagination and judgment, I found it utterly impossible to go beyond the limits of time and sense, for this plain reason, that all my ideas are derived from this quarter, and from the notices the mind takes of its own operations upon them—I could form a conception of nothing, nor even frame an imaginary object, without the aid of ideas previously received—I can easily conceive of a golden mountain; in this, however there is no creation, but a mere combination of ideas derived—Any man who is of opinion that any one faculty, or the aggregate powers of the mind can

create, or originate a single *radical* idea, will demonstrate it by representing it singly, having no archetype in nature, or by describing some imaginary thing, whose parts he had no previous knowledge of. I have never been able to do either, and those of my acquaintances who have tried acknowledged their incapacity.

From the connection between words and things, I was led to institute an enquiry into the origin of language, as being further elucidatory of the subject the result of which was, that every idea necessarily has its archetype, (I mean this with regard to every simple or radical one) the same obtains in the use of words in respect to ideas—the latter are the impressions, signs, evidences, or by whatever name you please to call them, of sensible existence, or its operations and properties; the former, (*viz.*) words are the signs of ideas—Hence words *significant*, or intelligible, are evidences of ideas, and ideas of things—It is true we have many imaginary ideas, or may have them; these are formed by transposing and modifying real ones; without these, the mind can no more form factitious ones, than a man can build a house or machine without materials.

One of the most celebrated phylologists and grammarians of any age, has concluded from his analysis of language, that in its original and natural form, it consisted of nouns and verbs, and that all the other parts of speech, as they are called, are nothing more than abbreviations, invented for dispatch in the communication of our thoughts and sensations. The truth of this, I think is demonstrable to any, and every reflecting mind, at all conversant with the nature of language. Conceive for a moment, of your having to learn every thing, and placed under the influence of ordinary circumstances, with your five senses, together with your natural wants, appetites &c. The objects producing sensations upon you, and the various changes upon each other are the noun substantives, and

their active operations, either upon yourself, or any part of the surrounding scenery, the verbs. The circumlocution which we should be obliged to use in our communications to each other, without abbreviation, would render our interchange of sentiments, the expression of feelings and wants, extremely inconvenient—the abbreviations enable us, in the use of language, to keep pace with our ideas.

These observations, though apparently remote, go to shew the indissoluble connexion which subsists between language, ideas, and sensible objects, and confirms what was before infered, that the true language of nature is atheism.

Supposing it possible that I had missed the only clue, which others had happily fallen upon, leading to a different conclusion, I determined to attend to the course pursued by the advocates of natural religion, and which had, in their estimation, by the right rules of reasoning, ascertained the being of a God—I soon found that it was attempted by reasoning from effect to cause—I had long since learnt, that insensible causes could only be discovered by or through their sensible effects—I was informed that the *creation* implied a creator as a matter of course.

This I admitted, and concluded that if the first proposition was true, that is, that we have a creation, that the point was settled. Recollecting two rules some time ago mentioned, viz. not to concede any point in an argument unless self-evident, and never to attempt the explanation of an effect unless proven to have been produced, I determined to put a *creation* to the proof, and accordingly required it—I was told that the requisition implied, on my part, a want of *common sense*, and that so far from its being reasonable, it was difficult to say whether it savoured most of *ignorance* or *impudence*.

These pertinent remarks were equally in the mouths of the deists and christians—I here however determi-

ned to make a stand, and with serious importunity asked for the facts and analogies which supported their assertion—I was with apparent condescension told, that the most ordinary mind, not deranged, on seeing a house or any other object of art, immediately inferred a builder—to this I agreed, but desired to be taught the resemblance, between the *creation* of the matter out of which the house or mechanism was made, and the mere modification of it into the form of the building—I observed further, that *experience* had taught us that men built houses, but asked for the man who had ever seen a creation—the origination of something from nothing?—none could be mentioned. In this, facts and analogies both failed—I remarked, that it was an observation time out of mind, that *e nihilo nihil fit*—that is, out of nothing nothing can be produced; for an illustration of this, I took occasion to observe, that I could neither create nor destroy a single particle of matter, nor were there a man known in the world ever to have done or seen either—This was conceded, and as a necessary consequence, in unison with my former inference, concluded, that matter is eternal, and not a creation. This conclusion it is true felt awkward, to a mind accustomed to believe in a God; but was the language of *reason*, exercised upon the operations of nature. I was told, that the perfect order and harmony of the universe, declared an intelligent first cause and supporter. From this circumstance, I drew a quite different conclusion; for order is necessary for the eternal existence of things as they are, the œconomy possessing in itself the means of self preservation. Were I to discover an obvious tendency to disorder and destruction, and notwithstanding that, the continuance of good order and preservation, the deduction would then be clear in favour of a preserving and supporting influence, but not of a creator. Only observe into what an extravagant absurdity

a different conclusion leads : from order and harmony, you infer a creator—in the creator perfection must exist, at least in as great a degree as in the order and harmony, and by a parity of reasoning, demonstrates that he was created, and so you may go on *ad infinitum* ; for when once started in this way, you have no stopping place. Again, what a strange kind of logic is it, to reason merely from the existence of things, to their non-existence, without a single fact, and of course no ground for analogy upon the subject. I will make one further remark, by way of obviating a remaining, and perhaps the last point, alledged against the doctrine to which my foregoing observations and enquiries lead—It is said, by both christians and deists, that the very nature and operations of mind, indicate a separate and independent existence from matter—Its facility of action, and the amazing ranges of thought through which it can pass in a single moment of time, are deemed conclusive, in establishing something radically different in it from material organization, its properties and qualities. Whatever may be the operations of mind, it never could have been conceived, that it had an independent existence from matter ; for its necessity in producing sensations, perceptions, ideas and thought, must have imposed, irresistibly, the belief of its being the consequence of vitalized animal structure, upon every person viewing the order of things in their natural relation.—How quickly is the philosopher degraded into an idiot, by an accidental stroke on the head, or a wound of the brain ; and how suddenly is the clearest mind thrown into a state of delirium or phrensy, by the accession of fever—For my own part, I have never been able to think at all, nor to produce any effect by my mind, without the instrumentality of matter, both as it relates to internal organization, and external structure— I have never seen a man, nor any one of the human race, whose brain was destroyed, or pulse en-

tirely cease to beat, evince more signs of mind, than are exhibited in an inanimate beast. Nature teaches us no other mode of being than what *exclusively* belongs to herself. From these circumstances we may fairly infer, that matter has existed *at least* as long as mind, and is not the effect, but in reality the cause of it. This, I say, is the conviction of *natural reason*, and suggests the only principles of *natural religion*, if indeed such they may be called—I mean those which compose atheism.

Having reached the only point to which an investigation of nature, and the *ordinary* qualifications of mind must lead, I will now open the book of Revelation, concluding that nothing is more exceedingly absurd and nonsensical, than the pretended belief in a God as a creator, and to be able to show nothing that he has made, nor any thing indeed that he has to do in the œconomy of the universe, agreeably to the best established principles of natural reason—In the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis, in the book called the bible, or the revealed word, my eyes are met with this extraordinary expression, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”—In these ten words I find several *radical ideas*, unknown to nature, and in learning which, my mind has no more to do, than it does in learning that the sun gives light, or the fire heat, except that in the former instance, I am taught by hearing, and in the latter by seeing and feeling—In both cases the ideas are excited in the mind by impressions upon the senses—they are excited by causes *ab extra*, operating upon the capacity of the mind, without which the mind could no more produce them, than it could see light without the eyes, or hear sounds without the ears, or, having the eyes and ears, see and hear without light and sound. There is this difference however to be remarked in the *external* circumstances—the means producing both the seeing



of colours, and feeling heat, are ordinary and natural, and so it is with respect to *common* articulate sounds ; but those which I have mentioned teaching us the being of a God, creation &c. are extraordinary and supernatural in their origin. It matters not by what means they have been perpetrated, whether by oral tradition or record—they bear unequivocal evidence of being superhuman, or revealed in their derivation ; nor is the force of the proof at all abated by the multiplicity of opinions, and degraded notions that have prevailed, and do still exist in the world, upon the subject. As the purest gold may be adulterated, and the most genuine impression nearly imitated, so the ideas originally revealed, are susceptible of alloy in the work shop of the mind—the imagination. But as in the former, so in the latter cases, this abuse cannot be made without the knowledge and use of the originals. The ideas of nature can never amalgamate with those of revelation, so as to escape detection in the hands of the correct metaphysical essayer—between them is a generical difference, which cannot be destroyed by the ingenuity and subtilty of the most plastic minds. Notwithstanding all their efforts to unite them in harmony, or to refer the latter to imaginary causes, so as to bury their radical distinctions, a single touch of analytical reasoning, breaks down their heterogenous mixture, and says to the powers of man, pointing to the objects of time and sense, thus far can thou go, and no farther, without revelation. Revelation does not stop at telling us, that in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, but teaches us several other *fundamental* ideas, (*viz.*) *spiritual existence, the fall of man, the immortality of the soul, a future judgment, and his redemption through a Saviour* ; which compose the tenets of the christian system, and were produced by no other circumstances than those decidedly supernatural. The revelation of

God being made as the great architect of the universe, &c. the mind of the believer is transported in the sublime strain of wonder and admiration, and unites with the psalmist, "The heavens declare the *glory* of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work—day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth wisdom." It will be in vain to refer me to heathen mythology in proof of a different sentiment, for every man capable of making the reference, possesses in himself the natural means and advantages, in *at least* as high a degree as the heathens did, for making the discoveries, and he can without going beyond the operations of his own mind upon natural causes, (excluding the language and ideas of revelation) show in what way they did originate. Such an experiment will afford the most unequivocal confirmation of the source from whence I allege they were derived, and the means employed, if made ingenuously, and without prejudice. I perfectly concur with Thomas Paine in his last pamphlet, (page 50) where he says, "That which is revelation to me exists in something which no human mind can invent," but disagree with him in the same paragraph, when he says, "There is no man that believes in revealed religion stronger than I do, *but it is not the reveries of the Old and New Testaments that I dignify with that sacred title.*" I disagree with him in the latter observation, because, according to his own definition of revelation, these are the only books which teach us ideas that no human mind could invent, and which I have enumerated above. Perhaps the whole number of entirely original ideas taught by the old and new testament, do not exceed the following, (*viz.*) spiritual existence—the being of a God, his triunity—the creation of the world—the existence of devils—the fall of man—the immortality of the soul—a future judgment—man's redemption through a Saviour, and eternal woe without

—a heaven, the habitation of God, his holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect—a hell, the abode of devils, and damned spirits of sinful men—To which may be added the attributes of deity, and his will concerning men. The design of the other parts of these books, is to illustrate their truths, and to shew their particular relations to the providence of heaven, and interest of men.

Such is the nature of the human mind, the peculiar and affecting connection which subsists between the revealed ideas of God, including his attributes and sovereignty, and our being and well being, and indeed all that belongs to us, that when once induced, it would be almost impossible to lose them entirely ; for every natural perception and distressing sensation, are in some degree associated with them. Here a thought occurs worthy our particular notice : If the being of a God is an object of natural perception, why is it, that so many instances of idoltry have occurred, and still exist in many parts of the world ? This cannot be refered to ignorance ; for it is utterly impossible, that any degree of ignorance can change the natural perceptions of the mind. A falling off in the purity of the first knowledge of God, communicated by inspired minds to mankind is very intelligible, for into how many thousand forms cannot the imagination modify a single thought, when under the influence of ignorance, prejudice and alarm ? Polytheism affords an ample illustration of this fact. Here I will take occasion to remark, that from the very nature of things, theism and not polytheism was the first form of worship contrary to the favourite hypothesis of Mr. Hume—both from the analysis of language, and origin of ideas. And here, to illustrate this truth the more forcibly, I will extract a paragraph from this celebrated deistical author, which will tend to corroborate this opinion, and confirm the true ori-

gin of the idea of a God, &c.—“ Although nothing is so unbounded in its operations as the imagination of man—to form monsters, and join incongruous shapes and appearances, costs the imagination no more trouble, than to conceive of the most natural and familiar objects ; and whilst the body is confined to one planet, along which it creeps with pain and difficulty, the imagination and thought can transport us, in an instant, into the most distant regions of the universe. But although our thought seems to possess this unbounded liberty, we shall find upon a nearer examination, that it is really confined within very narrow limits, and that all this creative power of the mind amounts to nothing more than the faculty of combining, transposing, augmenting and diminishing, the *materials afforded us by sense and experience.*”

What materials of sense and experience, but revelation itself, gave the idea of a God, from his view of the subject ? Any man who will read Bryant’s *Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, Sir William Jones’s *Asiatic Researches*, and Maurice’s *Indian Antiquities*, will find this truth abundantly proven, by all the variety of illustration requisite for producing the most ample conviction. In the very structure of the mythological names of the gentile people, is discoverable the *radicals* of the important ideas contained in the Pentitouch. Such has been the diversified channels through which remarkable events, the memories and names of illustrious personages, have been perpetuated, sometimes flowing through the less alloyed streams of tradition, and at others pursuing circuitous courses, deeply impregnated with the turbid soil of ignorance, that notions of this nation, before, and many of them since the christian æra, exhibit a strange variety indeed. “ When the traces of ancient tradition were become faint, in successive generations, the human imagination sported in all the wantonness of fiction.

From the broken fragments of true history, the want of combination in hieroglyphic representations, and the mutilated remains of ancient records or language, innumerable superstitions were fabricated, and received with all the avidity of popular credulity. But there is no part of the Hebrew theology which can be explained, from the perversions or misrepresentations of the human imagination—No part of their theology can be resolved into a mistaken history, a corruption of names, or a puerile allegory.” Yes, sir, I must again repeat what I have so often said, that we find from the very nature of the human mind in its original acquirement of knowledge, and its progress, together with traditional and historical facts, there can be no other assignable or conceivable origin of the ideas of a God, creation, &c. &c. than through revelation. Hence it is, that every man, however repugnant his mind may feel to the necessity, through opinions and prejudices early formed, both by education and the sanction of authorities, must unite with the christian, in consistency with the plainest precepts of common sense, and the obvious necessity imposed by the most palpable rules of analysis, synthesis and induction, in exalting the scriptures to the sublime source which they claim. The deist can no longer boast of his natural religion, for the first and great point upon which it rests, is obtained from revelation, and is there found in connection with the rest of the component parts of the christian creed. The atheist must be silent, for the very existence of the radical ideas, and the words employed in representing them, renders it utterly impossible but that their prototypes must have existed, and operated upon the minds of the inspired pensmen, mediately or immediately, who communicated them. The shocking imprecations of the most wicked profligate, and the most melting strains of devotion of the religious saint, bowing in awful reverence before the

sovereign of the universe, are equally derived from revelation.—The former employs the *name* of God, and frequently of the *holy Trinity*, to heighten his wanton impiety of expression—the latter uses them, when in deep humiliation, imploring his mercies, or in pious extacies, enjoying his graces.

To the same original cause the polytheist is indebted for the idea of a God, which being debased, constitutes the object of his worship, upon whose shrine he pours out his idolatrous oblations. Should there be a hesitation or doubt upon the subject, I refer to the analogy of all languages upon this point, when reduced by analysis to their radicals, and more particularly to *our own experience* in the acquisition of ideas and knowledge, with this general remark, *that no man ever yet had the knowledge, or even the thought of a God without being taught it.*

This view of the subject, or result of my enquiries, is in unison with the scriptures. Through faith we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Faith is the evidence of things not seen; it is produced by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and all the scriptures are given by the inspiration of God—the scriptures compose the written word of God. The world, by wisdom, know not God—no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the father, save the son, and he to whomsoever the son reveal him. It is believed that the first and second chapters of Paul's epistle to the Romans, contain a sentiment quite opposed to the general conclusion. This apparent opposition ceases when we recollect that *the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, were clearly seen—even his eternal power and Godhead*, according to the same apostle, by the revelations and inspirations of God, to the patriarchal and prophetic

minds. In faith, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, died, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, desiring a better country, that is, an heavenly one—They realized by faith the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in their own salvation. The second passage alluded to, relates to the Gentiles, and stands thus : “ For when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves, which shew the works of the law written in their hearts, their consciences, also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.” We are to remember that the Mosaic law was never given to the Gentiles. So says Paul, “ For I could wish that myself were accused (or separated) from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, and to whom pertained the giving of the law.” The gentiles might have appreciated the soundness of the maxims contained in it, and adopted them as rules of conduct, although not imposed upon them by the authority of law. The use designed to be made of the above passage with those who differ with me in opinion, is to prove that the world, without revelation, would have known or have the idea of a God, creation, &c. even in the opinion of Paul—his explicit declaration upon this subject, I before stated. I do not mean to restrict the agency of Deity to the revelation we have on record. By the same power that created the universe, and evolved order out of confusion, whose instrumentality enabled and prompted Balaam’s ass to articulate intelligent remonstrances against his enraged and cruel master, may the Gentile mind have been illuminated from time to time. I have said nothing about *abstrac-*

tion in my investigation. Although our authors and teachers have placed great reliance upon it, on account of its *creative influence*, I found no possible aid from its use in originating a single elementary thought or idea; and, indeed, the expression imports no other mental operation, than the separation of a part or parts from the whole; but this can never assign to an object qualities which it did not possess before. My anxiety to be intelligible, has produced frequent repetitions, notwithstanding which, I may have failed in frequent instances.

I explode, in the most formal manner, a creative power, and innate ideas in the intellectual endowments of man; for I have not been able, by torturing my own mind, to produce a specimen of the former, nor to elicit an evidence of the latter.

The attention that the mind bestows upon its own operations, (if correctly made) confirms it in the necessity of sensible existence, of a material nature in the present order of things for exercising them, and imposes the irresistible conviction, that its own ideas and knowledge of spiritual being, &c. were communicated, in their *commencement*, by supernatural means, which have been perpetuated by *audible signs, or language taught by hearing*. We have several instances on record, well authenticated, of children being born deaf, and after arriving at years of maturity gaining their hearing, who acknowledged, that during the state of profound silence, they had no thought, or distant conception of any thing spiritual.

If it is true, that atheism is the religion of nature, (of which I have no doubt) how awfully have the interests of truth been perverted, and the scriptures set at nought by its teachers. Every concession made in behalf of natural religion, is a surrender of the strong grounds of the revealed, and at the same time it administers life, strength and energy to deism, inflicts a



mortal wound upon the very vitals of christianity. In yielding the points upon which alone its supernatural origin can be supported, (I mean the impossibility of the human mind ever inventing its principles without supernatural aid) the scriptures no longer possess the intrinsic nature of divine truth, and become more a theme of ridicule, than the solemn voice of heaven, proclaiming to man his high origin, the low estate to which transgression has brought him, his exalted destiny beyond the grave through a Saviour, and eternal woe without.

Vain human philosophy has usurped the prerogative of the Most High, and having stolen light from heaven, meanly denies the theft. Thomas Paine, in that part of his pamphlet before cited, has said nothing more than he was justified in by the *natural christian religionists*. I will transcribe at large his observation —“ The world has been amused with the term *revealed religion*, and the generality of priests apply this term to the books called the Old and New Testament. The Mahometans apply the same term to the Koran. There is no man who believes in revealed religion stronger than I do, but it is not the reveries of the Old and New Testament, nor of the Koran, that I dignify with that sacred title. That which is revelation to me, exists in something which no human mind can invent, no human hand can counterfeit.” (This definite of revelation I entirely adopt.) “ The word of God is the *creation* we behold, and this word of God revealeth to man all that is necessary for man to know of his Creator.” He then proceeds to learn from his *created word of God*, his power, wisdom, munificence, mercy, and goodness, and concludes with these expressions—“ In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scriptures, which any *human hand may make or any impostor invent*; — but the scripture called *creation*.” By the course of

investigation before detailed, Paine is deprived of his first link in the chain of natural religion, and is obliged to dignify with the *sacred epithet of revelation*, the Old and New Testament, as the only word of God, through which he *ordinarily* converses with, and exalts, and improves the head and heart of man.

How much is it to be regretted, that the course of education taught in perhaps every school in our country, accords with the principles of Thomas Paine, by men too, professedly Christians. Entirely agreeable to the rules of philosophising, and the principles of right reasoning, (or rather wrong reasoning) inculcated by our teachers, a young man, on finishing a refined academical education; must *necessarily* and *naturally* be a deist; learning by the energies of his own mind, matured by instruction, not only the being of a God with all his attributes, and the creation of the world, but also the immortality of the soul, and a state of future rewards and punishments, without ever recognising in a single instance, the aid of revelation—Thus rising to the superlative height to which Thomas Paine alleges natural reason can carry the mind, the scholar, by logical necessity, ceases to respect the scriptures, and charges them with being the reveries of nonsense; and, wonderful to be told! all this mighty chain of deductions proceeds from this single *gratuitous postulatam*, “*that none of all the objects which we see, have been from eternity, and therefore they must have been produced by a self-existent, eternal and independent being or cause,*” than which, a greater absurdity was never taught with the affectation of truth, nor more universally contradicted by the plainest inferences, from intuitive propositions. This assumption is the groundwork of deism, and the foundation stone of natural religion. With all the deliberation of calm reason, I challenge its advocates to adduce a single fact or analogy, from the whole laboratory of nature, or a

single principle expressed in her vocabulary, suggesting the most remote hint of this *surreptitious axiom*—Succession of time *ad infinitum* whether in a prospective or retrospective view is the language of nature.

Our examination of the subject discloses another egregious error or two, as prevalent as those animadverted on. They are taught with as much assiduity as the rudiments of our language, to the great injury of society, and disparagement of divine truth. This I hold to be literally true, whenever principles are claimed as the natural discoveries of the human mind, by its own reflections, which at the same time are alone obtained from revelation. Every such a plagerism unacknowledged, and in reality *denied*, detracts from the genuineness and authority of the scriptures, and weakens their influence upon the human understanding. The errors alluded to relate to the popular ideas of morals, together with the common principles embraced by our systems of moral philosophy. Apart from the idea of a God, spiritual existence, &c. not known in *natural philosophy, natural metaphysics, or natural ethics*, morals consist in nothing more than a punctilious regard, and *ostensible* observance of the manners and customs existing; and moral philosophy, framed under those *natural* circumstances, relate to nothing more than the ascertainment of those principles which the wants, necessities and conveniences of mankind, in a social state, suggest, and in their practical influence, are regardless of every consideration but *public opinion*, and individual interest and aggrandizement. In the present *dislocated* state of things, we are taught the most sublime doctrines of theology and refined principles of religion, under the *spurious name of natural religion*, against the legitimacy of which I do, in the most formal and explicit manner, protest. It is more wonderful than otherwise, that men of rational habits of thought and clearness of perception,

should receive, as often as they do, the scriptures as true, after being thus rifled by many of our *philosophers*, professing christianity, of their intrinsic characteristic evidences of being superhuman.

Equally exceptionable is the current notion of *conscience*. It is supposed to be a principle resident in man enthroned upon his heart by the great Creator, in his first formation. Uninfluenced by external and local circumstances, it dictates to the mind whatever is right and reproaches it for its errors, equally operating in every part of the world. These opinions are opposed by the plainest matters of fact in the history of mankind. The conscience is as much formed by education as the understanding is, & agreeably to the sentiments imbibed of right and wrong, is the approbation or disapprobation of the moral sense in respect to actions. Hence we are informed, that amongst some of the Indians, it is deemed the religious duty of the children of decrepid parents to put them to death, in which they acquiesce with pious resignation—In our own country a very different custom obtains. In both cases we have reason to believe equal conscienciousness. Amongst the Brahmins, who believe in the transmigration, hospitality to an extreme is deemed indispensable towards the serpents and most loathsome insects, believing them to be the residence of the souls of their departed friends. In this they are as much directed by their moral sense, as the christian in his religious duties, in the meridian of Lexington. In short, I conceive the conscience, the moral sense or faculty, to consist in a *capacity of mind* to exercise judgment upon moral and religious subjects, deriving its rules from the sentiments it adopts from education &c.—From which it follows, that our consciences would approve our conduct in every act which enhances our own individual *temporal* interest, regardless of every other concern, had the ideas of revelation never been

communicated to mankind, and provided we could elude the observation of the world.

In the mind possessed of the belief of a God, his omnipresence, his character as a judge, and our responsibility to him for the violation of those laws which he has prescribed and promulgated for our regulation, a very different principle of action obtains—Honesty and uprightness are as sure to be observed under the dark veil of night, unperceived by man, as in the blaze of day, in the view of a thousand witnesses; and often the man who professes to disbelieve them, silently admits the possibility and even probability of their truth, and for a violation of them feels compunction proportionably. I know many men who disavow any motives from the above considerations, and whose conduct in life is deemed correct. To this I would observe, that many of our actions, both *right* and *wrong*, are automatic—that is, they are the effect of *habit*. The habit of proper conduct is the effect of an education produced by precept and example, restraint and coercion, properly employed; and that of a contrary nature, is produced by a different state of things. The principles of the former mode of education are, or were originally, derived from revelation, and in the latter not.

The great fundamental ideas of a God, &c. being once revealed to the mind, either mediately or immediately, diffuse themselves as extensively as its thoughts upon spiritual existence, creation, &c. varying with the different degrees of knowledge and ignorance; sometimes appearing in the exalted purity of spiritual perception, as in the apostolic day, and at others in degraded and groveling notions, as were evinced in the days of Egyptian darkness, the conscience participating in a correspondent degree of truth and error, in the exercise of its functions. It is regulated by our *sensations*, and *sympathetic associations*, our *experience*,

*manners and customs, and acquired ideas of right and wrong*, in the exercise of its censorial power in approving or disapproving; and not from any original, innate cause, or standard of judgement, independent of these circumstances.

If a unity of sentiment exists in the world, amongst the diversified inhabitants of the globe, it results from similar sensations, and correspondent associations, produced by the operation of analagous internal and external causes, upon a similar animal structure, and alike deductions of the mind from them. These are the requisites, and I may say the component parts of *common sense*, about which we have heard so much, with so little meaning, and which is often taught as an *original, elementary, self-evident principle*. In this acceptation, common sense and nonsense are commutable terms in the true language of analytical science.

A corollary from the foregoing observations is, that the interest and success of truth, require a very essential change, both in our pulpit instructions, and course of academical education. Instead of hearing from the *desk*, the wonderful achievements of human reason, aided by the light of nature, in theological acquisitions, we ought to be referred *alone* to revelation, as having first communicated the principles, together with those of christianity, and be taught that it is more the humble duty of the mind to receive and employ them as rules of faith and practice, than to have originated or invented them. Our schools of learning and science, yielding to the same dictates of natural reason, and correct philosophy, would conduce to the same end; the students should be instructed, that, every ray of science relating to the Deity, &c. has emanated from the *sun of supernatural illumination*, and that it is as necessary to recognise revelation in acquiring them as the existance of *natural light* in the investigation of colours; this innovation could not fail eventuating in

the extirpation of deism and atheism, in every christian land—in our present plan of philosophising, we are perpetually wandering in the dark, involved in our own reasonings, and shut out from the light of heaven; like the silk worm, entombed in our own texture, while the beams of revelation, are shining strong upon us! Instead of turning to the risen sun, and adoring its glorious majesty; we wheel to the west, with his rays in our eyes, and bow before the hemisphere of darkness. Nor is this conduct to be wondered at, it is the very trick and turn of *vain human philosophy*; at the same time it glories in its own refulgent energies, demonstrates in theology that its disciples are the sworn votaries of night.

I am no enemy to scholastic learning, I am an advocate of a good education; but it is not the province of philosophy to discover the radical ideas taught by revelation. Sir Isaac Newton and a man of only common sense, are entirely on a level in their first perceptions of them, fully as much so, as they are in seeing natural objects by the reflection of light. The difference between them, would consist in subsequent views and improvements that they would be able to make of them, and this would be in proportion to the superior correctness, and capacity of their minds.

The illiterate man, whose mind is not contaminated by the conceits of vain philosophy, and who reads the scriptures without ever having been *taught to doubt*, by the scepticism of those who profess to be raised above the humble necessity of receiving the truths of revelation, unless they are able to *comprehend* them, imbibes their truth in much greater purity, than the *energising* philosopher—for they are matters upon which no more reasoning can be employed, (I mean their elementary principles) than can upon the first principles of matter. No man has ever pretended to ascertain the *modus existendi*, or mode of existence, of the latter, or to doubt their *being*, on account of this inca-

pacity, and as vain and unreasonable would it be in the former. To know that they do exist, and to learn their various properties and uses, is all that the mind can achieve, and we obtain our first perceptions of them in the same way a child does its pap from the nurse. This view of the subject shews how radically wrong the opinions of many parents are in regard to the education of their children. They object to letting them ever read the bible, until their minds are sufficiently matured for exercising judgment upon it. The exclusion of light from their eyes until they could dissect a sun beam, or sounds from their ears until they had learnt accousticks, would not be less absurd. Those persons who have the *religion phobia*, or whose minds are so refined as to sicken at the name of revelation, will act consistently in changing the vocabulary of science, obliterating the expressions formerly enumerated, as entirely derived from revelation, and excluding as mere notions of superstition and priestcraft, all the motives arising from them in the regulation of mens' conduct, and adopt a plan of education, and a system of morality legitimately natural ; the former extending its views no further than time and sense, the investigation of matter, its properties and laws, exhibiting mind as a consequence of *vital organization, sui generis*, or of its own kind : the former extending no farther, and comprehending a view of social wants, necessities and enjoyments, and attaching criminality to no agent, let his conduct be what it may, if he can elude observation or detection, or in other words, *conceal appearances*. If revelation *must* be excluded in one instance, in acquiring fundamental principles of science, it may be excluded entirely, and the above will be the result. As it is *absolutely* necessary however in affording the radicals of the most sublime science, and that decidedly most



interesting, why not adopt it in full, and with candour acknowledge it?

The effects of such improvements would not be less conspicuous and happy in governments. Such is the simplicity, force and harmony of truth, that it assimilates all parties through which it pervades.—The real condition and interest of men being only understood by learning those lessons of intellectual knowledge, the principles of which are alone contained in the scriptures, and were given by inspiration, a similarity of concern, and unity of destination in every individual engaged in the great drama of human life would be acknowledged—Every mind would unite in the affecting sentiment, that our present state of being derives, in reality, its chief importance to us, from its relation to eternity, in conformity to scriptural declarations. Under such presentiments of mind, the *people*, in forming a system of government, and their representatives and servants, in enacting laws and administering justice, would sedulously exclude every thing that would tend to embarrass the improvements of mind, restrict rational and social enjoyments, and hinder those preparations required for immortal felicity.

The public functionaries would feel a more uniform and efficient motive for discharging the duties assigned to them than the uncertain, and fugitive plaudits of men, or the fear of a human tribunal. The insufficiency of such inducements, has often been witnessed from the cringing sycophant, up to the most sturdy masculine patriot, when allured by temptation to power, or invited by an opportunity for individual aggrandizement. The Deity has established no arbitrary distinctions amongst men, and in the christian church, every member enjoys equal rights in subordination to the principles by which it is regulated. The true science

of politics contained in the corollary observations I have made embrace the same principles as the basis of every just and well organised government. The frequent cant amongst some politicians that religion and politics should never be blended, proceeds from a disbelief in the christian religion. Did they verily believe it true, this disingenuous sentiment would never be expressed. Such men convince me that it would be dangerous to trust them were they not entirely devoted to public opinion, or governed by correct habits early imposed by the force of education. I do not mean that religion should be established by government—my ideas lead to no such a consequence; but that government should be established, and administered all over the world according to the *christian principles*. This however can never be the case until the christian world becomes a world of christians, which will never be as long as our very systems of education teach the youthful mind to doubt of the supernatural origin of the scriptures. I do not think that preachers ought to meddle further with politics, than to illustrate the harmony which subsists between the sublime truths of christianity, and our representative democratical form of government, in the various relations of individuals to their God, society, and themselves; shewing them that at the same time it affords the best means, and greatest security for happiness in any possible form of the social state, it gives the fairest opportunity in preparing for another and a better world.

The best protection of religious truth by government, is to leave it free—it will tolerate itself. And the best antidote to error, is *correct education*; for it is that which forms the mind. By education, I not only mean scholastic acquirements and parental teachings, but also pulpit instructions: in every case avoiding the inculcation of any thing, which, for the sake of truth must be unlearnt.