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SAMUEL WARD**

WATSON REFUTED

Samuel Francis
Watson Refuted

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*Watson Refuted / Being an Answer to the Apology for the Bible, in a Series of
Letters to the Bishop Of Llandaff:*

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ADVERTISEMENT

I had written a considerable part of another work, containing strictures on religion. The appearance of the Bishop of Llandaff's pamphlet, and the number of editions that have been published for the purpose of encouraging its sale among the poorer classes, induced me to take up the pen expressly in answer to this publication, that I might undeceive the multitude, and show that, under the imposing title of a Bishop, Dr. Watson has been guilty of the most gross misrepresentations, and, whether intentionally or from ignorance, has deceived his readers, while, under the pretence of meekness, he triumphs in the detection of a few errors, committed by a man who does not pretend to be a Theologian, or to be possessed of any great learning. He has uniformly passed over the weighty arguments of the

Age of Reason, and stopped at a few immaterial inaccuracies. I hope, in the following sheets, to show, that the learned Professor of Divinity has committed errors in the Natural Sciences and History, which would be inexcusable in any author; but, when coming from a dignified Clergyman, who wishes to dictate to the nation, their detection cannot fail to show to the public, how necessary it is for men to employ their faculty of reason, and not to yield it to those whose profession is to teach things they acknowledge to be above reason, and incomprehensible. I shall, as soon as my other avocations permit, give the world a tract upon religion in general, with strictures on the Jewish and Christian systems. For this reason, I shall not, in the present pamphlet, enter deeply into any abstract reasoning, but confine myself chiefly to the detection of the errors contained in the Apology for the Bible.

S. F.

London, Aug. 15,
1790,

LETTER I

MY LORD,

You have thought it not inconsistent with your dignity as a Bishop, to oppose the *Age of Reason* by *Thomas Paine*, and I, as a member of the community, find myself called upon to expose your reasoning, and stop the career of error. You disclaim controversy; but if your candour is any thing more than a vain boast, I entertain hopes of seeing the defender of Christianity again step forward to answer my arguments, if he deems them of sufficient weight to disturb his quiet. I am sincerely glad to find a dignified churchman begin a dispute with men, whom formerly the pious members of the Church would have deemed fit victims for the fire or the gallows; at the same time, I feel deep regret, that the Bishop has not yet altogether laid aside the clerical passion for the extermination of the heterodox. I hope, says Dr. Watson, that there is no want of charity in wishing, that Mr. Paine's life had been terminated long before his publication. This may be consistent with Christian charity, but nature and reason teach us ugly unbelievers another doctrine: and, however inveterate I may be against those of the clergy who persecute and deceive the multitude, I confess, that the

death of a person, whom I conceive to be acting for what he thinks the public good, would give me no pleasure; and the Bishop allows the purity of Mr. Paine's motives. The wish of the philosopher is, let reason guide us, and all parties have freedom of debate. No dogmatical dictates of bigotted priests, no passive obedience to the mandates of inquisitors, nor to the persecutions so often fomented by churchmen. To the progress of letters, during this century, we owe the mildness and condescension of clergymen: till philosophy taught us, the clergy never discovered, that persecutions for heresy and witchcraft, or inquisitions and popery, were horrid institutions. Dares Dr. Watson affirm, that freedom of inquiry was ever suffered on religious subjects? that people were allowed to examine the grounds of the doctrines taught by the Church? No, Sir, your predecessors of all beliefs have ever persecuted philosophers and inquirers into truth, both in science and in religion. Neither Galileus nor Rousseau escaped the malevolence of the opposers of science; and in the Bible they found authorities for their inveterate opposition to the progress of truth and knowledge. The New Testament informs us, that the wisdom of God is foolishness to man, that human learning produces nothing but pride¹, and that the poor in spirit gain the

¹ "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Colos. ii. 5, 8. "Cum sit nobis divinis literis traditum cognitiones philosophorum stultas esse, ad ipsum re et argumentis docendum et; ne quit bouesto sapientiae nomine inductus, aut inanis eloquentiae splendore deceptus, humanis malet quam divinis credere." Lactantius, Inst. lib. i. chap. 2.

kingdom of heaven.

Under these and other similar pretences, have barbarous priests led their credulous followers to massacres in the name of their God; by means of that touchstone word, *Faith*, they made the multitude forget that their leaders were but men. Now, Sir, we have grown bolder: knowledge being no longer confined to clerical seminaries, priests are not kings. The church totters; and a single pamphlet, you say, "has unsettled the faith of thousands." Now, that you cannot stifle reason, you pretend to liberality of sentiment.

The natural historian, or the astronomer, fears not the publication of opinions contrary to his own, except from a scholastic habit, learned in the clerical seminaries, which still disgrace almost every country. The chemist eagerly peruses all theories; the divine alone refuses to argue with his opponents, and trembles at the very name of reason. I differ in my philosophical opinions from Mr. Paine; my principles extend so much farther than his, that I suspect I come under the class which you are pleased to call madmen, and every clergyman would affect to despise, but dare not argue with, before an unprejudiced tribunal. These, Sir, are the effects of superstition, and the cunning policy of the Church. The Bible is hardly suffered to be read in Catholic countries. The English reformers could not go so far; their revolution sprung from a dawn of philosophy. The English clergy, however, would confine us to the reading of that unintelligible farrago, and the still more insufferable

commentaries upon it. So did the scholastics with Aristotle; their bigotted partiality to this author was nearly of the same force with the priestly attachment to the Bible. They retarded science; but the motives of the clergy are stronger. By the Bible they live; and it is not uncommon to hear the parson deride in private what he preaches from the pulpit.

But to your first letter.

After the pious wish for Thomas Paine's death, you proceed to state how miserable the adoption of his doctrines would render the "unhappy virtuous." Fear not such a dire event: the *pious* are few in number, and of those, few have the courage to open a book controverting their opinions, and which, they are taught to believe, contains nothing but blasphemies. But, should chance lead them to a detection of their errors, they would only become less devout, and more useful citizens. Freed from the prospect of hell and heaven, they will have leisure to think of this world, in which they live somewhat like hermits, loving only their priests, and ready to sacrifice victims to credulity.

You say, that guillotine massacres were not the effect of the Popish religion, but of the disbelief of this system. This deserves some consideration. It is not true, that the majority of the people of Paris were unbelievers. No, Sir, they swore to the miracles of Abbe Paris, and were as ready to give testimony to the wonderful cures and prodigies operated by his intercession, as the Jews or Christians have been to vouch for theirs. The fact is this: the lively disposition of the French, the

unintelligibility of their religion, and the shameful conduct of the priests, turned their attention to the more serious object of politics; but this event could not immediately change the nature of the murderers of the Protestants on St. Bartholomew's day. Does your Lordship imagine, that the peasants of La Vendee are models of morality? If you think so, I must undeceive you. Nothing but ignorance prevails in that district; like the ancient crusaders, they are led solely by their priests, who, by means of certain words which early habits and superstition have made their followers respect, and, together with want of communication with the rest of France, have inflamed them, and driven them to slaughter: even miracles have not been wanting in that part of the country; but in this, as in many other instances, they have disappeared, on the arrival of incredulous troops, whose hearts are perhaps hardened by God, like the Egyptians of old. Since God diminishes men's faith in proportion as he gives them human wisdom, let us not endeavour to controvert this heavenly will, by endeavouring to make the enlightened people of the eighteenth century so credulous as in the former days of ignorance. The Bishop allows, that the higher classes of every country all lean towards infidelity; they are more guided by reason, and reason is the avowed enemy of faith, it being the criterion of faith, that it contains natural impossibilities. It is unfortunate that so many sects pretend to faith, and differ so much among themselves; and that to explain their faiths, they use the weapons of reason against one another. This of itself

proves, that faith is but a cant word, since the faithful argue about what comes not under human knowledge. Thus all religious sectaries, whether Christians, Jews, Mahometans, Boodzoists, or Bramins, as staunchly believe contradictory doctrines, while, in the inquiries that depend on their reason, we find that, wherever men have long been civilized, they have, in astronomy, in physics, or ethics, come in general to the same conclusions. The language of the philosopher is understood in Pekin as well as in Rome; but the religious fanatics of every country differ in their opinions, and consider all but themselves as dreamers and impostors. The Bramin laughs at the story of Noah and the ark, the stopping of the sun, and the incarnation of God; while the Christian shows the same contempt for the incarnation of Vishnu, and other articles of the Braminical faith. The exercise of reason alone shows us the true limits of our intellectual faculties. Ignorance of this is the cause of all reveries in science, as in religion; it is only superstition that incites men to launch beyond their conceptions.

You accuse of infidelity all those who commit crimes against society. When we answer, that the Jewish and Christian religions have deluged the world with blood, you reply, that it is not as being Jews and Christians, but because they were wicked. At the same time, I hope you allow, that the Spartans, the Athenians, the Romans, the Chinese, did not commit half the atrocities which disgrace Jewish history, the aera of the crusades and the Christian persecutions, of the invasion of America, the massacres of heretics, &c. The candid observer

must therefore conclude, that right and wrong is not confined to sects; that the Christian religion, whatever its precepts may be, has not been able to prevent crimes, while nations who knew not so much as the name of Moses or Christ, produced a Confucius, an Aristides, a Socrates, an Epaminondas, a Cincinnatus. Among these nations, who knew not the Lord Jehovah, we find Archimedes, Epicurus, Demosthenes, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, while the chosen people of God, and their successors, the Christians, borrowed their language, the very names of their gods, and the little science they knew, from these despised infidels. It was not the oracle of Delphos, the augurs, or the sybils, that enlightened the Greeks and Romans. The rabble credited them, as the ignorant Jews and Christians did their prophets and apostles. In short, morals cannot be invented; there cannot be two systems of morality. The precepts must be directed to principles existing in the heart of man. Ignorance conceals from nations the rule of conduct, in the same manner that it prevents them from knowing geometry; the moment they study either, they are put in the road of truth. No wonder, then, that in the times of the greatest oppression, when frightened into certain doctrines by the stories of nurses and parents, many learned men should not have been able to conquer their first prejudices. You certainly know the time when astrology and the philosopher's stone were in fashion; the believers in these reveries were men of science. Van Helmont, Stahl, Boyle, and innumerable others were possessed of this madness. You can be

no stranger to the numerous wretches that suffered for witchcraft and necromancy, and, upon the very brink of death, confessed they were guilty.

The next reflection the Doctor makes, is respecting gospel moderation, for which purpose he quotes, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." Yet has this been done by all Christian rulers; and the clergy are at this moment, in express defiance of this maxim, about to send missionaries to disseminate principles that have ever produced internal dissensions, and without which infidels have lived in perfect happiness. It is, perhaps, an excess of piety; but cool observers pretend, that it is the high priest, not the High God, that they are going to preach: to fill their knapsacks is the first object of these pilgrims, and their God is made subservient. Unluckily for the Bishop, he could not adduce a more detestable maxim, to show his charity, than that which I have just quoted: it is the pivot of Oriental despotism; it teaches passive obedience to all classes; the father is the tyrant of his children, the nabob of his subjects, the emperor of all: it is a maxim whose tendency is to root in men's minds, that we are the property of one another, and may be inherited as cattle. To those of my readers who are pleased with it, I wish a thorough experience of its effects.

The remainder of your first letter contains observations to which I perfectly accede. Your conclusion against Thomas Paine is perfectly fair. Any apparent deviation from moral justice in the world must prove as much against the goodness of God, as

a similar inconsistency in his immediate actions and commands proves against revealed religion. My Lord, we are in the abyss of error; your question with Thomas Paine is about the comparative absurdity of the two Opinions. The deistical notions of your adversary do not agree with his reasonable tenets; but I readily grant, that, to a religious person, nothing is incredible; and that the greater the inconsistencies, the more sublime the system. But let me ask your Lordship, what you conclude against one, who, like myself, is not a Deist? and repeats, with the first philosopher of the age, that there are only four possible hypotheses upon the causes of the universe: 1st. That they are purely good. 2dly. That they are malicious. 3dly. That they are a mixture of good and evil. And, lastly, That they neither possess benevolence, nor any other passions. The two first hypotheses are equally contradicted by daily experience, the mixture of good and evil is too apparent: the third is denied, by the steadiness of the laws of nature: the last, then, only is admissible.

You next proceed to justify several actions of the Jews, which you and the Bible are pleased to call God's commands. I must decline following your reasoning; for the very existence of such crimes as the Jews ascribe to their enemies, and which, they say, were so repugnant to God, would of themselves prove against the goodness of that Being. His frequent threats, and the extermination of so many miserable nations, is a poor expedient; like that of a man, who, attempting to make a machine, and foiled in his endeavours, gloried in breaking it in a thousand

pieces. How much more ridiculous is that sublime Artificer, who employs the same means which impotence or malevolence give rise to in his wretched children. I am glad you have no recourse to the silly causes of atheism, as given by that illustrious dreamer, Plato.

The world has too long been imposed upon by ridiculous attempts to vilify atheists, and show their nonexistence. That name has been a cant word, like Jacobin in France, and Whig and Tory in England, which every person applies to his neighbour as it best suits him. In Catholic countries, all who dare think are heretics; among Protestants, they are atheists. Being a word of opprobrium, it has ever been used as a powerful engine in the hands of the clergy. The question is upon the truth of systems, not upon the character of those who profess them. If this were the discrimination, and the palm given to that religion that has had the greatest number of honest men, the Christian system would certainly lose the contest.

The Bishop seems to think, that savages have not so perfect a notion of God as we imagine: religion, he supposes, begins as it were in express revelation. This is but the fancy of a clergyman, unsupported by any proofs; but at least it shows, that the Bishop involuntarily acknowledges, that reason alone can hardly give us the idea of a ruling Being. The savage, it is true, does not discourse in a metaphysical jargon; he wants expressions: but I wish the Doctor would inform me in what our Catechism definition of God is clearer than the

notions of the rudest savage, who, trembling at the approach of thunder and violent convulsions of nature, or enjoying the genial sun and fertilizing inundations, imagines all the world to be animated with his own passions. The thunder is a mark of wrath, while the blessings are signs of a propitious genius. To conciliate these imaginary beings, to avert their wrath, is the grand object of superstition. Schoolmen conceal, under their mystical jargon, the real materials which their gods are made of; they conceal that the Supreme Artificer is the offspring of fancy, the figurative and unphilosophical symbol of nature, to which they give human dispositions: in all religious systems men are the type of their gods. Your letter concludes with a remark sufficiently extraordinary, that most Deists of your acquaintance disbelieve the mysterious conversations of God, his miracles, and such other stories, because they are too wonderful, and against the order of nature. Your reply is curious: because we never have seen the like of them, does it follow that they are untrue? Give me leave to tell you, my Lord, that you have forgotten the rules of logic: you know, that in all cases, but of demonstration, the philosopher does nothing but weigh probabilities. Any thing that is conceivable is possible: but are we therefore to believe in the existence of witches or necromancers? Are we to give credit to the world having sprung from an egg? That Mahomet divided the moon? That the sun stood still? That astrology is a science? Yet what reason have we to disbelieve them? The respective supporters of these opinions may say with the Doctor,

that nothing can be too wonderful, and that, because these things have not happened in our time, it does not follow they should be untrue. I acknowledge, with the Doctor, that many Deists admit a Being as inconceivable as any religious mystery; therefore it may seem ridiculous in them to stop their credulity; since we call God just, when nothing but a concatenation of causes and effects can be perceived in the world; when we proclaim him benevolent, while the world is full of vice, while millions perish in misery, and continual calamities befall mankind; while, in short, most men have the gloomy prospect of damnation before them. These are greater miracles than an universal deluge, making a woman from a rib, or God's countenancing the atrocious murders of Jews. He that will believe one wonder, has no plea for doubting the rest.

LETTER II

MY LORD,

Your second letter begins with some nice distinctions between authenticity and genuineness. The whole reasoning seems to amount to this, that a book may be authentic, although not genuine, and *vice versa*. To this proposition we were no strangers; but piety makes your Lordship forget some other considerations. When the proofs of authenticity depend in a great measure upon the genuineness of a book, then the authenticity falls to the ground the moment we prove it spurious. Thus the Jews strenuously maintained, that the Pentateuch had been written by an inspired man at a particular time. But if Moses is shown not to have written these books, I trust you will not declare them authentic, without other very solid proofs. When a whole nation is proved to be mistaken respecting the author of a work, we ought not hastily to credit their legends. Moreover, logic teaches us, that in proportion as events are incredible, they require a stronger testimony to prove that they have actually taken place. A battle may have been fought, a city may have been destroyed, but miracles being against the order of nature, no testimony can be strong enough to prove them, we must again appeal to faith.

It is so much easier for men to be deceived or imposed upon, or for persons designedly to mislead their credulous followers, that unless it were more miraculous that a man should be mistaken, than that the miracle happened, we ought not to give credit to such fables. If we drop this rule of logic, we shall readily believe prodigies of all sorts, whether wrought by Moses, Jesus Christ, Mahomet, St. Antony of Padua, or any modern wonder-workers, witches, magicians, astrologers, or magnetisers. Mr. Paine nowhere asserts, that because a book is not genuine, it must be false; but certainly he might assert this of the Bible. You say, that if the works of Titus Livius had been ascribed to another, they would nevertheless be true; how would you ascertain it? If the whole Roman nation supposed them to have been written by a particular author at a certain time, and should we be enabled to point out many passages evidently written in a posterior age, would you, without any other proofs, join in the assent to the authenticity of the history, upon a tradition so vague, and already proved false in so material a point? Although I am no Bishop, I would only imagine, that as to probable events contained in such spurious books, there might have been some grounds for them; but I would receive them with great caution; and, at any rate, never would I establish a system of history, much less of religion, upon the productions of an ignorant people: in all cases, events related against the order of nature are to be considered as the reveries of dark ages. To elucidate your principles, you mention Anson's voyage, written by Robins, under the name of Walter,

to prove that a spurious work may contain a true history; but, my Lord, do you forget, that this was written at a time when the whole nation knew that Lord Anson had made such a voyage, and every man in his fleet could testify the particulars of it? But if our posterity, four or five centuries hence, should discover a book purporting to be written by a Mr. Walters, detailing the voyage of Admiral Anson, and if in that book they should meet a passage speaking of the late revolution in France, or of the author's death and burial, would not that strike at the authenticity of the whole? Would any part be believed that was not corroborated by the evidence of respectable contemporary authors? All that could be inferred would be from the nature of the events related, such as the accurate description of countries, and such other particulars as marked either the period of the observations, or their truth: in the first case, they might suspect the work to be interpolated; in the second, they would value it only for the accuracy of information. It is different with scientific and historical works: a spurious book of science may contain truths, they stand for themselves, they are the same at all times and places. Not so in history: the truth here depends on the universal consent of nations, on the testimony of authors of credibility confronted with each other, and in all cases relating things probable. When we read in a Chinese history, that the goddess Amida peopled the world by bearing male children from under one arm, and females under another, or, in the Mahometan writers, that the trees spoke to the founder of that sect, would a man credit any circumstance,

however probable, related in such histories, without the strongest collateral proofs? And should we further discover, that these histories detailed events posterior to their author's death, would not this make the whole still more improbable? Your remark upon this subject is singular: you say, that if Joshua, Samuel, or Moses, declared themselves the authors of the works ascribed to them, then to prove these books spurious would at once destroy their genuineness and authenticity. I would reason thus: Moses does not say, that he was the author of the Pentateuch; why then do we believe that he wrote it? You would, no doubt, answer, that the tradition of the Jews proclaims him such. I retort, that if the genuineness of a book may be proved by tradition, we ought as much to argue against the authenticity of a work, from having proved the general belief of its genuineness to be founded on error, as if the author had said, I am the author of this book. This we shall, in the sequel, prove to be the case with the books of the Old Testament. The addition of an express declaration of Moses would add no authenticity to the Pentateuch, since it is as easy to forge a work where the author speaks in the first as in the third person.

Your next remark is concerning miracles. I have already observed, that no testimony can give them belief. You maintain, that the degree and kind of evidence for the prodigies recorded in the Bible exceeds that for any other wonders. How this happens I am unable to comprehend. I know they are contained in a book composed by the priests of the most credulous and

ignorant nation that perhaps ever existed; and the authority of these unknown and obscure persons, is all the evidence we have for crediting their stories. An English Bishop tells his countrymen, that the miracle of the sun standing still is better supported than the prodigies of Abbe Paris, Mesmer, and the late Labre at Rome, than the numerous Indian, Chinese, and Popish miracles, of which a great part are attested by magistrates, divines, physicians, and the most enlightened classes of society; while the wonderful repast of the angels with Abraham, or the marvellous tale of Jonah's three days' residence in the belly of a fish, depends upon the authority of a book which we shall prove to be spurious, to have been lost for several ages, and to be compiled, if not altogether composed, by some Jewish scribes, who were, as they themselves acknowledge, the only men versed in the scriptures of the nation. I thought you would have known sacred history better than at the present day to make such unsupported assertions. Have you forgotten the wonders of the magicians of Pharaoh? Do you not recollect the express acknowledgment of Moses himself, that there may be miracles and prophecies performed by men who adored not the Lord Jehovah? Does he not say, in chap. xiii. of Deuteronomy, "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, &c. – that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death, *because he hath spoken to you to turn away from*

the Lord your God." It is not because he is a false prophet, but because he is not a prophet of Jehovah. Does not this at once show the grossness of the conceptions of the Jews, and the sophistical mode of arguing of their legislator? For I would ask, How did Moses prove himself the oracle of God? Or how did Jesus Christ show himself the Son of God, but by their pretended miracles? Why then believe the testimony of a miracle in one instance, and not in another? But the Jews certainly imagined, that there were several gods, and that they quarrelled with each other, as kings are used to do; therefore it was natural that one set of prophets should try to exterminate another, and be as inveterate against them as the Lord Jehovah was against Baal, or other rival gods. If the reader imagines I speak at random when I say, the Jews believed in other gods, I refer him to Judges, chap. xi. ver. 23, 34, where it is said, "So now the Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldst thou not possess it? Wilt thou not possess that which *Chemosh thy god* giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess." There cannot be a fairer parallel.

I can hardly imagine a Bishop ignorant of the augurs, oracles, and sybils of the Greeks and Romans, and of the implicit belief these nations had in them; the truth of their prophecies was fully as well established as the prophecies of the Jews. Neither were miracles uncommon among the heathens. You have, no doubt, read St. Ambrose and Origen, and have found in the works of

these and other fathers, that the only difference between the miracles of the Christians and infidels, was, that the former were operated by God, and the latter by the devil; and could I be satisfied that Satan took up Jesus Christ to the top of that high mountain, (now unknown to geographers) from whose pinnacle all the world could be seen, this would surprise me as much as to see Jesus Christ, or any other wonder-worker, bringing a dead man to life. I am ashamed to have inveighed so long against silly prejudices; but I could not avoid calling upon your Lordship, to point out the difference between gospel-miracles and the ridiculous tales believed in all dark ages, and of which we find so copious collections in the works of the first fathers. The axiom of philosophers, that no human testimony can establish the credibility, of miracles, you have left unanswered. You say it has been confuted an hundred times: had you given the confutation of it, we would have been able to ascertain the truth of your assertion. You are writing for the multitude, and being a dignitary of the church, ought to furnish the people with arms to oppose reason. Perhaps the unsuccessful attempt of Dr. Campbell has deterred you from at least recapitulating the principal answers to this proposition. Till you can prove that the great mass of mankind are not very fallible and easily deceived by any impostor, or that they are disposed and capable to examine the truth of reports spread about prodigies, you will never be able to persuade men of sense, that events impossible are to be believed upon the testimony of those who not only are, but have

constantly been, the slaves of credulity in all countries.

You then show, that Mr. Paine's objections to the genuineness are not new. This is true; and I am surprised you have quoted so few supporters of his opinions. Your attempt to prove the genuineness of the Pentateuch, by direct evidence, is ridiculous. What! Maimonides, ten centuries after the destruction of the Jews, a Jew himself, and writing at a period so remote from the supposed date of the books of the Old Testament, is, by Dr. Watson, called a direct evidence of the genuineness of the Pentateuch. Juvenal, a poet, who in more than one place ridicules the credulity of the Jews, says, that they believe in Moses – so do the Europeans allow that the Indians believe in Brama. – We question not the general traditions of the Jews, but the credit they deserve; and I shall next proceed to show, that the books of the Pentateuch are spurious, and undeserving of credit. The name of Moses and the Jews were unknown to the famous Phoenician historian Sanchoniato, of whom Eusebius has preserved us some extracts; he has never mentioned a word about this famous legislator: had he done so, Eusebius was too strenuous an advocate *for* Christianity not to have recorded it. The books of the Jews were concealed from all the world before the famous Greek translation made at the instance of Ptolemy Philadelphia. Josephus himself acknowledges, that no heathen knew the Jewish books, which he endeavours to explain, by some miraculous interference of God to keep them from the impious. It is evident, that the insignificance and ignorance of the Jews

were sufficient to screen them for a long time from the search of philosophers. Upon the early history of the Jewish nation, however, we have the testimony of several of the ancient writers. Manetho, and Chaeremon, Egyptian historians, give the most unfavourable account of this nation. Lisimachus does not favour them any more; and, although he differs about the name of the king who expelled them from Egypt, yet he agrees in calling them a set of men infected with leprosy, and the meanest of the subjects of the king of Egypt. Diodorus Siculus is as hard upon these wretched Jews. In short, the opinion of their being the vilest and most ignorant of men, has prevailed among all antiquity. All the writers about them agree in stating that they never produced any work in science; indeed, that they never improved any branch of useful knowledge. Many of these authors mention Moses as a priest of Heliopolis, who led them out of Egypt, and gave them a religion. Diodorus Siculus informs us, that the God of Moses was Jau, or Jahouh, which is the true pronounciation of Jehovah; and Plutarch (de Iside) says, that the Thebans adored this God, and had not images in their temples, because Jau signified the general principle of life, the soul of the world.

Strabo, in his Geography, book 16, informs us, that Moses, who was an Egyptian priest, taught his followers to worship the God Jahouh, without representing it by emblems. This was the God of the Thebans, the soul of the world. The Jews have even preserved the name of Tsour, or giver of forms, and commonly translated by the word creator in chap. xxxii. of

Deuteronomy. Herodotus affirms, that the Jews or Syrians of Palestine borrowed circumcision from the Egyptians. Diodorus says the same; and even Philo and Josephus do not deny it. A great many other rites were copied by the Jews from this nation. It is, therefore, of great consequence to ascertain the age in which the Jewish books were written; for if we can prove that all the fundamental points of their religion were copied from their masters the Egyptians, or borrowed from the Babylonians during the captivities, then the reader will judge of the truth of the clerical opinion, that a handful of hordes were the favourite people of God; that a set of ignorant and credulous vagabonds taught science to the Chinese, Indians, and Egyptians, and preserved nothing among themselves but some ridiculous accounts of their origin, and a collection of absurd prodigies. If we succeed in pointing out from what sources Jewish mythology is derived, there will be but little difficulty in unravelling the principal fables contained in the Pentateuch and other Jewish books. We are pretty well acquainted with the allegories of the heathen mythologies.

I am ready to grant that several of Mr. Paine's objections are not valid, and often trifling; but I declare, once for all, that I do not think myself bound to follow Mr. Paine in every instance. I shall direct my remarks, rather to disprove your reasoning, than to defend every objection of your opponent; at the same time, I shall avoid repeating what he has advanced, and you have not disproved. The chief proofs against the genuineness of the

Pentateuch have been overlooked by Mr. Paine. I shall state them briefly.

First. It was believed, by all the best informed old fathers of the church, that the Jewish books had been absolutely lost during the captivity, and that Esdras had written them from inspiration, or, that he collected the Pentateuch, and all other canonical books, out of whatever records he could find, and put them together.² In either case, their authority is greatly invalidated; and the more so, as the fourth book of Esdras, adopted by the Greek church, and generally deemed authentic, says expressly, that Esdras dictated the holy books during forty successive days and nights, to five scribes, who were continually writing. This tale shows sufficiently the general belief that he was the restorer of the long lost books of the law. In our second book of Nehemiah, or, properly speaking, Esdras, it is said, that Ezra, or Esdras the scribe, who was above all the people, brought the book of the law to the people, and then the people rejoiced much in being instructed in the law of God, that when they found there the commandment of the Lord ordering the Jews to perform the feast of the booths, there was great gladness, "and all the congregation

² Porro Esdras sancti patres docent iostanratorem suisse sacrorum librorum, quod non ita intelligendum est, quasi scripturæ sacræ omnes perierint in eversione civitatis, et templi Nabuchodonosor, et ab Esdra divinitas inspirato reparatæ fuerint, ut fabulatur auctor, L. IV. Esdræ C. XIV. Sed quod Scripturas Mosis, et prophetarum in varia volumina descriptas, et in varia loca dispenreas, et tempore captivitatis non diligenter conservatas, Esdras summa diligentia collectas ordinaverit, et in unum quasi corpus redigerit. Bellarmin de Script. Ecclesiast. page 22.

of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under booths: for, since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so.". If the Jews had even forgotten a feast, the memory of which every father would transmit to his son, is this not an evident proof that they had no books in the captivity? Again, in chap. vii. of the 1 book of Esdras, it is said, that Esdras "had very great skill, so that he omitted nothing of the law and commandments of the Lord, but taught all Israel the ordinances and judgments."

Can any man, after this, doubt that Esdras is the compiler of all the books which the Jews had not known for many centuries? And are we, who laugh at the Catholic councils, to trust to the word of a Jewish scribe? it is further stated in 2 Chronicles, chap. xxiv. ver. 15, that Hilkiyah the priest found a book of the law of God *given* by Moses, and sent it by Saphan to king Josias, who heard it read, which shows that it must have been very short; and, by the context, it would appear to have been the law strictly speaking; another proof that these records were altogether scattered, and are all without authority, since it was so easy to forge them among a people who seemed to preserve no more than a traditional law. Again, although, in the older Jewish books, such as Kings and Chronicles, we find the name of Moses often mentioned, yet no word answering to the five books of Pentateuch is to be found. The Code of laws of Moses seems to have been forgotten; for Solomon ornamented the temple with calves, in express contempt of that law, and this while he was

the favourite of God, and the wisest man in the world. The very confusion that pervades the books ascribed to Moses, shows them to have been compilations. Jerome, who was one of the most learned of the fathers, confesses that he dares not affirm that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch; he even adds, that he has no objection to allow that Esdras wrote the books in question.³

Secondly. We know that no canon of books ever existed among the Jew's till the time of the synagogue under the Maccabees. Before their reign, there had never existed among the Jews any such council; and, if the word occurs in the Pentateuch, it is a fault of the transcribers and composers, who lived when there was a synagogue, and is not to be understood in any other acceptation than a collection of priests. The Pharisees of the second temple chose the books they thought best among a multitude of forgeries. The Talmud relates, that this synagogue were about to reject the Book of Proverbs, Ezekiel's prophecies, and Ecclesiastes, because they imagined these writings contradictory to the law of God; but a certain Rabbin having undertaken to reconcile them, they were preserved as canonical. A prodigious number of forged Books of Daniel, Esdras, and of the Prophets, were then in circulation; and to distinguish the genuine from the false works became

³ Sive Mosen dicere volueris auctorem Pentateuchi, sive Esdram ejuadem iustauratorem operis, non recuso. Hieronim.Op. Tom. IV. p. 134. Apud Edit. Paris 1706

absolutely necessary. This doubt and uncertainty conspires to render the decision of the synagogue very doubtful; particularly, as we shall show in the sequel, that many passages of the Prophecies are written evidently about the time of this choice of sacred books, and inserted in them, probably by some cunning priest, as the oracles of Sybil were forged to suit Cæsar.

Thirdly. The similarity of the mysteries of the Jews to those of the Babylonians, is too glaring not to let us see the origin of Genesis in particular. The creation in six days is a perfect copy of the Gahans, or Gahan-bars, of Zoroaster; the particulars of each day's work are literally the same. The serpent was famous among the Babylonians. The mythological deluge of Ogyges and Xissuthrus, are symbols of changes arising on earth, as they imagined, from the revolutions of the heavenly bodies. These, a little ornamented by the historical narration of Deucalion's inundation related by Berosus, is the pattern of Noah's flood; the ark of Osiris and emblematical dove and raven were Egyptian hieroglyphics. The man and the woman in Paradise is a mere copy of Zoroaster's first pair. The original sin is Pandora's box. The Talmud of Jerusalem says expressly that the Jews borrowed the names of the angels, and even of their months, from the Babylonians. The Elohim, or Gods, (not God), are said in Genesis to have created the world. It was not Jehovah, but the genii or gods that are in the Hebrew called makers of the world. And these are the very genii, who according to Sanchoniatho, were by Mercury excited against Saturn.

Fourthly. We ask, in what language was the Pentateuch written, if it really was the work of Moses? It is known that Hebrew is a dialect of the Phenician, and that the Jews spoke Egyptian for a very long time before they adopted the language of the people among whom they dwelt. In Psalm lxxxi. we learn that the Jews were surprised to hear the language of the people beyond the Bed Sea. If, therefore, Moses, or any person of that age, is the author of the Pentateuch, it is evident that the Hebrew books are mere translations. What degree of credit does a nation deserve, who have been able to take for originals books that were in the face of them translations? Is it right to persecute men, as priests have done while they had power, for refusing to give credit to this tissue of contradictory and absurd fables?

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