

T H E
ANALYTICAL REVIEW,

O R
HISTORY OF LITERATURE,
DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN,

ON AN ENLARGED PLAN.

CONTAINING
SCIENTIFIC ABSTRACTS OF IMPORTANT AND INTERESTING WORKS,
PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH;

A GENERAL ACCOUNT OF SUCH AS ARE OF LESS CONSEQUENCE,
WITH SHORT CHARACTERS;

A N D
NOTICES, OR REVIEWS, OF VALUABLE FOREIGN BOOKS;

A L S O T H E
LITERARY INTELLIGENCE OF EUROPE, &c.

“ At hæc omnia ita tractari præcipimus, ut non, Criticorum more, in laude et
“ cenfura tempus teratur; fed plane *hiftorice* RES IPSÆ narrentur, iudicium
“ *parcius* interponatur.” BACON *de hifloria literaria confcribenda.*

V O L. XIX.

FROM MAY TO AUGUST INCLUSIVE, 1794.

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M DCC XCIV.



Paueg. c. 1. Sueton. in Vit. August. 35. The administration of public and private worship was regulated by public authority. The functions of the pontifex maximus and his colleagues, which were continued through all the changes of the roman government, were of this kind. Liv. i. 2. The prosperity of the nation was supposed to depend upon the precise discharge of it's instituted rites. Cic. Orat. de Harusp. Respon. On the whole, the just and evident conclusion is, that the ecclesiastical laws of Rome guarded the religion of the state by the severest prohibition against every kind of deviation from it's ancient ordinances. It was not the emperor and the proconsul, but the ancient and established laws of the land, that were oppressive and cruel to the devoted and innocuous converts in that province. In fact, Trajan ordained no new edict concerning them; and agreeably to that lenity which distinguished his government in every part of his extensive empire, he forbid Pliny to receive anonymous informations, or to molest them by official prosecutions. Benignity indeed was so eminently conspicuous among the more splendid qualities of his princely virtues, that it became an invariable custom during many subsequent centuries after his death, to add to the usual votive acclamations on the accession of a new emperor, sis melior Trajano! Eutrop. viii. 5.

Mr. M., on account of his age, declines entering into any further controversy on this subject; and concludes with a happy application of an ancient anecdote.

F. 34. Postscript.— Polemical writers are apt to carry on the debate with so much petulant intemperance, that the question seems ultimately to be, which of the disputants shall have the honour of the *last* word. The author of the present defence disclaims all ambition of that kind; and no *reply*, from whatever *band* it may come, shall induce him to advance a step farther in the controversy. It was, indeed, with the utmost regret that he was *constrained*, by a very unprovoked attack, to enter into it; and he could not but consider himself, upon that occasion, as in circumstances in several respects similar to those of a certain veteran actor of ancient Rome *, who having in his declining years retired from the theatre, and being compelled by Cæsar, in the last period of his days, to re-appear upon the stage, addressed the audience in a suitable prologue, which concludes with these elegant and very *apposite* lines:

*Ut hedera serpens vires arboræ necat,
Ita me vetustas amplexu annorum enecat:
Sepulchri similis nihil nisi nomen retineo.*

ART. X. *The Age of Reason, being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology.* By Thomas Paine, Secretary for Foreign Affairs to Congress in the American War, and Author of the Works entitled Common Sense and Rights of Man, &c. 8vo. 117 pages. Price 2s. 6d. Paris, Barrois. 1794.

MR. PAINE'S power of commanding public attention on important subjects has been more than once proved beyond all contradiction. When he gives the world his thoughts on religion, it is in vain to expect, that either contemptuous silence, or coercive prohibition, will

* *Laberius*. Vid. Macrob. Saturn. ii. 7.

prevent the work from being read. The 'age of reason' is certainly so far advanced, that men will no longer ask leave of their rulers to think and inquire. Nor is it possible, that freedom of thought, and diligence of inquiry, whatever temporary inconvenience they may produce, should be in the issue injurious to mankind. Truth and good are one; and it must ever be the interest of the world at large to destroy the empire of error and prejudice. Nothing is therefore to be apprehended from giving Mr. Paine's objections to revelation a candid hearing. If his work contain any thing new it ought to be considered; and no judicious or consistent friend to christianity will shrink back from the discussion. If it contain nothing new, the refutation of his errors will be found in any of those able defences of revelation, which the learning and talents of former times have so abundantly supplied. We judge it to be a part of our duty to the public, and to the cause of truth, to give a report of the contents of Mr. P.'s work, with the same fidelity, with which we shall report the replies of his respondents.

The piece is written without much regard to method; but its materials may all be reduced to two heads, the defence of natural religion, and objections to revelation.

With respect to natural religion, Mr. P. makes this formal declaration of his faith: 'I believe in one God, and no more: and I hope for happiness beyond this life. I believe the equality of man: and I believe that religious duty consists in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavouring to make our fellow creatures happy.' And afterwards

P. 116. 'I trouble not myself about the manner of future existence. I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the power that gave me existence is able to continue it, in any form and manner he pleases, either with or without this body; and it appears more probable to me that I shall continue to exist hereafter, than that I should have had existence, as I now have, before that existence began.'

The only word of God which he acknowledges is the creation which we behold.

P. 47. 'The creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

'Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the immensity of the creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the scripture, which any human hand might make, but the scripture called the creation.'

Mr. P. goes on to maintain the necessity of admitting a first intelligent cause of all things, and, in his energetic manner, to represent the several ways in which God has revealed himself to man, by giving him a power of discovering the immaterial and eternal principles of science, by exhibiting before him the magnificent structure of the universe, and by teaching them from the example of his munificence to all, to be kind to each other. The support which natural theology has derived from astronomical science is well represented; and the sublime notions of deity which arise from contemplating the immensity of space as filled with systems of worlds, are expressed in a familiar style, very well adapted to correct and enlarge the conceptions of the vulgar concerning the perfections and providence of the supreme Being. A considerable part of the tract is filled with illustrations of this subject, of which no friend to religion will disapprove.

On the subject of revelation Mr. P.'s arguments may be reduced to the following heads. 1. Every national religion pretends to a divine origin; every church professes to have a revelation or word of God; the only reasonable way of treating them, is to reject them all. 2. Revelation is something communicated *immediately* from God to man. Such supernatural communication may be made to one individual, but when he tells it to a second or third, it is to them not a revelation, but a hearsay, which they are not obliged to believe. 3. The account of the birth of Jesus is similar to many stories in the heathen mythology.

P. 10. Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, of his birth, parentage, or any thing else. Not a line of what is called the New Testament is of his writing. The history of him is altogether the work of other people; and as to the account given of his resurrection and ascension, it was the necessary counterpart to the story of his birth. His historians, having brought him into the world in a supernatural manner, were obliged to take him out again in the same manner, or the first part of the story must have fallen to the ground.

The wretched contrivance with which this latter part is told, exceeds every thing that went before it. The first part, that of the miraculous conception, was not a thing that admitted of publicity; and therefore the tellers of this part of the story, had this advantage, that though they might not be credited, they could not be detected. They could not be expected to prove it, because it was not one of those things that admitted of proof, and it was impossible that the person of whom it was told could prove it himself.

But the resurrection of a dead person from the grave, and his ascension through the air, is a thing very different as to the evidence it admits of, to the invisible conception of a child in the womb. The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to have taken place, admitted of public and ocular demonstration, like that of the ascension of a balloon, or the sun at noon day, to all Jerusalem at least. A thing which every body is required to believe, requires that the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all, and universal; and as the public visibility of this last related act was the only evidence that could give sanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground, because that evidence never was given. Instead of this, a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say, they *saw it*, and all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it. But it appears that Thomas did not believe

lieve the resurrection; and, as they say, would not believe, without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. *So neither will I;* and the reason is equally as good for me and for every other person, as for Thomas.

‘ It is in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise this matter. The story, so far as relates to the supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it. Who were the authors of it is as impossible for us now to know, as it is for us to be assured, that the books in which the account is related, were written by the persons whose names they bear. The best surviving evidence we now have respecting this affair is the jews. They are regularly descended from the people who lived in the times this resurrection and ascension is said to have happened, and they say, *it is not true.* It has long appeared to me a strange inconsistency to cite the jews as a proof of the truth of the story. It is just the same as if a man were to say, I will prove the truth of what I have told you, by producing the people who say it is false.

‘ That such a person as Jesus Christ existed, and that he was crucified, which was the mode of execution at that day, are historical relations strictly within the limits of probability. He preached most excellent morality, and the equality of man; but he preached also against the corruptions and avarice of the jewish priests; and this brought upon him the hatred and vengeance of the whole order of priest-hood. The accusation which those priests brought against him, was that of sedition and conspiracy against the roman government, to which the jews were then subject and tributary; and it is not improbable that the roman government might have some secret apprehension of the effects of his doctrine as well as the jewish priests; neither is it improbable that Jesus Christ had in contemplation the delivery of the jewish nation from the bondage of the romans. Between the two, however, this virtuous reformer and revolutionist lost his life.’

4. The external evidence for believing the books of the scriptures to be the word of God is as follows:

P. 20. ‘ When the church mythologists established their system, they collected all the writings they could find, and managed them as they pleased. It is a matter altogether of uncertainty to us whether such of the writings as now appear, under the name of the Old and the New Testament, are in the same state in which those collectors say they found them; or whether they added, altered, abridged, or dressed them up.

‘ Be this as it may, they decided by *vote* which of the books out of the collection they had made, should be the word of God, and which should not. They rejected several; they voted others to be doubtful, such as the books called the Apocrypha; and these books which had a majority of votes, were voted to be the word of God. Had they voted otherwise, all the people, since calling themselves christians, had believed otherwise; for the belief of the one comes from the vote of the other. Who the people were that did all this, we know nothing of; they called themselves by the general name of the church; and this is all we know of the matter.’

5. P. 22. ‘ Revelation cannot be applied to any thing done upon earth of which man is himself the actor or the witness; and consequently all the historical and anecdotal part of the Bible, which is almost the whole of it, is not within the meaning and compass of the word revelation, and therefore is not the word of God.’

6. The

6. The account of the creation has all the appearance of being a tradition which the Israelites had among them before they came into Egypt. There is no proof that it was written by Moses. The historical part of the Old Testament is a history of wickedness. The Psalms and Book of Job contain a great deal of elevated sentiment, reverentially expressed, of the power and benignity of the Almighty; but not superiour to many other compositions on similar subjects before. The Proverbs are an instructive table of ethics, but inferior in keenness to the proverbs of the Spaniards, and not more wise and æconomical than those of the American Franklin. All the remaining parts of the Bible, generally known by the name of the Prophets, are the works of the Jewish poets and itinerant preachers, who mixed poetry, anecdote, and devotion together. The word prophet was the Bible word for poet, and prophesying meant the art of making poetry.

7. The word of God cannot exist in any written language.

p. 32. 'The continually progressive change to which the meaning of words is subject, the want of an universal language which renders translations necessary, the errors to which translations are again subject, the mistakes of copyists and printers, together with the possibility of wilful alteration, are of themselves evidences, that human language, whether in speech or in print, cannot be the vehicle of the word of God.'

8. p. 33. 'The first four books, called Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, do not give a history of the life of Jesus Christ, but only detached anecdotes of him. It appears from these books, that the whole time of his being a preacher was not more than eighteen months; and it was only during this short time, that those men became acquainted with him. They make mention of him, at the age of twelve years, sitting, they say, among the Jewish doctors, asking and answering them questions. As this was several years before their acquaintance with him began, it is most probable they had this anecdote from his parents. From this time there is no account of him for about sixteen years. Where he lived, or how he employed himself during this interval, is not known. Most probably he was working at his father's trade, which was that of a carpenter. It does not appear that he had any school education, and the probability is that he could not write, for his parents were extremely poor, as appears from their not being able to pay for a bed when he was born.'

9. How much or what parts of the books called the New Testament were written by the persons whose names they bear, we can know nothing of, neither are we certain in what language they were originally written. 10. The Christian system has been an enemy to learning. It's advocates, foreseeing that the progress of knowledge would lead men to call in question the truth of their system of faith, have cut down learning to a size less dangerous, and have restricted the business of learning to the study of the dead languages.

12. A miracle being something contrary to the operation and effect of the fixed laws of nature, unless we know the whole extent of these laws, and of what are commonly called the powers of nature, we are not able to judge whether any thing that may appear to us wonderful, or miraculous, be within, or beyond, or contrary to our natural power of acting. As we know not the extent to which either nature or art can go, there is no positive criterion to determine what a miracle is, and mankind in giving credit to appearances are subject to be continually imposed upon.

P. 108. ' If we are to suppose a miracle to be something so entirely out of the course of what is called nature, that she must go out of that course to accomplish it; and we see an account given of such miracle by the person who said he saw it, it raises a question in the mind very easily decided, which is, Is it more probable that nature should go out of her course, or that a man should tell a lie? We have never seen, in our time, nature go out of her course, but we have good reason to believe that millions of lies have been told in the same time; it is therefore at least millions to one, that the reporter of a miracle tells a lie.'

13. P. 113. ' If by a prophet we are to suppose a man, to whom the Almighty communicated some event that would take place in future, either there were such men, or there were not. If there were, it is consistent to believe that the event, so communicated, would be told in terms that could be understood; and not related in such a loose and obscure manner as to be out of the comprehension of those that heard it, and so equivocal as to fit almost any circumstance that might happen afterwards. It is conceiving very irreverently of the Almighty to suppose he would deal in this jesting manner with mankind: yet all the things called prophecies, in the book called the Bible, come under this description.

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

Beside these general strictures upon the evidence for revelation, Mr. P. strenuously opposes many of those tenets which almost all religious establishments have agreed to receive as doctrines of christianity, particularly the doctrine of the fall of man, of redemption by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, and of the trinity. But these objections are only to be considered in the light of *argumenta ad homines*; for Mr. P. can scarcely be so ignorant of the state of religious opinions, as not to know, that a large body of christians regard these, and many other doctrines commonly called christian, as excrescences, which those who are desirous of preserving the main trunk must hasten to lop off.

With respect to other more general objections respecting the authenticity of the books of scripture, the credibility of the historians, prophecies, and miracles, Mr. P.'s assertions are so ill supported by particular instances and authorities, that till he chooses to engage more immediately in historical and critical discussion, without which it is impossible that any historical question concerning ancient books can be determined, a general reference to the long catalogue of able writers in defence of the christian faith which this country has produced, may be deemed abundantly sufficient. Or if a more distinct reply should be thought necessary, able champions, from different churches and sects, will, we doubt not, be ready to appear in defence of the common cause. One of these we shall have the pleasure to announce to our readers in the next article.

We cannot dismiss the present work without remarking, that whatever natural strength of intellect Mr. P. may discover, he appears ill qualified to do justice to the subject of revelation from his want of erudition. Among other striking proofs of literary deficiency, which this tract affords, we find the following: p. 25. The book of Job and the Psalms are brought into comparison with other compositions on similar subjects written *before* that time, as well as since. P. 30. The idea of *greater* and *lesser* prophets is ridiculed as if the distinction referred to the degree of their power of prophesying, and not to the size of their books. P. 33. The term *New Testament* is derided for want of knowing, that the universally received interpretation of the title of the Christian Scriptures, Ἡ Καινὴ Διαθήκη, is the *New Covenant*.

ART. XI.—*An Examination of the Age of Reason, or an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology, by Thomas Paine: By Gilbert Wakefield, B. A. late Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge. 8vo. 58 pages. Price 1s. 6d. Kearsley. 1794.*

THIS reply to Mr. Paine commences with very handsome expressions of respect for his talents, and with very liberal concessions in regard to the subject of the controversy. Mr. P. is allowed to possess originality of conception, and profundity of thought, with comprehension, and sagacity, far beyond the vigour of vulgar minds. The positive articles of his faith are admitted; and issue is joined with him on the subjects of national institutions of religion.

‘National churches,’ says Mr. W. p. 7., ‘are that hay and stubble which might be removed without difficulty or confusion, from the fabric of religion, by the gentle hand of reformation, but which the insatiation of *ecclesiastics* will leave to be destroyed by fire. National churches are that incrustation, which has enveloped, by gradual concretion, the diamond of *christianity*; nor can, I fear, the genuine lustre be restored, but by such violent efforts as the separation of substances so long and closely connected must inevitably require.’

In subsequent parts of this examination Mr. W. concedes, in all their force, the difficulties concerning the history of the miraculous conception of Jesus, and the objections raised by Mr. Paine against the peculiar system of doctrines deduced in the creed of the established church from the scriptures; which he calls ‘wretched materials, heaped up for the security of usurped dominion, and secular interest, by the hands of priests and devotees.’ The commonly received doctrine of the devil and his angels, upon which Mr. Paine bestows much declamation, Mr. W. allows to have been a fable gratuitously fabricated by the sons of superstition, from passages of scripture, in which these allegorical personages are emblematically introduced.

Dismissing the phantoms of superstition, and the fictions of scholastic subtlety, Mr. W. first meets his antagonist on the question of the superiority of the jewish and christian systems to all others. This argument is very forcibly stated in the following paragraph:—

P. 10.—‘What the jews and christians maintain in behalf of their respective systems, is: that their founders delivered to mankind rational sentiments of the divine nature, of his existence, and his providential government of the world, at a time when ignorance and depravation with respect to these fundamental canons of religious rectitude were almost universally predominant. With relation to the writings of the jews, it is altogether undeniable, and is a truth of the

utmost weight and magnitude, that our accumulated discoveries in science and philosophy, and all our progress in other parts of knowledge, has not enabled the wisest of the moderns to excel the noble sentiments conveyed in the didactics and devotional compositions of the Old Testament; compositions, many of which existed, without dispute, before the earliest writings of heathen antiquity, and at a period, when even those illustrious instructors of mankind, the greeks and romans, were barbarous and unknown. It would gratify me much, I confess, to be informed in what manner the contemners of the jews and of the mosaic system account for this singular *phænomenon*; which indeed might be stated with abundantly more fullness and cogency, if it were necessary on this occasion. Will Thomas Paine the *deist*, or any of our modern *atheists*, undertake the solution of this difficulty? Besides, let any man compare the simple morality and the noble precepts of the gospel, as they relate to the attributes of God, and the duties of humanity, with the monstrous theology, with the subtleties, and the contradictory schemes of contemporary moralists, among the greeks and romans, (who nevertheless had, in all probability, profited mediately or immediately by the jewish system, which could not exist without diffusing some influence through the neighbourhood) and reflect at the same time, that a perfect manual of morality may be collected from a few pages in the gospel, but must be picked in pagan writers from a multitude of discordant volumes, and a mass of incoherency and absurdity; and then condescend to furnish us with an explanation of what must be allowed on all hands a surprising fact; namely, the existence of such superior intelligence in a jewish carpenter at Nazareth.

To the assertion that revelation must be immediate, and cannot be transmitted either verbally or in writing, it is replied, that when the person to whom a revelation has in the first instance been made communicates it to a second party, he does not expect him to believe this message on a mere assertion, but delivers his credentials with the message, and sanctions his pretensions by some display of supernatural agency.

The declaration, that God visits the sins of the father upon the children, which is said by Mr. Paine to be contrary to every principle of moral justice, is vindicated by remarking, that it is consonant to the regular plan of divine providence, and matter of experience, that communities are chastized for crimes not merely their own, but the aggregate wickedness of themselves and their progenitors.

Mr. Paine's objection, that Jesus Christ wrote no account of himself, and that the account of his resurrection and ascension was a necessary counterpart to the story of his birth, Mr. W. considers as the most important part of the work, and adds, 'If I should prove unable to vindicate my faith in christianity upon principles truly rational, and unambiguously explicit, I will relinquish it altogether, and look for an asylum in the deism of Thomas Paine, and the calm philosophy of Hume.' From the various answers which might be instituted to this objection, he selects one, which appears to his mind incapable of confutation upon any principles of philosophy or experience, and will indeed admit of no dispute, but upon positions subversive of all historical testimony whatsoever, and introductory of universal scepticism. It is as follows:—

P. 21.—'The numerous circumstances interspersed through the *gospel narratives* and in the *Acts of the Apostles*, appertaining to the geography of countries, the positions of rivers, towns, and cities, public transactions of much notoriety in those days; the dress, customs, man-

ners,

ners, and languages of nations and individuals; political characters of eminence, and their conduct, with a vast multiplicity of detached occurrences and facts not necessary to be specified at large, challenge (to speak with moderation) as large a portion of credibility to these books, considered in the light of *historical* testimonials, as can be claimed for any writings whatever, received as genuine, and equally ancient and multifarious. Now no mean presumption arises in favour of the most *extraordinary* transactions also, blended in the same texture of narrative by historians of so credible a character with respect to the rest of their relations; but, when these *extraordinary facts* are found to have so intimate an incorporation with the *common* and unsuspecting occurrences of these histories so as to admit of no detachment, but to stand or fall with the main body of the compositions; I cannot see how any historical probability of the authenticity of these *extraordinary* events can rise higher than in such an instance. But it will be proper to unfold the purport of this reasoning (which admits abundant illustration) more explicitly by a particular example.

The apostles Peter and John, after the death of their master, being summoned before the priests and elders of the jews, boldly assert in their presence, that "God had raised Jesus Christ, of Nazareth, whom the jews had crucified, from the dead." After some examination and debate, the two apostles are commanded by those magistrates and rulers of the jewish nation to teach no more in the name of Jesus. But these intrepid followers of Jesus replied in precisely the words of Socrates to the athenians: "We ought to obey God rather than men; for we cannot but speak the things which we have *seen* and *heard*." And what was their prospect and expectation from this determination to perseverance? Nothing less than ridicule, contempt, persecution, poverty, bodily chastisements, imprisonment, and death:—

"Starving their gains, and martyrdom their price."

Now, if we recollect in union with all this, what indeed should never be forgotten, that these apostles, the first teachers of *christianity*, the *companions* and *friends* of Jesus, did not endure these accumulated inconveniencies from a mere obstinate attachment to *speculative* opinions, in which, in my opinion, they were fallible as other men; but for asserting the palpable, unquestionable evidence of their *external senses*, what "they had *heard*, and *seen*, and *handled*;" no alternative of delusion or fallacy can be supposed, but their case stands clearly distinguished from that of every *future* victim to religious persuasions; liable, as they were, to no misconstruction, no precipitate and prejudiced judgments, no conceivable imposture. The falsehoods therefore of Christ's resurrection in connection with this single fact, and all the train of collateral circumstances dependant from it, would, I am persuaded, upon any mathematical calculation of the sum of moral and historical presumption, amount to an improbability of the greatest magnitude, indefinitely approximating to a miraculous event.

To this direct and forcible reasoning the author adds, that the demonstration of the resurrection may have been sufficiently public to demand assent, in conjunction with such a variety of corroborating coincidences, though it were not attended by the ocular observation of all Jerusalem; that 'ocular and manual demonstration' is not necessary to full belief; that instead of certainty for our guide, we are compelled to trust, on most occasions, to degrees of probability infinitely

diversified; and that disputable evidence is best calculated to produce diffidence and docility, and to afford that exercise for the mental powers, which contributes essentially to their vigour and perfection. To the hardy assertion, that fraud and imposition are stamped upon the face of the story of the resurrection, it is judged unnecessary to reply, till a deduction of particulars is presented in its support. Our belief of the truth of the facts related in the gospels does not depend upon our knowledge of the authors of the books, but upon collateral and independent evidence. The incredulity of the jews may be satisfactorily accounted for, from their expectation of a conquering Messiah; from the depravity of manners which prevailed among their rulers, considered in contrast with our Saviour's doctrine and life; and from the circumstance that the jews believed the possibility of working miracles by a confederacy with evil spirits. The very denial of such a people as the jews is no mean presumption in favour of the character of Jesus.

Upon the important question concerning the authenticity and genuineness of the books of scripture, in reply to Mr. Paine's objection, Mr. W. makes the following observations:—

P. 37. ' It is most certain, and ought not to be dissimulated, that *all* the books of the *Old* and *New Testaments* have not come confirmed to us by the same degree of evidence. They may be properly distributed into two classes, books of *fact*, and books of *opinion*. Under the former class I would comprise from *Genesis* to the book of *Job*, with the *Gospels* and *Acts* of the *Apostles*; and under the latter, to make the largest concession to this argument, the *Hagiographa* and *Prophets*, i. e. all the remainder of the *Old Testament*, with the *Epistles* and *Apocalypse* of the *New*. Now, that we may waive all discussion of the evidences and importance of the latter collection, the *christian* and *jewish* systems need no support beyond the authenticity of the *historic* class: and I assert in the fullest confidence, and appeal to a multitude of publications in behalf of this assertion, that no history whatever, taking its antiquity into consideration, has more claims to be received as genuine, than the histories in question. And what need of circumstantial detail in repelling the objections of men, who really know just nothing of the subject, and satisfy their *reason* and *philosophy* by peremptory asseveration only, unilluminated by one single ray of information on the topic in dispute? To contravene positions, that have been discussed again and again by writers of the first genius and erudition, and to disparage the genuineness of the *bible histories* wholly and indiscriminately, without some precision of investigation, some specific allegations, founded on the report of authentic documents, is intolerable arrogance, and the consummation of literary profligacy. With respect to the *internal* evidences of these *histories*, I am persuaded, and would engage to prove in detail, that they are exceedingly superior to those of any ancient records whatever, whose authenticity is admitted; evidences, of which no man will doubt, who does not insist on *mathematical demonstration* in cases only susceptible of varying *probabilities*. However this be, it is my settled persuasion, deduced from experience and the manners of mankind, that, if no *written memorials* of the *jewish* and *christian* dispensations were at this moment in existence, the present condition of the professors of these systems, as a tradition of believers in a certain system, composing vast aggregates of men through a succession of ages, in a variety of instances persecuted, distressed, and destroyed for their belief, cannot be

be accounted for, but on a supposition of the original reasonableness of these dispensations, in the apprehensions of the *first* professors; and consequently of their probable authenticity: unless indeed we are resolved to exempt the men of those æras from the common benefits of rationality. It were most easy to enlarge on this subject; but more has been said already, than such desultory and unsubstantiated allegations have any reason to expect: and I shall only add, from a multiplicity of cogent instances, with reference to *one* branch of evidence of the first moment, that a comparison of the xxviiith chapter of *Deuteronomy* only, with the subsequent and present state of the *israelitish* nation, must flash conviction, I should think, upon any mind, not totally prejudiced and perverted, in favour of the *prophetical* pretensions of the *scriptures*: for that the book of *Deuteronomy* was composed *posterior* to these events, what effrontery even of learned *deism*, if it hazard the assertion, will undertake to prove?

Mr. W. goes on to ridicule the weakness and absurdity of Mr. Paine's definition of a revelation as 'the communication of things unknown before.' With respect to the historical parts of the Old Testament, he admits, that they are to be considered in the same light as all other history, namely, as aggravated and disguised in a thousand instances, by passing through the medium of national partiality.

P. 41.—'The history of Sampson,' he adds, 'is, on this account, to be credited in proportion only to that degree of probability, measured by the common experience of mankind, and the state of the world in those days, which the history itself shall claim in the estimation of reasonable judges, under such qualifications and deductions, as will by no means invalidate the main body and the leading facts of the narrative in the light of a national register of persons and events.'

The majestic simplicity of the mosaic account of the creation is next admired; and it is denied, that the egyptians were a learned and scientific people. In reply to Mr. Paine's remark, that the word of God, being immutable, cannot exist in any written or human language, Mr. W. says—

P. 45.—'What can be more frivolous and more unworthy of a man of sense? A revelation, we suppose, is first conveyed to a particular person; he proposes it, with the proofs of his mission, to others; they transmit the same by tradition and written records to their posterity. It is acknowledged, that no succeeding evidence to future generations can strictly authorize that most indubitable conviction of the first immediate professor; but even their evidence may approximate to certainty beyond any assignable limits, so as to amount to a species of persuasion, from a concurrence of corroborating particulars, which is morally irresistible. Who, even at this day, can be assured, that Michael Angelo planned the fabric of St. Peter's at Rome, or sir Christopher Wren, St. Paul's in London, with a satisfaction equal to that of the contemporaries of these transactions? And yet, what man in his senses entertains the least doubt of these respective facts? And so it *may be* with respect to the jewish and christian revelations; and so it *is*, notwithstanding any arguments of Mr. Paine. A few mistakes of copyists and printers make no more alteration in the *general* effect of this argument, than a new stone, or a pinnacle repaired, will be deemed to abolish the pretensions of the primary architect to his structure.'

In the remainder of Mr. W.'s answer, he is for the most part occupied

occupied in correcting Mr. Paine's notions of redemption, and giving a more rational idea of the nature of the christian religion, and of the reason why Christ died upon the cross; in expressing his contempt for Thomas Paine's judgment concerning the value of ancient learning; and in appealing from his opinion concerning revelation, to the most distinguished mathematicians of our own country, Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Locke, Barrow, and Hartley, who were firm believers in the christian revelation. Of Newton he relates, from the life of Emlyn, the following pointed reply to Dr. Halley:—

P. 54.—' Dr. Halley,' says he, ' I am always glad to hear you when you speak about *astronomy*, or other parts of *mathematics*, because that is a subject you have studied, and well understand; but you should not talk of *christianity*, for you have not studied it; I have, and know you know nothing of the matter.'

Mr. W. might have spared his concession to Mr. Paine of the story of Jonah and the whale, and his addition to Mr. Paine's merriment on the subject, of his little black-boy, who eat his bread and cheefe in perfect security within the belly of a shark. There is a difference between a miracle and an impossibility; the whale (or shark) might swallow Jonah, but Jonah could not swallow the whale.

Mr. W. has written, as usual, with ability and spirit; and has certainly done much towards the refutation of Mr. P.: something, however, he has left to be done by his successors in this controversy. A more particular statement of the evidence for the genuineness of the books of scripture, and a more distinct notice of Mr. Paine's general observations on prophecy and miracles, would have rendered the reply more complete.

Fast Sermons.

ART. XII. *Equality: a Sermon. To which is added, a Sermon preached on Friday, February 28, 1794, the Day appointed for a General Fast.*

By the Rev. James Hurdis, B. D. Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford. 8vo. 63 pages. Price 1s 6d. Johnson. 1794.

IN the first of these discourses, the bugbear *equality*, which has of late occasioned so much needless alarm, is attacked by the weapons of rhetoric. The professor of poetry preferring, as might be expected, the light skirmishing of oratory, to the close fighting of logic, fetches his arguments from analogical topics; he shows that, as the members of the body cannot subsist without the head; a ship of war without it's captain and subordinate officers; a fleet without it's admiral; an army without it's general and inferiour commanders; a family without it's lord and master; a hive of bees without their queen; the solar system without a ruling sun and planets of different magnitudes; or even the invisible heavens without various orders of angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim; so neither can human society subsist without different ranks of men, and degrees of power, held together and directed by one supreme ruler. The present state of Great Britain is compared with those times in which the country was distracted by civil commotions; and it is on the whole concluded, that there has been no period in which the condition of these kingdoms has been preferable to that of the present; and consequently, that it is unreasonable to indulge chimerical notions of national reform,

Three chapters are added of anecdotes to illustrate the characters of Lewis xv, Lewis xvi, and the late queen; but we have already extended our extracts to a considerable length: and wish to excite rather than to exhaust our readers curiosity with respect to this amusing and interesting work.

T H E O L O G Y .

ART. xxviii. *The Age of Infidelity: in Answer to Thomas Paine's Age of Reason.* By a Layman. 8vo. 76 Pages. Price 1s. 6d. Button. 1794.

THIS reply to Mr. Paine is divided into two parts; the first containing a sketch of the evidences of christianity; the second a review of Mr. Paine's objections. Of the former it is unnecessary to give an abstract. It contains a general view of the evidence of revelation drawn from the character of the writers of the scripture, from the prophecies, moral character, doctrines, and miracles of Jesus, and from the rapid progress, and the moral influence of christianity; but stated rather in a loose and popular, than in a strictly argumentative way.

To Mr. Paine's objections against *any* revelation, it is replied, that revelation may be communicated through the medium of a second person of established veracity, provided he produces satisfactory credentials of prophecies and miracles, as was done by Moses, and by Jesus Christ. In answer to Mr. Paine's objections against the christian revelation, this writer distinctly examines his remarks on the Old and New Testament. The account of the creation, &c. is supposed to have been received by Moses from heaven, during his residence for forty days upon the mount. The mosaic cosmogony is asserted to be, in comparison with the wretched and unintelligible reveries of the heathen philosophers, as light to chaos. The author understands this account of the origin of the world, to be only a description of the formation of the solar system, and thus understood, he conceives it to be perfectly consistent with modern discoveries in astronomy.

The history of the fall our author judges it unnecessary and dangerous to interpret allegorically; and he maintains, that nothing can be more probable or rational, than this account. He overlooks, however, many difficulties, which confessedly hang upon the literal interpretation of this story, and refers to former writers for the proof, that the Pentateuch was written by Moses. The israelites, it is remarked, had more than the bare word of Moses for his divine authority, the delivery of the law being attended with many miraculous circumstances. With respect to the rest of the Old Testament, the author contents himself with dropping a few general hints, which, for want of fuller illustration and confirmation, cast little new light upon the subject. In answer to the observation, that the term prophet meant originally a poet or musician, the author declares, that having examined every text, in which this term has been sup-

posed to have this meaning, he is convinced, that it includes the idea of inspiration, real or pretended.

Passing on to the New Testament, the writer vindicates the literal interpretation of the history of Our Saviour's temptation, and finds nothing in it, that a wise man needs be ashamed of believing; but appears to be unacquainted with the much more satisfactory explanation of the story, on the supposition, that the whole passed in the mind of Jesus, as a vision. To the objection against the reality of Christ's resurrection, that he was seen only by his disciples, the following reply is offered.

P. 61. 'Supposing for a moment, that God were pleased to make a divine revelation of his will to mortals, or to require our assent to a series of historical facts, it is certainly very becoming for such creatures as we are to dictate, *à priori*, the kind and degree of evidence on which we chuse to believe them! Admitting, however, that Jesus Christ had arose and ascended in the sight of all Jerusalem, let us see what better evidence would this have afforded us of the fact. All the inhabitants of Jerusalem are long since dead; that they did see it therefore, we could not possibly have any other evidence than that of a few historians of those ages, and these historians would lay open to the same cavils and objections as the evangelical writers. Mr. P. would still tell us that it rested upon the credit of eight or nine, (perhaps not so many) witnesses who say they saw it; and that the rest of the inhabitants saw it, whence "all the rest of the world are called upon to believe it." And if he could meet with but one unbelieving *Thomas*, who being absent from Jerusalem, happened not to see it, he would add "Thomas did not believe the resurrection; and as they say, would not believe, without having ocular and manual demonstration himself. *So neither will I*; and the reason is equally as good for me, and for every other person, as for Thomas." So that the objection to the small number of witnesses of this event is reduced to a mere cavil, for if "ocular and manual demonstration" be *necessary*, then *no* historic evidence can be sufficient.'

That Mr. Paine should admit the evidence of the jews, whose ancestors crucified Christ, against his divine authority, and at the same time reject their testimony in favour of the miracles of Moses, is judged unreasonable. For a reconciliation of the apparently different accounts of the resurrection, the reader is referred to the masterly treatises of Gilbert West, and Ditton; and he is reminded, that neither of them was a clergyman, or wrote for interest.

On the subject of *mysteries*, this writer does not surrender to the enemies of revelation the peculiar mysteries of christianity, but retains the doctrine of the trinity, and other orthodox tenets; not thinking it worthy any exertions, to defend a system of christianity reduced to the standard of natural religion, and mere morality. Whether such a pertinacious adherence to points, which furnish infidels with some of their most powerful weapons of hostility, will be serviceable to the cause of christianity, may perhaps be reasonably questioned.

Upon

Upon the objection of improbability of miracles, the only consideration of any moment, suggested in this reply, is, that Jesus being, as Mr. Paine admits, a virtuous and amiable man, who preached excellent morality, it is wholly inconsistent with this character to suppose, that his miracles were only tricks to impose on vulgar credulity.

This Answer to the Age of Reason, though doubtless well intended, in many respects falls short of what might be expected and wished on so important a subject, in reply to a writer who possesses such popular talents as Mr. Paine.

ART. XXIX. *Sermons on some of the principal Doctrines of the Christian Religion, with practical Inferences and Improvements.* By Edward Stillingsfleet, M. A. Chaplain to the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth, and late Minister of West Bromwich, Staffordshire. 8vo. 431 pages. Price 5s. sewed. York, Peacock: London, Rivingtons. 1794.

* THOSE theological tenets, which have been hitherto commonly received as the peculiar doctrines of christianity, are almost exclusively the subjects insisted upon in these sermons. They are not treated in the way of logical argumentation, or biblical criticism, but in that of popular illustration, and practical improvement. The fallen state of man, the weakness of human reason, the vicarious sufferings and atonement of Christ, the necessity of the sanctifying and regenerating influences of the holy spirit, are this preacher's favourite topics, upon which he expatiates in plain and easy language, with frequent quotations from scripture. The author's zeal for what he deems the truth of the gospel does not, however, lead him to neglect the enforcement of it's duties. He considers these doctrines as most friendly to morality, and most conducive to true peace and comfort of mind; and accordingly directs his hearers to the practical use of them, in the conclusion of his theoretical sermons, and sometimes makes christian obedience the entire subject of his discourse. Even upon controverted points, though his opinions appear to be orthodox, he expresses himself with caution, and often in scriptural language. On the subject of the trinity he makes use of such general terms as might suit any system.

'God,' says he, 'represents himself to us in the holy scriptures under the *names* and *characters* of father, son, and holy ghost, and each is spoken of as God.'—Afterwards, 'God has been pleased to reveal himself to us, in his holy word, as an eternal, almighty, all-wise, and good creator and governor of the world, who has particularly manifested his love to us, as father, son, and holy ghost, in the glorious work of redemption.' And speaking of the Jehovah of the Old Testament as the only true self-existent God, he says, 'In the New Testament dispensation, the people of God are described as those who are admitted into covenant with the same God, only under a different *name*, viz. father, son, and holy ghost.' From this brief account, our readers will know what to expect from these sermons, without further extracts. The subjects are, the different effects of the preaching of the cross; the nature and spiritual worship of God; the poor and contrite spirit blessed; Jesus Christ the only foundation of

man's salvation; the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; Christ our spiritual physician; the names and titles of Christ; the brazen serpent a type of Christ crucified; the victory over death through Jesus Christ; the ascension and kingly power of Christ; the promise of the holy ghost fulfilled; conformity to the death and resurrection of Christ; the feast of the christian passover; what it is to be born again, and the necessity of it; the way and duty of keeping a conscience void of offence; christians to show forth an exemplary conversation; St. Peter's character and conduct considered; Paul's discourse before Felix considered; the certainty and nature of a rest to the people of God; the hope of eternal glory, an encouragement to press on to it.

ART. XXX. *A Sermon preached at the Anniversary Meeting of the Sons of the Clergy, in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, on Thursday, May 16, 1793.* By the Rev. Griffith Griffith, M. A. Rector of St. Mary le Bow, London, and domestic Chaplain to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury. To which are added, Lists of the Nobility, Clergy, and Gentry, who have been Stewards for the Feasts of the Sons of the Clergy, together with the Names of the Preachers, and the Sums collected at the Anniversary Meetings, since the Year 1721. 4to. 25 pages. Price 1s. Rivingtons, 1794.

AFTER the numerous sermons which have been published on the occasion of anniversary meetings of the sons of the clergy, it would be unreasonable to expect much new matter in this discourse. The general arguments for charity have been so often repeated, and the particular claims of the objects of this charity have been so often stated, that novelty must give way to propriety, and the preacher must be satisfied to repeat old arguments with perspicuity and energy. This praise is due to the present discourse; and the writer has besides the merit of introducing a consideration in favour of the charity, drawn from the times. When the national benevolence has arisen to such a pitch in the cause of a foreign clergy, he very justly concludes, that it may be expected to regard it's own clergy with peculiar concern.

ART. XXXI. *A Sermon preached before the honourable House of Commons, at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on Thursday, January 30, 1794: Being the Day appointed to be observed as the Day of the Martyrdom of King Charles I.* By the Rev. Thomas Hay, A. M. Chaplain to the House of Commons. 4to. 30 pages. Price 1s. Watts, 1794.

A GENERAL review is in this sermon taken of the civil dissensions of the last century, in order to deduce from them a warning to the present times. The calamities of that period are exhibited as an instructive lesson on the danger of fanatical intemperance; and the recent events in France are represented as affording a melancholy example of the still more lamentable effects of irreligion. Whence is inferred, in conclusion, the indispensable necessity of true religion to the support of civil government and social order. Without determining the degree of accuracy with which facts are here stated, the propriety of the general conclusion drawn from them may be readily admitted. And it would

ART. VII. *A Concise View of the History of Religious Knowledge, from the Creation of the World to the Establishment of Christianity. Intended as an Introduction for Young Persons and others to a proper Apprehension of the Origin, Progress, Principles, and final Settlement of the Christian Church; on the Authority of the Holy Scriptures.* 8vo. 210 pages. Price 3s. sewed. Robinfons. 1794.

UPON orthodox principles, and according to the more popular interpretations of the bible, this is a good manual of scripture history. It comprehends the whole period from the creation of the world to the fourth century of the christian era. It states the leading facts in concise terms, and with such glosses upon the narrative, as have commonly been put upon them by those commentators, who adhere to the established system of doctrine. Sundry connecting portions of history are added, from the apocryphal books and from other writings, but without any references to authorities.

ART. VIII. *Reason and Revelation: or a brief Answer to Thomas Paine's late Work, entitled "The Age of Reason."* By Thomas Bentley. 12mo. 40 pages. no publishers name. 1794.

FROM the cheap form in which this pamphlet is printed, it appears intended for general circulation, as a popular reply to Mr. Paine's *Age of Reason*. And if familiarity and vulgarity of language were all that were necessary, this piece might answer the purpose. But it has both deficiencies and redundancies, which render it very inadequate to the design of counteracting the infection of Mr. Paine's infidelity. In that accurate inquiry and methodical discussion, which the subject requires, it is deficient; for the writer only throws out a few cursory assertions in opposition to the observations of Mr. Paine. In easy belief it is redundant; for, though Mr. B. rejects many articles of orthodox faith, he believes that Socrates, and many other heathens, had an internal, mental revelation from God; that the wisdom of an Alfred, a Wickliffe, a Luther, and a Locke, was immediately communicated from heaven; and that he himself, with many of his acquaintances, has had experience of these communications in dreams and visions, in which one thing has been represented by another.—In short, Mr. B. has too little learning and philosophy, and too much fanaticism, to write a rational and satisfactory answer to the "*Age of Reason*."

NATURAL PHILOSOPHY.

ART. IX. *A View of Nature, in Letters to a Traveller among the Alps. With Reflections on Atheistical Philosophy, now exemplified in France.* By Richard Joseph Sullivan, Esq. F.R.S. and F.A.S. in six Volumes.

[Continued from page 18 of this volume.]

OF the valuable contents of this work, the result of ingenuity and industry happily united, our readers are already in part apprized, from the account we have given of the first two volumes, and the copious extracts which we have laid before them on several curious and important subjects in physics. In our account

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