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By SYLVANUS URBAN, *Gent.*

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168. *An Apology for the Bible, in a Series of Letters addressed to Thomas Paine, Author of a Book, intituled, "The Age of Reason, Part II. being an Investigation of true and fabulous Theology."* By R. Watson, D.D. F. R. S. Lord Bishop of Landaff, and Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge.

WE are not of the number of those who think that a book ought not to be answered because it may be defective in argument, or redundant in misrepresentation and invective. The necessity of exposing its errors will be increased with the importance of the subject, and the probability of those readers to whom it is addressed being misled by their ignorance of the matters contained in it. If this be generally true, it can never be more so than when the subject of Religion is handled ignorantly and petulantly; when every thing venerable and sacred is made the sport of rude cavil and wanton scoff, and when a work professing to destroy the genuineness, authenticity, and authority, of the books of Scripture, is addressed, by its style and manner of publication, to the vulgar and unlearned.

It is evident to every thinking man, that such readers as the mass of the people is composed of, must be incompetent to decide accurately upon the evidences of Revelation at large. They involve literary questions, historical as well as critical, of which common readers cannot possibly judge.

They cannot weigh the difference between spurious and genuine writings; they cannot pronounce upon the agreement or disagreement of the histories recorded in holy writ with the contemporary periods of profane transactions: they cannot nicely balance the analogy which prevails between the word and works of God; as, indeed, the errors and inconclusive reasoning of the champion whose work is here encountered sufficiently manifest.

If he whose understanding, though miserably perverted, is naturally good, whose literary attainments, though very superficial, must exceed that of the lowest class of readers; if he whose zeal, and, it may be, conviction, have prompted him to examine the subject anxiously and diligently, has fallen into erroneous positions, and deduced inconclusive consequences, has shewn more warmth than judgement, and produced more invective than argu-

ment; how are readers, whose understandings and attainments may be generally inferior, to decide upon those momentous points with any capacity or fairness?

We lament, indeed, that such a subject should be so handled for such readers; but we receive all the consolation the case admits of when we thus meet with writers on the side of Revelation infinitely more powerful, and quite as zealous, as Mr. Paine.

We see, with a glow of heartfelt pleasure, the same champion who so successfully encountered the more learned, more dextrous, and more temperate Gibbon, now advance, with a firm and collected pace, to repress the petulance, to expose the ignorance, and correct the misrepresentations, of Mr. Paine. It is, indeed, a singular, and the world will pronounce it a happy, event, that the dispassionate reasoning and the profound learning which checked the career of the Historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire should now be effectually exerted to stem the torrent of profaneness which has issued from the author of *The Age of Reason*.

Twenty years of study and reflection have improved that mass of knowledge, and those powers of reasoning, which were so conspicuous in the *Apology for Christianity*; and they have so strengthened and confirmed the learned Prelate's conviction of the goodness of his cause, that he now steps forward, with the intrepidity of youth, and with the experience of age, to aid the cause of Truth and Revelation in an *Apology for the Bible*.

Greatly as we are pleased, and completely as we are satisfied, with the refutation contained in the book before us of the objections of Mr. Paine; yet there is no circumstance with which we are more highly gratified than by the manner in which the reply is couched.

Firm, temperate, and collected, the learned Prelate descends not from discussion into reproach, from argument into scurrility. He reproveth with dignity, he retorts with calmness. He never forgets the Christian, the scholar, or the gentleman. What an amiable contrast does this form in a priest, in a bishop too, with the conduct of his adversary, the illiberality of whose epithets, and the uncharitableness of whose temper, would alone condemn a cause much more plausible than his own!

own! Let us, however, hasten to justify our applause of the work before us by some passages, which we hesitate not to place before our readers, familiar to them as they may now be, and, we trust, are.

The Bishop properly and strongly shews the absurdity of that test to which Mr. P. appealed as the criterion of his principles:

“A fever, which you and those about you expected would prove mortal, made you remember, with renewed satisfaction, that you had written the former part of your *Age of Reason*; and you know, therefore, you say, by experience, the conscientious trial of your own principles. I admit this declaration to be a proof of the sincerity of your persuasion; but I cannot admit it to be any proof of the truth of your principles. What is conscience? Is it, as has been thought, an internal monitor, implanted in us by the Supreme Being, and dictating to us, on all occasions, what is right or wrong? Or is it merely our own judgement of the moral rectitude or turpitude of our own actions? I take the word (with Mr. Locke) in the latter, as in the only intelligible, sense. Now, who sees not that our judgements of virtue and vice, right and wrong, are not always formed from an enlightened and dispassionate use of our reason in the investigation of truth? They are more generally formed from the nature of the religion we profess; from the quality of the civil government under which we live; from the general manners of the age, or the particular manners of the persons with whom we associate; from the education we have had in our youth; from the books we have read at a more advanced period; and from other accidental causes. Who sees not that, on this account, conscience may be conformable or repugnant to the law of Nature? may be certain or doubtful? and that it can be no criterion of moral rectitude even when it is certain, because the certainty of an opinion is no proof of its being a right opinion? A man may be certainly persuaded of an error in reasoning, or of an untruth in matters of fact. It is a maxim of every law, human and divine, that a man ought never to act in opposition to his conscience; but it will not thence follow, that he will, in obeying the dictates of his conscience, on all occasions act right. An inquisitor, who burns Jews and hereticks; a Robespierre, who massacres innocent and harmless women; a robber, who thinks that all things ought to be in common, and that a state of property is an unjust infringement of natural liberty; these, and a thousand perpetrators of different crimes, may all follow the dictates of

conscience; and may, at the real or supposed approach of death, remember, “with renewed satisfaction,” the worst of their transactions, and experience; without dismay, “a conscientious trial of their principles.” But this their conscientious composure can be no proof to others of the rectitude of their principles, and ought to be no pledge to themselves of their innocence in adhering to them” (p. 5).

Having stated the distinction between the genuineness and authenticity of a book, which his adversary had confounded, the learned Prelate thus applies his position to an argument which Mr. P. vends with great confidence and satisfaction:

“Your argument stands thus: if it be found that the books ascribed to Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, were not written by Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, every part of the authority and authenticity of these books is gone at once. I presume to think otherwise. The genuineness of these books (in the judgement of those who say that they were written by these authors) will certainly be gone; but their authenticity may remain; they may still contain a true account of real transactions, though the names of the writers of them should be found to be different from what they are generally esteemed to be. Had, indeed, Moses said that he wrote the five first books of the Bible, and had Joshua and Samuel said that they wrote the books which are respectively attributed to them; and had it been found that Moses, Joshua, and Samuel, did not write these books; then, I grant, the authority of the whole would have been gone at once; these men would have been found liars, as to the genuineness of the books; and this proof of their want of veracity in one point would have invalidated their testimony in every other: these books would have been justly stigmatized, as neither genuine nor authentic. An history may be true, though it should not only be ascribed to a wrong author, but though the author of it should not be known; anonymous testimony does not destroy the reality of facts, whether natural or miraculous. Had Lord Clarendon published his History of the Rebellion without prefixing his name to it; or had the History of Titus Livius come down to us under the name of Valerius Flaccus, or Valerius Maximus; the facts mentioned in these histories would have been equally certain” (p. 35).

The following cavil of Mr. P. meets with a satisfactory confutation and a successful retort from his *priestly* antagonist:

“But Moses, you urge, cannot be the author

author of the book of Numbers, because he says of himself that 'Moses was a very meek man, above all the men that were on the face of the earth.' If he said this of himself, he was, you say, "a vain and arrogant coxcomb (such is your phrase!) and unworthy of credit; and, if he did not say it, the books are without authority." This your dilemma is perfectly harmless; it has not an horn to hurt the weakest logician. If Moses did not write this little verse, if it was inserted by Samuel, or any of his countrymen, who knew his character and revered his memory, will it follow that he did not write any other part of the book of Numbers? Or, if he did not write any part of the book of Numbers, will it follow that he did not write any of the other books of which he is usually reputed the author? And, if he did write this of himself, he was justified by the occasion, which extorted from him this commendation. Had this expression been written in a modern style and manner, it would probably have given you no offence. For, who would be so fastidious as to find fault with an illustrious man, who, being calumniated by his nearest relations, as guilty of pride and fond of power, should vindicate his character by saying, "My temper was naturally as meek and unassuming as that of any man upon earth?" There are occasions in which a modest man, who speaks truly, may speak proudly of himself without forfeiting his general character; and there is no occasion which either more requires or more excuses this conduct than when he is repelling the foul and envious aspersions of those who both knew his character and had experienced his kindness; and in that predicament stood Aaron and Miriam, the accusers of Moses. You yourself have, probably, felt the sting of calumny, and have been anxious to remove the impression. I do not call you a vain and arrogant coxcomb for vindicating your character, when, in the latter part of your work, you boast, and I hope truly, that "the man does not exist that can say I have persecuted him, or any man, or any set of men, in the American Revolution, or in the French Revolution; or that I have in any case returned evil for evil."

"I know not what kings and priests may say to this; you may not have returned them evil for evil, because they never, I believe, did you any harm; but you have done them all the harm you could, and that without any provocation" (p. 51).

In a book whose subject is of such general importance as that before us, and whose excellence, we may almost say, is equal to its importance, we omit with pain and reluctance any pas-

sage which strikes us as particularly calculated to vindicate the authority of Scripture, or to place the evidence of Revealed Religion in a striking point of view. We must therefore beg to be understood as affording, by our selections, a fair specimen of the whole; and, if any of our readers should be so unfortunate, from a previous want of information, from a partial view of the subject, from a captious spirit of objection, as to have imbibed any of the principles, or to have been misled by any of the arguments, of Mr. Paine, we earnestly and anxiously intreat him to give the whole book a cool, unprejudiced, and diligent, reading. And, if he sees so many petty cavils refused, so many real difficulties obviated; or, if he finds similar doubt and ignorance attending the subjects of Natural Philosophy, or Natural Religion, where few or none allow themselves to doubt, or to deny the whole because they cannot comprehend a part, he owes it to himself\*, to his friends, and his country, to conduct his remarks farther, and to examine with the same diligent impartiality the whole of the evidence in favour of Revelation. "The consequence of his unbelief must be left to the just and merciful judgement of Him who alone knoweth the mechanism and the liberty of our understandings, the origin of our opinions, the strength of our prejudices, the excellences and defects of our reasoning faculties" (p. 11).

With respect to the difficulties attending Revelation, they produce in the Bishop's Apology the following admirable and even sublime reflections:

"The History of the Old Testament has, without doubt, some difficulties in it; but a minute philosopher, who busies himself in searching them out, whilst he neglects to contemplate the harmony of all its parts, the wisdom and goodness of God displayed throughout the whole, appears to me to be like a purblind man, who, in surveying a picture, objects to the simplicity of the design, and the beauty of the execution, from the asperities he has discovered in the canvas, and the colouring. The History of the Old Testament, notwithstanding the real difficulties which occur in it, notwithstanding the scoffs and

\* See some admirable observations on the danger of unbelievers in the pious and candid Jortin. *Rem. on Eccl. Hist.* vol. II. p. 41-43.

avails of unbelievers, appears to me to have such internal evidences of its truth, to be so corroborated by the most antient profane histories, so confirmed by the present circumstances of the world, that, if I were not a Christian, I would become a Jew. You think this history to be a collection of lies, contradictions, blasphemies: I look upon it to be the oldest, the truest, the most comprehensive, and the most important, history in the world. I consider it as giving more satisfactory proofs of the being and attributes of God, of the origin and end of human kind, than ever were attained by the deepest researches of the most enlightened philosophers. The exercise of our reason in the investigation of truths respecting the nature of God, and the future expectations of human kind, is highly useful; but I hope I shall be pardoned by the metaphysicians in saying that the chief utility of such disquisitions consists in this—that they bring us acquainted with the weakness of our intellectual faculties. I do not presume to measure other men by my standard; you may have clearer notions than I am able to form of the infinity of space, of the eternity of duration, of necessary existence, of the connexion between necessary existence and intelligence, between intelligence and benevolence; you may see nothing in the world but organized matter; or, rejecting a material, you may see nothing but an ideal, world. With a mind weary of conjecture, fatigued by doubt, sick of disputation, eager for knowledge, anxious for certainty, and unable to attain it by the best use of my reason in matters of the utmost importance, I have long ago turned my thoughts to an impartial examination of the proofs on which Revealed Religion is grounded, and I am convinced of its truth. This examination is a subject within the reach of human capacity; you have come to one conclusion respecting it, I have come to another; both of us cannot be right; may God forgive him that is in an error!" (p. 136).

If Mr. Paine's book has met with a favourable reception amongst any class of readers, it must be attributed to the licentious wit he has chosen to exercise on sacred subjects. An unexpected and pleasant combination of ideas often determines the judgement of the vulgar and unthinking more than a solid argument; and serious subjects are those which, of all others, afford the readiest materials for the exercise of this talent. If a profane and licentious man chuse to employ his wit on the subject of religion, the strange and unusual assemblage of ideas which he may put together will have an effect from the novelty

and surprize which the real ability of the assemblage could not have on any other subject. "The mind, without looking any farther, rests satisfied with the agreeableness of the picture and the gaiety of the fancy; and it is a kind of affront to go about to examine it by the severe rules of *truth* and good reason." Locke.

Our Apologist, however, is affronting enough to put Mr. Paine's wit to the test of these harsh rules; and how successfully he can combat him, even with his own weapons, let the following extract shew:

"As you esteem the Psalms a song-book, it is consistent enough in you to esteem the Proverbs of Solomon a jest-book. There have not come down to us above eight hundred of his jests; if we had the whole three thousand, which he wrote, our mirth would be extreme. Let us open the book, and see what kind of jests it contains. Take the very first as a specimen: 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction.' Do you perceive any jest in this? The fear of the Lord! What Lord does Solomon mean? He means that Lord who took the posterity of Abraham to be his peculiar people—who redeemed that people from Egyptian bondage by a miraculous interposition of his power—who gave the law to Moses—who commanded the Israelites to extirpate the nations of Canaan. Now, this Lord you will not fear; the jest says, you despise wisdom and instruction.—Let us try again: 'My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.' If your heart has been ever touched by parental feelings, you will see no jest in this.—Once more: 'My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.' These are the three first proverbs in Solomon's "jest-book;" if you read it through, it may not make you merry: I hope it will make you wise; that it will teach you, at least, the beginning of wisdom—the fear of that Lord whom Solomon feared" (p. 151).

We could wish to bring forward the conclusion of the sixth letter, where the learned Apologist sums up the result and effects of his adversary's attack upon the Old Testament, as we consider it a short but decisive enumeration of the proofs of its divine authority; but this and all other omissions we trust our readers will correct by perusing again and again the whole volume.

The beginning of the eighth letter, where the testimony of the Apostles is given

given "to establish the alibi of the dead body from the sepulchre by supernatural means," affords an happy instance of the refutation of a cavil in a manner at once popular and conclusive. And to those who, unhappily, have been caught by the artifices of *The Age of Reason*, such passages as these will be the most important and interesting. To the world at large, to scholars and divines, the Apology will be more important for those parts of it where the author has entered into the question more generally, asserted the necessity of Revelation, and has taken a large and comprehensive view of the whole matter in debate. Such, for instance, is the vindication of the Jews as the chosen people of God, p. 121; the refutation of Mr. Paine's incontrovertible propositions, p. 224; the superiority of Christianity to Deism, p. 298; and the whole of the last letter. With one of these we shall beg leave to close our selections, and we chuse it because it is short. It is on the advantages the Christian possesses over the Deist:

"The Christian has no doubt concerning a future state; every Deist, from Plato to Thomas Paine, is, on this subject, overwhelmed with doubts insuperable by human reason. The Christian has no misgivings as to the pardon of penitential sinners, through the intercession of a Mediator; the Deist is harrassed with apprehension lest the moral justice of God should demand, with inexorable rigour, punishment for transgression. The Christian has no doubt concerning the lawfulness and efficacy of prayer; the Deist is disturbed on this point by abstract considerations concerning the goodness of God, which wants not to be intreated; concerning his foresight, which has no need of our information; concerning his immutability, which cannot be changed through our sup-

plication. The Christian admits the providence of God, and the liberty of human actions; the Deist is involved in great difficulties; when he undertakes the proof of either. The Christian has assurance that the Spirit of God will help his infirmities; the Deist does not deny the possibility that God may have access to the human mind; but he has no ground to believe the fact of his either enlightening the understanding, influencing the will, or purifying the heart."

In a work of so much variety and importance as the present, at the same time treated so concisely, it cannot be expected that every objection should be answered in the most satisfactory way, or every question placed in the fullest point of view. For instance, we have a more satisfactory vindication\* of Elisha's cursing the children than what the Apology supplies (p. 195) in a work † written on the same occasion, but inferior in general merit. And there are some parts which will appear more or less satisfactory, according to the difference of opinions in the Christian world. But we will venture to say, that, taking into consideration the variety, the magnitude, and the difficulty, of the subject, there is as much excellence comprized in so small a compass as we ever observed in any book whatever.

Such is the execution of the work before us, which must be considered as a most valuable accession to the cause of Revelation, whether we view it in the light of a masterly refutation of the objections which produced the Apology, or as a substantial and convincing illustration of the main arguments which support the fabrick of Revelation. While we deplore the cause which called upon the Bishop for this additional proof of his powers and his

\* Extremely few are the instances in which our mind has been dissatisfied with the Bishop's solutions of the difficulties opposed to him. But they are very numerous in which we have found his arguments confirmed by the testimony of experience, and the decisions of those who are best acquainted with the subject of controversy. We shall briefly point out a few of these instances. In regard to numerical contradictions, p. 142, how well is the Bishop's position supported by Godwin ad Cæs. de Bell. Gall. lib. I. c. 26: "Ut fœmel dicam quod sentio, parva fides est numeris, in quibus semper fuit facilis librariorum lapsus, non solum apud Cæsarem, sed ubique." See also a case exactly in point, cap. 29, where the total amount of numbers neither corresponds with the particulars, nor with the account given by other historians.—Paine's argument, from the difference in the inscriptions upon the crosses (p. 241), which is so well refuted by our Apologist, is exposed, on the same convincing grounds, by Samuel Keyher. Vid. not. ad Fabricii Cod. Apocr. Nov. Test. vol. I. p. 260.—In illustration of the payment of tithes, as an acknowledgement of civil not religious benefits (p. 66), we may mention a people who derived their name from that circumstance, the Decumates. See Brotier ad Tacit. Germ. c. 29; and Gibbon, vol. I. p. 337, 4to.

† Age of Infidelity, by a Layman, part II. p. 64.

zeal to defend Christianity; because it may have done more mischief than can be undone, we cannot but congratulate the Christian world on this good effect which has flowed from it. We hail with reverence and applause the labours of an Apologist whose name will ever rank among the best and ablest defenders of the Gospel, for the soundness of his reasoning, the extent of his learning, the moderation of his temper, and the fervor, the Christian fervor, of his zeal.

169. *Sober and serious Reasons for Scepticism as it concerns Revealed Religion; in a Letter to a Friend.* By John Hollis, Esq.

ON the new principle that all things are to be made public, is founded this attack on revelation, under the specious title of an examination into it. Supposed-irreconcilable differences between the doctrines of Christianity and rational ideas of the Divine benevolence and future state are here brought forward; and future punishment, whether strictly eternal or not, is presumed to be inconsistent with the comfortable notion that God is equally the father and friend of all his creatures. According to the extent to which it is become the fashion to carry *benevolence*, there must be no punishment at all; and the more tender, affectionate, and fatherly, the connection between parties, the less must one of them correct the other, even for acknowledged faults. But in this, and his doubts and objections, we do not find Mr. Hollis advancing any which had been left unnoticed by former professors of scepticism; nor does he shew a disposition open to conviction, though he declares that "he shall no longer (at least till he is better informed) by a solemn and public act declare himself a Christian, because he would not do it, either by word or deed, in private conversation."

170. *The Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance.* By Thomas Paine, Author of "Common Sense," &c.

THE funding system, which is the system here treated of, is not of English but foreign origin. Mr. Paine begins his work by asserting that every system of credit is a system of paper-money. He affirms that the English system differs from that of the paper-dollars of America, and the assignats

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of France, in one particular only, namely, that the capital does not appear in circulation. Hence he deduces, that the accumulation of paper-money in England is only proportioned to the amount of interest of that capital; and that, if the interest be taken at five per cent, it will require twenty years to elapse before the same destructive inconvenience would follow on the funded system as was produced in one year by that of the paper-dollars, or assignats. In a word, that the latter systems verged speedily to their ruin, and the system of funding will as inevitably experience the same fate in the course of a term twenty times as long.

In the next place, our author proceeds to examine what he calls the symptoms of decay in the system of funding upon interest. They are exhibited in the progressive increase of the national debt, from the expences of the five wars preceding that in which we are now unhappily engaged. He finds that the sums expended in each were nearly in geometrical proportion, increasing by the common ratio  $1\frac{1}{2}$ . So that each successive total is once and a half the amount of the preceding, as follows:

1st war	National debt	21 millions.
2d	Additional	33
3d	Ditto	48
4th	Ditto	72
5th	Ditto	108

From these he goes on to ascertain by computation the expences of the wars to come, as under:

Present war, or 6th	162
7th	243
8th	364
9th	546
10th	819
11th	1228
12th	1742

At which period our national debt is expected to be 5486 millions of pounds sterling!

As it becomes in some measure incumbent on Mr. P. (after having assumed this ratio from the first five terms) to shew the principle from which it may arise, he adverts, in the next place, to the apparent rise in the price of all commodities in America and France, during the operation of their systems of paper-money, which, in fact, consisted chiefly in the diminished value, or plenty, of the medium